POST-SECULAR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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Based on papers read at the symposium
on Post-Secular Religious Practices
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Editorial note

The theme chosen for the Donner Institute 22nd Symposium, 15–17 June 2011 in Åbo/Turku, Finland, was *Post-secular religious practices*. The field we were interested in had so far not received a set terminology. Against this background, we accordingly suggested a stipulative definition in our Call for papers: 'A post-secular society is that which combines a renewed openness to questions of the spirit with the habit of critical enquiry.'

As noticed in our Call for papers, people today more often take responsibility for regulating their lives the best they can in order to become and stay healthy, efficient, moral and flexible actors both in their private lives and in the labour market. A common feature of many religious and spiritual practices is the invitation to work with oneself, more specifically with one's mind, body and spirit, as well as with one's emotions, goals, values and relations. This late modern orientation has been named, 'the subjective or expressive turn of culture'. As a consequence, many people are today increasingly seeking a non-dualistic or holistic understanding of life and the human being, an understanding that would bring mind and body, or 'nature' and 'spirit', in unity. Some analyses of post-secular urban culture have depicted it in critical terms of, for instance, a disorienting character or disconnectedness, a lack of subjectivity or authenticity, a glorification of the superficial or as fragmentary, diffuse, and disassociated. This condition has been insightfully characterized as becoming 'exhausted of being oneself'.

The papers that were presented at the symposium did not form a consistent whole, but were rather a fairly heterogenous collection of views on different aspects of Post-secular religious practices. Since the subject is new nothing else was to be expected. This heterogeneity also clearly appeared in our Call for papers: 'We welcome papers dealing theoretically with secularization and post-secularity in relation to relevant post-secular religious practices such as, for example, Mindfulness, Yoga, Charismatic healing, Meditation and other spiritual health and well-being practices.'

I am nevertheless convinced that the present conference proceedings will awaken interest—as every pioneer act does. As if this was not enough, this is also the first volume in the series Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis that is published simultaneously both in printed and digital form.

Table of contents

VEIKKO ANTTONEN

Making space for the 'post-secular' in religious studies

I am greatly honoured to have the opportunity to say a few words at the opening of the annual Donner Institute Conference, which this year focuses on post-secular religious practices.* Of course this challenging task made me think about my own connection to the notion of the secular, as well as its corollary, 'post-secular'. During the past twenty-five years, I have been working on the cultural logic of terms denoting 'the sacred'. My sincere wish has been to unravel both cultural and cognitive mechanisms by which the domains of the religious and the secular are established in social life in order to create distinctions, boundaries and behavioural rules for observing them. From the outset, the theory that I have proposed entails that the element of 'religion' or 'the sacred' is an inextricable ingredient in human societies, giving shape to diverse individual and culturally shared religious formations and mental landscapes. Even though I have theorised the sacred more in reference to vernacular cultures rather than theological religions, my primary goal has been to break open the fuzzy boundaries used to constitute the domain of the secular rather than to explore religion or the sacred *per se*. My methodological choices have been motivated by a conviction according to which the parameters forming a religion in a specific cultural setting need to be viewed in close connection with its counter-domain, 'non-religion'. The parameters of faith are always in some specific relationship with ideas, ideologies, philosophies and political programmes underlying the domain of the secular. I have defined the sacred as a 'categorical boundary to set things with non-negotiable value apart from things whose value is based on continuous transactions'. By means of this definition I have wanted to emphasise and point out that people in general have not only a culturally established inclination, but also an innate capacity to participate in distinct sacred-making activities and processes of signification according to paradigms given by the belief systems to which they are committed, be they religious, national or ideological (Anttonen 2000: 280–1).

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*   This paper is based on the words of welcome on 15 June 2011. Veikko Anttonen is
       Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Turku.

In close connection with my methodological choices, Kim Knott has suggested that the contours, beliefs, practices and culture of the secular have hardly begun to be researched (Knott 2010). We still need to flesh out the hidden mechanisms which create the boundary space between the domains of religion and non-religion and bring them into close interaction with each other in varying formations and discursive practices. By developing tools, methods and models for analysing the relationship between the 'religious' and the 'secular', scholars in the field of religious studies are better equipped to theorise these domains in juxtaposition with each other and to re-engage the study of religion with other disciplines (see Knott 2010:133). I am tempted to think that otherwise the whole enterprise of distinguishing certain religious practices and subsuming them in the corollary category of the 'post-secular' would be methodologically untenable.

There are various scholars of religion who have made important contributions to our understanding of the relationship between the two domains. Being one among the many, Timothy Fitzgerald identifies 'religion' and the 'secular' as being mutually conditioned, oppositional concepts which in a way similar to concepts such as 'economics' and 'politics', emerge in the context of western Enlightenment and colonialist discourse. Fitzgerald maintains that religion's other, the category of non-religion, appeared discursively in the guises of concepts such as 'superstition', the 'profane', the 'secular' and 'secularism' (Fitzgerald 2007a, 2007b). Our approaches and discourses as scholars of religion have suffered from a one-sided methodological attitude regarding the priority of one domain over the other. Classical secularisation theories are the outcome of this one-sidedness. Sociologists of religion have in recent years voiced critical responses and discontents in the secularist paradigm. The eminent British sociologist of religion, Grace Davie has challenged the long-established secular canopy according to which there is a necessary connection between modernisation and secularisation. Davie posits that the secularity of Europe is not a model for export. It is better to see Europe as an exceptional case, something distinct and peculiar to the European corner of the world, which cannot be treated as the norm in its secularity (Davie 2002). In addition to the former communist countries in East and Central Europe, where secularism was a dominant ideology, French secularism is a paramount example of the European case.

The American social anthropologist Peter R. Bowen gives a vivid illustration of the French category of the secular, *laïcité*, in his book *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves*, which has the subtitle 'Islam, the State and Public Space' (2007). In his ethnographic study, Bowen sets out to find reasons why

a law was passed by the French Government in 2004 which prohibited any clothing that clearly indicated a pupil's religious affiliation. Bowen refers to views according to which it was not until the 1970s that the Republican concept of *laïcité* became the general framework for French thinking about new social issues such as the nature of family, divorce, homosexuality and the acceptability of the Islamic headscarf. In France, *laïcité*, or secularity, revolves around the concept of the public. The public domain is defined in terms of an unquestionable allegiance to the state. The law prohibiting headscarves reveals fears and anxieties over the recognition of French Republican values. Bowen cites French historians, according to whom modernity in France necessitated an 'exit from religion'. The retreat of religion from the public space consisted of three simultaneous changes: religion ceased to suffuse the public world; God retreated to a position of absent power; and the individual assumed the right to choose to believe or not to believe. This modern revolution in religion was accompanied by a profound transformation of the state: the state became a moderator of arrangements among the individual participants in civil society. The freedom of individuals to choose their affiliations and attachments to churches, societies and labour unions was not in conflict with the republican model of the state. Regarding the ban on religious signs, Bowen comes up with an assumption that the headscarf wearer is making inappropriate public claims about the superiority of her values to those of other people. Rather than signifying only a choice of individual identity, the scarf sends a message that is out of place in modern society, because it involves absolute truth claims. Bowen concludes that 'When Muslim women in headscarves say that it is with these clothes and this religion that they choose to abide by the rules of the Republic and the life together (*la vie commune*) that is France' (Bowen 2007: 249), they challenge the conditions for belonging to the nation. Although this challenge creates anxieties about sociability and allegiance, anxieties over differences in appearance, history and religious ideas can lead to new possibilities for sharing a life together. Although Bowen does not use the concept, this new self-understanding of being and displaying Frenchness can be taken as an instance of an expression of 'post-secularity' . I hereby thank you for your attention and I wish you all an inspiring and successful conference!

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NINA BJÖRKMAN

A pure mind and a healthy body

An Islamic perspective

Introduction

Speaking of post-secularism is undoubtedly rather difficult within the Islamic context, where secularism itself can be seen as something that has either not taken place at all or something which is being imposed from the outside. We could talk of anti-secularism or non-secularism, but those terms have such negative connotations that I would prefer not to. The idea for this particular article was born when the suggested title for the upcoming symposium was 'Mind and Body', and it might therefore seem a bit out of place within the field of post-secularism.

In today's Egypt we see the Muslim Brotherhood supporting hospitals, healthcare centres and other charities, but where does this focus on promoting good health and providing the necessary services stem from? Why do movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood engage in charitable activities to the extent that they do? Is it just a question of doing good for others, or are there other reasons?

In the following text I will take a look at some of the factors behind a trend within the Muslim Brotherhood, which is characterised by seeing the connection between a healthy body and a pure soul as being something vital for a practising Muslim. This article should not be seen as an all-encompassing description of Hasan al-Banna's thoughts on physical health, but rather as a short overview of them, based on the literature I had at hand.

Healthy body and mind

We all know that Islam is a religion that is highly focused on cleanliness. We have the concept of ritual cleanliness—the state of *wudu*—which a Muslim has to enter five times a day before prayer. We have concepts such as *haram* and *halal*, which cover most areas of daily life and tell Muslims what is per-

missible and what is not. And finally we have the concept of fasting, of abstaining from food and other pleasures in order to have a clear mind and be able to focus on the correct path, that of Islam.

The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, wrote extensively about the importance of being a good Muslim—of being good to oneself and good to others. Al-Banna stated that there are ten basic elements in the covenant of the Muslim Brotherhood. The first three of these are comprehension, devotion and action. By action al-Banna means, in his own words, 'the fruit of knowledge and devotion'. First he mentions the reformation of the self. He writes that Muslims should strive to attain a strong body, good character, a cultured mind, correct beliefs and true worship. By accepting the covenant of the Muslim Brotherhood, its members are obliged to fulfill certain duties. Directly after the importance of reading and reciting the Quran, al-Banna mentions the need for a thorough medical checkup and the importance of physical fitness (*Six Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*: 10, 18). It becomes clear already at this stage that the physical body was seen as something very important by the founder of the Brotherhood, as was maintaining one's health.

Al-Banna says that every Muslim should fast at least three days a month. They should perfect their personal purity and cleanliness and try to maintain a state of *wudu* (ablution) most of the time. Muslims should also completely avoid intoxicating substances like tea or coffee, and anything else that causes impairment to the body or the mind, such as smoking. Al-Banna also advocates the importance of tidiness at home and at work. He speaks of the importance of cleanliness of dress, diet and person, for, as he says, 'Islam was founded on cleanliness' (*Six Tracts of Hasan al-Bana*: 18, 29). As a matter of fact, members of the Muslim Brotherhood can often be spotted in the crowd on the streets of Cairo or any other city in Egypt because they wear distinctive, formal clothes.

Al-Banna also advocates what I would call a purity of the mind when he says 'always be truthful, never tell a lie.' He talks about being compassionate and forgiving to others and merciful to both humans and animals. Being good-mannered, merciful to the young and respectful of the old are also mentioned. Al-Banna claims a Muslim should be able to earn his own living and be willing to offer help and service to others (*Six Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*: 10, 18). Herein lies one of the basic ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood: it is not only about what you believe in yourself, but about what you do for others and for the society that you live in.

Education

Hasan al-Banna felt that one of the most important duties of Muslims is the getting of an education and knowledge in the disciplines of life that suit them best. This applies to both males and females. According to al-Banna, poverty and lack of education were the reasons for the weakening of the nation. He showed great concern about the secularisation of the school system and the low standards of education. Al-Banna claimed it was the Islamic community's duty to provide education for all its citizens. As a result, propaganda for re-form of the existing school system as well as founding alternative educational facilities was at the top of the Brotherhood's agenda. In 1935 the movement contacted the Ministry of Education to express its concern, in particular con-cern regarding Christian missionary schools in Egypt. (Mitchell 1969: 284; *Six Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*: 29.) Al-Banna felt that creating the new Islamic society he envisioned would require a strategy of both formal and informal education to raise a new generation of Muslims committed to reviving and implementing Islam in all areas of human activity. He drew a great deal of inspiration from European holistic educators such as Maria Montessori and Friedrich Fröbel (the founder of the kindergarten), and he wanted to incor-porate their concepts into his system of education, albeit within an Islamic framework.

By the 1940s the Muslim Brotherhood had an increasingly standardized educational programme that laid a great deal of focus on physical health. It also included instruction in personal health and hygiene. The schools were maintained out of the budget of the different branches of the movement or through direct private contributions (Rosen 2008; Mitchell 1969: 287).

Physical education

Hasan al-Banna felt that physical education served to balance the body and soul, and that involving youth in sports and physical competition strength-ened both self-confidence and the spirit of co-operation. He also maintained that physical training was an essential factor in preparing young people for an armed *jihad* in the name of Islam (Rosen 2008). In the first set of criteria for membership in the Muslim Brotherhood, defined by Hasan al-Banna at the Third General Conference in 1935, three degrees of membership were estab-lished. Physical training was, perhaps a bit surprisingly, a requirement for a member to reach the third level, the highest form of membership, known as

'active' membership ('*amil*). The physical training involved in achieving this level was seen as a form of confirming one's commitment to the movement (Mitchell 1969: 183).

The Muslim Brotherhood was, and is, divided into different functional groups; committees and sections. While the committees dealt with things on a more structural level, such as legal or financial issues, the sections were of great importance on an operational level—they were involved in interaction with the members directly. A section for 'the propagation of the message' was also responsible for organising athletic activities. It had a number of publications, some of which also included athletic issues (Mitchell 1969: 170–1).

The Rover Scouts (*jawwala*)

From very early on Hasan al-Banna argued that public health was an essential aspect of the social reform. He focused especially on spreading information and the increase of facilities and personnel to fight the severe national health problem. The Brotherhood's programme of action hence had the same approach. The Rover Scouts were the first groups used to spread information about hygiene and bring medical care to the countryside. Local Rover units helped clean up the streets of the villages, encouraged villagers to use hospitals and clinics and provided first aid where they could. These activities were part of a programme established for the Rovers in 1943, aimed at fighting the sanitation and health problems which were facing the general population, rural and urban. This activity was gradually passed on to the medical section of the Brotherhood, but the Rovers continued to assist. During floods and malaria outbreaks in Egypt in 1945 and 1947, Hasan al-Banna offered the services of the Rovers to the Ministry of Health. In 1944 a dedicated medical section was established by the doctors in the movement, in order to set up clinics and hospitals and intensify the programme for spreading information on hygiene to raise the health level of all classes in society (Mitchell 1969: 289–90).

The section for bodily training and Rovers were responsible for organising collective and individual physical training and athletics to complement the members' spiritual and intellectual training. There are no details about these sections found in the original constitution of the Brotherhood from 1945 (revised in 1948), but the revised and expanded regulations of 1951 mention the section for bodily training (Mitchell 1969: 174).

As previously mentioned, the Rover Scouts focused heavily on physical training. Al-Banna is reported to have described the Rover units as 'the athletic training institute of the Brotherhood'. The Rover Scouts had already formed football teams back in the 1930s. They also had basketball, table tennis, weightlifting and wrestling teams, among others (Lia 1998: 170). As they continued to grow and develop, the Rover units kept hiking and camping as their major activities. These activities and the Muslim Brotherhood's focus on sport were undoubtedly essential to their ability to recruit young men into the movement. By the 1940s the Rovers became the informal, active instruments in the welfare and social services of the Brotherhood. In the countryside, for example, an extensive social project was inaugurated in 1943. The aim was to stimulate the local initiative in education, health, sanitation and welfare in the villages. The main function of the Rovers was, however, the maintenance of order within the society and defence against enemies from the outside (Mitchell 1969: 202).

The idea of the Rover Scouts had religious roots, and was based on the view that a healthy body is inseparable from a healthy mind. The Rover units were one of the oldest institutions passed on by al-Banna. In the early days when the Brotherhood was still based in Ismailiya, excursion units were formed that were focused on athletic activity and physical training. When the Brotherhood moved to Cairo the first unit, which remained in Ismailiya, was reorganised along the lines of the Egyptian scout movement and renamed 'The Rover Troops' (*firaq al-jawwala*). The war brought many new recruits to the movement, to a great extent due to its efforts within the youth groups. Al-Banna registered the Rovers officially at the end of the war, and by 1948 they were the most active and numerous division of the Egyptian scout movement (Mitchell 1969: 200, 202).

In 1948 the Brotherhood had an estimated 40,000 members in the Rover units, but by 1953 this number had reduced to 7,000. The Brothers' insistency on leadership led to an uneasy relationship between the Rovers and the national scout movement. The Brotherhood's crisis with the government from the early 1950s onwards resulted in a halt in the growth of the Rover movement. By 1953 the government had taken measures to bring the Rovers under strict surveillance. In fact the Rover movement practically ceased to exist—not so much due to government hostility, but as a result of the movement's inability to attract members. The death of Hasan al-Banna led to a new era in the Muslim Brotherhood and the new regulations of 1951 contained no mention of a Rover unit (Mitchell 1969: 203–4).

While al-Banna's successor, Hasan al-Hudaybi, concurred with the need for a healthy body, he proposed that this should be attained through athletic methods only. The 1951 regulations hence included a section for bodily training which replaced the Rovers. The Rovers also seem to have continued to exist informally within this new section, but it was Hudaybi's hope to restrain the movement completely. In 1953 it was declared that the Rover activities were to be entirely separated from the section for bodily training. The section's aim was redefined as the promotion of athletic activities—hiking, camping—in the countryside, and the organising of athletic events. At around these times the section began publishing newsletters on the rules and regulations of different sports and the section for the propagation of the message also saw a new focus on athletics (Mitchell 1969: 204–5).

Social work

> Instructing and guiding the society by spreading the call of righteousness, fighting atrocities and detestful things, encouraging virtue, enjoining all that is good, helping the people, trying to win the public opinion to the side of Islam, and observing the Islamic principles in all aspects of public life. This is the duty of the individual brothers as well the *jamaat* (community) as a working unit. (*Six Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*: 10, my italics.)

Hasan al-Banna speaks at length of the importance of being kind to others and doing good deeds. He says Muslims should be active and energetic and happy to offer service to other people. They should feel compelled to assist the needy and support the weak (*Six Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*: 19).

The Muslim Brotherhood has, throughout the history of its existence, been very effective in winning over the poor and working classes through charity work. The women in the movement have usually been more involved than men in welfare activities.[1] In 1953 it is said that each province in Egypt had at least one dispensary clinic, and that the 16 clinics in Cairo had treated over 100,000 patients. In January 1954 the RCC (Revolutionary Command Council) ordered the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and took over all the clinics then operating (Mitchell 1969: 290).

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1   'The feminine face of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood' 3.8.2011.

Ehud Rosen mentions Abbas al-Sissi, a prominent early member of the Muslim Brotherhood, who spoke of areas where the Muslim Brotherhood had sought systematic Islamist reform. One of these areas was the social field in which the Brotherhood aimed at raising the standard of living, seeking a balance between the social classes and fighting poverty, disease and illiteracy. Another area of reform would be knowledge, where the Brotherhood strove to re-interpret the Quran and *sunna* as well as correcting what the Brotherhood believed to be flaws in the religious texts (Rosen 2008).

The Muslim Brotherhood has offered healthcare and education to many Egyptians who could otherwise not afford it. Since the 1980s the movement has had a great deal of influence in the workers' unions, and through these they have been able to build up trusts for health insurance, pension insurance, unemployment insurance, low-interest loans and subsidised medicines. They have also established clubs for different kinds of sports. The workers' unions have worked in a democratic way when the government has not. In 1992 there was a devastating earthquake in Cairo. It left 500 people dead, 10,000 injured and 50,000 without a roof over their heads. While Mubarak's regime failed to provide the victims with the most basic necessities such as food and water, the Muslim Brotherhood put up tent villages and provided for them. The workers' unions have since also engaged in help in Bosnia, Kashmir and Palestine.[2]

The Brotherhood runs banks, community centres and facilities for disabled people all over Egypt. Twenty-four hospitals across the country belong to the Islamic Medical Association, which is an organisation linked to and supported by the Muslim Brotherhood. These hospitals offer their services at a much lesser cost than other hospitals in the country, partly because doctors volunteer to work here as a part of their *zakat*. For people without the ability to pay for treatment it can even be offered for free.[3]

Discussion

Dr Mohammed Badie, the current General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, stressed that it was imperative for the country's renaissance and development that a culturally, politically and ideologically neutral education system be established to serve the philosophical, economic and cultural needs of

2   'MB Chairman: Islam endorses education as the foundation of Egypt's renaissance' 15.5.2011. See also Gardell 2011: 57.
3   'Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood promotes moderate path' 20.2.2011.

its society.[4] Today we see the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood taking root in other societies as well. In the United States, for instance, the Muslim Brotherhood has become involved in a healthcare initiative with Christian, Jewish and Buddhist representatives. In November 2009 a coalition of major Islamic national organisations in the US set up a panel in order to broaden their efforts to support healthcare reform.[5]

As always, there are many layers to a religious and political movement such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Since the material available to me was so scarce, this overview of the health aspect of the movement remains fairly short. I do, however, hope that this article has shed some light on some maybe not-so-known factors behind a movement that thas, in fact, contributed significantly to the health care in Egypt.

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MÅNS BROO

Yoga practices as identity capital

Preliminary notes from Turku, Finland

As elsewhere in Finland, different types of yoga practices are popular in the city of Åbo/Turku. But how do practitioners view their own relationship to their practice, and further, what do they feel that they as individuals gain from it? Through in-depth interviews with yoga teachers in the city of Turku and using the theoretical framework of social psychologists James E. Côte's and Charles G. Levine's (2002) concept of *identity capital,* I wish to examine ways in which individuals, in what could be called a post-secular society, construct a meaningful sense of self and of individual agency. The observations offered in this article represent preliminary notes for a larger work on yoga in Turku, conducted at the 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape' research project at Åbo Akademi University, devoted to qualitative and ethnographic investigations of the changing religious landscape in Finland.

But before I go on to my theory and material, let me just briefly state something about yoga in Finland in general and in the town of Turku in particular. Turku may not be the political capital of Finland any longer, but is by far the oldest city in the country, with roots going back to the thirteenth century. However, as a site of yoga practice, Turku has a far shorter history than this.

As in many other Western countries, the first people in Finland who talked about yoga as a beneficial practice Westerners might take up rather than just laugh at as some weird oriental custom were the theosophists. The first theosophical lodge (Aura) in Turku was founded in November 1907 (Ahlbäck 1995: 144), but even though theosophical authors did deal with yoga at some length in their publications, their yoga was very different from what people generally see as yoga today. As Swami Vivekananda (see De Michelis 2004), H. P. Blavatsky and others were very critical of the physical practices of what they called 'Hatha Yoga', understanding the so-called Raja Yoga of Patañjali was the 'real' or 'uncorrupted' yoga. For them, yoga meant an internal, meditative practice.

It took many more decades before what Elisabeth De Michelis (2004) has called *modern postural yoga* arrived in Turku. A local branch of the Yoga

Federation of Finland was founded in 1969, and courses soon started attracting large numbers of students. The Yoga Federation of Finland held a virtual monopoly on postural yoga in Turku until the advent of several commercial yoga studios in the early 1990s, much as in other localities in Finland.

As in some other Eastern European countries, Finland's yoga scene today is bifurcated between an older and a newer style of practice. What could be called the old style is represented by the Yoga Federation of Finland, founded in 1967. Characteristic for the so-called Hatha Yoga taught by this group is that it has been explicitly severed from its Hindu roots to create a type of completely secular yoga 'uniquely suited to Finnish people'. Unlike in some other countries, this development was not a response to state or political pressure, but rather a response to criticism of yoga from circles within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and a result of the personalities of the early leaders of the Federation. Within the Yoga Federation of Finland, yoga is typically taught by volunteers in adult education facilities. Somewhat like the British Wheel of Yoga (see Newcombe 2005) the Yoga Federation of Finland does not follow any particular Indian guru (though a rather loose link with Tirumalai Krishnamacharya is often emphasised today, see e.g., Tavi 2011), and the style of yoga taught is very gentle and soft so as to suit anyone, regardless of age or physical condition. Perhaps as a result of the rising median age of its teachers, the gentleness of the Yoga Federation's style of practice has increased in recent years. Since the Yoga Federation calls its own brand of yoga 'Hatha-yoga', that term, internationally generally applied to postural yoga in general, is, for practitioners in Finland, synonymous with soft, gentle yoga.

Scholars have noted the importance of the Federation's decades of work for the popularisation of yoga in Finland (Ketola 2008: 275). Its extensive and very dedicated network of people teaching yoga in their spare time means that yoga classes are available all over the country and cost very little. At the Turku Adult Education Centre, you can get 50 hours of yoga for 50 Euros.

The newer style of yoga is represented by the commercial, internationally practised brands of yoga that started arriving in earnest in Finland in the 1990s. Unlike for example Great Britain and the United States, the Iyengar school of yoga (see e.g., De Michelis 2004) is not very influential here. Rather, the dominant position is held by K. Pattabhi Jois's Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga method, but most international styles of yoga can be found in Finland today. These schools are urban, often celebrate their Indian roots, cater mainly to young people, and are set up along commercial lines. This yoga is clearly a transnational cultural product (Strauss 2005: 9).

These two styles of yoga may well be viewed as forming two discrete worlds. However, preliminary findings indicate that many who practise one of the new brands of yoga had started out with the Yoga Federation. Considering the popularity and easy availability of these classes, this is not surprising, though it is noteworthy that there is not as much traffic in the other direction. Both sides have less than flattering views of each other: the urban youth calls the yoga of the Yoga Federation 'woollen socks-yoga' or 'grandmother yoga', while the Yoga Federation practitioners scoff at the soulless gymnastics of the young.

The Yoga Federation teaches almost twenty groups in Turku every week. In addition to this, Turku today has seven professional yoga studios, which for a Finnish city of 177,000 inhabitants is a fair number, in fact the second largest in the country. As is typical for Finland, two of these (of which one is by far the largest of all the commercial schools) are focused on the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga method of K. Pattabhi Jois (1915–2009).

Now, this is, as mentioned, a work in progress. I have so far interviewed most of the yoga teachers at the above-mentioned schools. I will, as I progress with this work also collect some quantitative information. However, at present, I am interested in what a professional commitment to postural yoga—or perhaps I should say semi-professional, since I have as of yet met nobody in Turku who lives solely on teaching yoga—means in terms of identity formation.

It has often been argued that both social and personal identities are becoming increasingly transitory and unstable in the present late modern society (e.g. Giddens 1991, Côté & Levine 2002, Taylor & Spencer 2004). This is, of course, connected with the ever-increasing plethora of choices the individual is faced with, but also with de-traditionalisation and secularisation, and an oft-perceived lack of institutionalised stages of adolescence and adulthood (Hunt 2007), a lack perhaps somewhat romantically or nostalgically contrasted with a contrasting situation in pre-modern societies. Does the postsecular perspective have anything to add to the scholarly debate on identity?

Identity has been discussed in widely differing ways and from the viewpoint of several academic disciplines. In this paper, I view identity as a continual process, rather than as something one attains (or fails to attain) and then tries to maintain, following for example Anthony Giddens (1991, 1994) and Albert Bandura (2002). Because of institutional destructuring in habits and customs and also because of a corresponding continual institutional restructuring and differentiation, it makes sense to view identity as a reflexive and, also, contextually varying project for one's whole lifespan. As argued by

Dan P. McAdams (1993, 1997), this identity formation process creates a story or narrative that explains or gives meaning to past actions. For an individual related to a reference group and embedded in a social structure, creating a personal narrative of his or her life creates coherence and makes it meaningful in a certain context. Such a creation of 'personal myths', as McAdams calls them, is an elementary part of identity formation by which individuals negotiate with themselves who they are and what is significant in their lives—as well as create possible paths for the future.

Sarah Strauss (2005: 57–9) argues that the practice of yoga is a quest for wellness—a combination of well-being and fitness—in order to reach an authentic Self, healthy in every sense of the word. Unlike the early modern Romantic self-development quest (*Bildungen*), she writes, such a quest is not for a youth to develop into a fully formed adult member of society, but rather a continual sense of self-making, with no end in sight. Through a careful, ongoing management of various aspects of quotidian life, the individual practitioner attains an authentic Self, that is, a Self in complete balance.

This goes well with my material, where this kind of an ongoing quest for balance comes up often (e.g., IF mgt 2011-046). While sometimes devoting up to six or seven hours a day to teaching and practising yoga, the teachers I have spoken to find time for many other interests as well, from golf to playing in bands. None seems interested in any kind of yoga purism. I have found no indications of a fear of non-yogic interests being counterproductive either to the practice of yoga or to the image of a yoga teacher—rather, excessive purism is frowned upon and the theme of balance is often raised. However, non-yogic practices are often interpreted in relation to yoga. I quote:

> Many books on golf mention yoga as a good thing to practice. There is so much in common between yoga and golf, such as the importance of posture, balance, breathing and flexibility of body. And even a kind of spiritual mindset—the further you go in golf, the more even small mental movements will affect your swing. So I believe that yoga would be very useful for all golfers. (IF mgt 2011-025.)

Now, how is this identity constructed and how can we analyse it within the conditions of the post-secular situation? Jürgen Habermas (according to Côte & Levine 2002: 49) views identity as being embedded in social experience, symbolic communication, and as a reflection of institutional processes. Yet it can potentially be under the agentic control of the individual, that is, if communicative and broader social conditions allow. This correlates with Albert

Bandura (2000: 78), who argues that, '[p]eople's success in shaping their social and economic lives lies partly in a shared sense of efficacy to bring their collective influence to bear on matters over which they can have some command.' The sense of collective agency can thus be seen as a guideline for social identity.

The social psychologists James E. Côte and Charles G. Levine (2002: 143–4) have suggested the term *identity capital* to describe the resources at an individual's disposal that contribute to what they call an internal point of reference. The acquisition of this identity capital is the product of an agentic personality, and it consists of either tangible (socially visible), or intangible effects (socially invisible qualities such as ego strengths, internal locus of control, self-esteem and a sense of purpose in life). Côté and Levine also point out the importance of analysing how skilful people are in constructing and completing strategies of actions that achieve certain ends (or identities) for them, that is to say, how they create their agency in different circumstances (Côté & Levine 2002: 123). The idea of an active change or transformation is integral in defining human agency, irrespective of which aspects of it are emphasised.

All of my interviewees viewed the study of what they call 'the philosophy of yoga' to be important to their ongoing yogic transformation. What this philosophy comprises of was very variously defined. Everyone dutifully reported having read or at least tried to read Patañjali's classic Sanskrit yoga text, the *Yoga Sutra*. More important were, however, modern texts, such as those of Ken Wilber (IF mgt 2010-033), Eckhart Tolle or Jon Kabat-Zinn (IF mgt 2011-025). But much more central than such study, which in several cases seemed to be more or less incidental, was the bodily practice itself. Sarah Strauss (2005: 10) articulates a viewpoint held by many of my informants when she calls yoga a form of embodied knowledge, which no amount of reading can impart. It is no coincidence that the most common question when two yogis meet, rather than 'How do you do?', is 'How has your practice been?' The practice, then, is much more than a means to some specific end: it is important identity capital in itself.

While the corporeal, quotidian nature of this practice is evident in the interviews—many speak of injuries, becoming bored or uninspired at times (e.g., IF mgt 2011-025), it is sacred at the same time, in the sense of transcending ordinary life, or as being of non-negotiable value (Anttonen 2000). My informants deemed this postural practice as increasing strength of body and mind (IF mgt 2011-024), giving new perspectives on life (IF mgt 2011-025), a sense of unity with all of creation (IF mgt 2010-033), as well as flexibility in dealing with all kinds of people (IF mgt 2011-046).

Another important theme is freedom. One informant felt that yoga gave her freedom from competitiveness, though not completely. I quote:

> I felt that within dance there was just so much competitiveness, it was so hard and visible. Everybody was always speaking about who is better or worse than someone else, who is more interesting or more artistic? I thought that I would lose this competitiveness completely in yoga, and in the beginning it really was like that. But now there are more schools, and while there is no direct competition between them, everyone has their own style, and to me it is a pity that there is no cooperation. Everyone just does their own thing. Perhaps they don't even know what the others are doing. They are not even interested. Whenever a new school opens, I like to visit it and see what the place looks like, who the teachers are, what kind of students they have and all. But nobody ever visits me. (IF mgt 2011-024.)

A different kind of freedom is illustrated in the following quote:

> By-and-by the practice makes you feel lighter, and you kind of identify yourself less with the physical body. That is one experience I have had. After practice, you kind of feel that you are very much free at that time, that you are not bound by your body or anything. You are completely liberated and you can sense that kind of energy around yourself. (IF mgt 2011-025.)

All of this represents Côte's and Levine's intangible identity capital, with the exception of strength and flexibility, which may also be understood to represent tangible identity capital in the creation of the image of a successful yoga teacher. In my interviews, success is also often implicitly linked with money, a constantly recurring theme. Some view taking money for teaching something as 'spiritual' as yoga as disagreeable, while others feel that unless they charge high enough prices, people will not appreciate what they offer, and neither would they be showing themselves that they appreciate their own work. At least so far, there are no clear correlations between the view on money and professional status, age or type of yoga taught. But regardless of opinion, everyone is aware of the prices that competing schools charge and everyone has thought about this question. While yoga today, as many scholars have pointed out, functions along the standard principles of a consumer society, there thus seems to be some uneasiness about this among yoga teachers.

Now, is there anything that could be called post-secular within the practices that I am studying?

Many secularisation theories have been heavily bound up with the idea of a privatisation of religion (see Weber 1930 for the classic thesis). This privatisation of religion correlates well with what could be called the privatisation of identity. According to the sociologists Harold J. Babbitt and Charles E. Burbach (1990), the Twenty Statements Test (TST) developed by the sociologists of the Iowa School in the 1950s and often used in studies since then, shows that among North American college students personal identity (defined in terms of styles of self-presentation) seems to be increasing in importance, and social identities (understood as socially recognised roles) appear to be increasingly less important. Some 80–90 per cent of college students in the 1990s appear to favour personal identities, compared to about 30 per cent in the 1950s.

However, many scholars subscribing to the notion of a post-secular society have critiqued the idea of a privatisation of religion and found evidence to the contrary. Instead of discussing the decline of religion and the loss of its meaning in a society, there is a move towards resacralisation or revitalisation of religion, ora re-enchantment (e.g. Habermas 2006, Taylor 2007, Partridge 2005, Besecke 2007). It may be that the turn from social identities to personal identities will likewise have to come under scrutiny, especially considering the blurring of the boundaries between the social and the personal (or public and private) that the new media has brought with it. The same goes for the distinction between religious/spiritual and secular identities. The issue of religious/spiritual identity is very sensitive to context and thus, also, to research methods. It is possible to profess a religious/spiritual identity in one context and deny or compromise it in another.

Rather than such strict categories, it may be more germane to see identity as a 'variable indexicality', to use Gavin Flood's (2006) apposite phrase, meaning that the content of the 'I' is filled out in different ways in different contexts. By this I do not intend to subscribe to what has often been called a 'post-modern' understanding of identity (Côté & Levine 2002: 40–4), where there is no stable content, but I rather wish to emphasise a general fluidity and elasticity of identity around some internal points of reference.

While primarily identifying themselves as yoga practitioners, my interviewees are comfortable with using many other identities as well. They seem to have little zeal for proselytising yoga among their non-yogic friends, though one person said that the physical shape of some of her friends sometimes tempts her to do so (IF mgt 2010-024). Yoga practitioners make up the ma-

jority of the social network outside of work for only one of my interviewees, and even he claimed that to be coincidental. None reported their interest and profession having been criticised or questioned by friends or relatives, showing the degree of public acceptance of yoga in today's Finland.

Also, sometimes contemporary religious or spiritual well-being practices are regarded as providing mere resources to be used by the individual seeker and agent, understood as the main or even sole authority over his or her own spiritual life (e.g. Heelas & Woodhead 2005). However, the question may not be quite as simple as this. Matthew Wood (2008) argues on the basis of his ethnographical researches within various New Age settings that individual seekers may instead have many authorities, and that together this plurality of authorities undermines one single and determining religious authority. Thus the contemporary field of religiosities/spiritualities and well-being practices, does not necessarily imply a categorical change from outer to inner authority. Rather, it indicates that the whole question of authority becomes increasingly complex. Therefore, one characteristic of post-secular culture would be that this set of multiple authorities may consist of very different yet somehow interacting sources: traditionally understood as religious sources as well as scientific texts, personal inner voices, and so on.

This is well borne out in my material. While some of my informants do speak of themselves being their most important teachers (IF mgt 2011-024), others refer to named authorities without hesitation (IF mgt 2010-033). And importantly, even the ones who have no teachers feel they would like to have one. I quote:

> – Who would you say is your most important teacher right now?
> – Hmm, I would have to reply myself, really. I have always felt like that. Or maybe I have missed a little having someone to turn to if I had any questions. And I have looked for such a person, but I haven't found my guru or important person yet. I feel like there is nobody here in Turku, or, well, everyone has something to give, but I haven't found anyone here in Turku, and that's a pity. . . .I guess that is why I have actively tried to participate in courses all over the world. And being an air stewardess comes in handy here—when we fly somewhere far away and everyone else goes out shopping, I go for yoga! (IF mgt 2011-024.)

Further, while not formally belonging to any particular school of yoga, this person claims to teach the Ashtanga Vinyasa method in its 'pure form', and mentioned the writings of both national and international teachers of this

school as important guidebooks for her teaching. On the other hand, the leader of the local Ashtanga Yoga school, mentioned the famous Indian female guru Mata Amritanandamayi as his most important source of spiritual inspiration and called himself an 'Ashtanga heretic' (IF mgt 2010-033). Much remains to be done here, but it is obvious that the question of authority is a complex one.

To sum up. While much work remains to be done, preliminary findings indicate that while yoga teachers in Turku, Finland view the study of both classic and modern texts of yoga as important in the creation of their own yogic identity, it is in their own sacred but very down-to-earth physical practice that their personal agency finds its main locus, and through which they create both tangible and intangible identity capital. An ongoing progress towards all-round wellness, defined as strength, mental and physical flexibility as well as freedom from various constraints seems to be at the centre of this identity capital, but a balanced, successful life comprising various social relationships is important as well. The yogic identity may be understood as my informants' internal point of reference, but it does not rule out various other identities, fluidly entered into in appropriate contexts.

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ABBY DAY

Non-religious Christians

Scholars who recently rejected secularisation theses on the grounds that they were insufficiently defined or contextualised now seem to be accepting with unseemly, uncritical haste, the new, in vogue notion of the post-secular. Scholars seem tempted to drop the term 'post-secular' into their papers and presentations as if it is a generally accepted and understood term. It is not and nor, as this paper will argue, is it plausible unless applied to a limited and specific range of phenomena.

What was pre post secular?

Post-, in the English language, is a prefix. Attached to a noun, it changes the meaning of the original word to convey a change in nature through time. A graduate becomes a post-graduate after graduating. A post-script (PS) is what we add to a letter or other text, which is in addition to the previous meaning or information. People attach 'post' to 'modern' to create 'post-modern' and therefore to suggest this is a new and different period. Post is a term of temporality, but it refers to more than simply a 'later' time. It is used to convey a different time from that which went before. We would not, for example, say that January is 'post-Christmas', albeit that it may be after Christmas, unless we are specifically linking the month to Christmas itself, as in saying 'January is a time of post-Christmas sales'.

The term is therefore loaded with value and inference. Assuming 'we' are now in a 'post' era assumes a linear time frame. If this is post, then there had to be a pre. And yet, how are we to account for the fact that according to much scholarly debate, before the post-secular we did not have the secular? I recall David Martin's (1978) fine critique of secularisation theory where he, rightly, demonstrated that secularisation may or may not occur in different countries at different times, depending on their particular histories, sets of practices and legitimations.

Therefore, by definition, to invoke the post-secular is to make an explicit, two-fold statement that 1) there was once a secular and 2) it is no more. What

are we to make of the first statement? Do we now need to accept wholly the theories of people like Steve Bruce (2011) and Detlef Pollak (2008), for example, and dispense with Anders Bäckström *et al.* (2004), Grace Davie (1994) and R. Stephen Warner (1993)? Are we implicitly saying Martin was wrong, and there was, after all, a common period of something called the secular? That would require a complete revisionist account of most of the sociology of religion's theories and tropes spanning the past 40 years or so.

Ideas like secular and post secular are often treated in the same way as 'belief'. Research interventions which assume that belief (and its sub-sets of 'religion' and 'secularity') is a common phenomenon have been insufficiently interrogated: 'belief' as assent to metaphysical propositions is not a universal human phenomenon, but a concept largely deriving from Christian-centric assumptions with limited applicability (Asad 1993, Robbins 2007). Divergent disciplinary approaches can be traced here to effect an inter-disciplinary understanding of how scholars in the field of a social scientific study of religion frame their discussions about belief. A 'genealogy of belief' is proposed, tracing epistemological and methodological approaches over the last two centuries in, primarily, anthropology and sociology (Day 2010).

Presenting empirical evidence from long-term fieldwork in the UK, and suggesting wider Euro-American comparisons, my work centres on a particular practice whereby informants produce a distinct form of Christianity they describe as non-religious, although they never use the word 'secular'. Multi-dimensional, holistic analysis of that phenomenon resulted in a 'performative' understanding of belief and social identity arising from and shaped by social relations. Performing Christian belief and identity is a social action that positions and engages people in their social worlds in specific ways. What is proposed here as 'non-religious Christianity' serves as an analytical tool to explore the particularities likely to produce, under certain conditions, dispositions that are often termed 'religious' or 'secular'.

Secular, non-religious Christians

What we saw in the UK in 2001, and will probably see again in 2012 when results of the 2011 census are published, is that when pushed to make a choice on the decennial census, more than 70 per cent of the population self-identifies as Christian. What they may believe, however, is more complex. Less than eight per cent of the population currently attends church regularly, or participates in obligatory 'Holy Day' rituals; it is obvious that a sizeable propor-

tion of the census Christians assume God won't make good on his promise to punish those who disobey him. Fortunately for them, no Inquisitor will come knocking at their door demanding they declare an article of faith. Indeed, the disjunction between low Christian participation and high census self-identification was brushed over by church leaders who welcomed the census results as evidence of high levels of Christian identity, belief and spirituality. No matter that questions did not attend to either belief or spirituality: as Talal Asad (1993) discussed, approved legitimate forms of being Christian are historically situated and approved by the powerful. Current forms of legitimate belief may be more privatised, less 'creedal', more open to personal variation and even disaggregated from overt allegiance to God or Jesus.

Nevertheless, the question remains: why would people without faith in God, Jesus or Christian doctrine self-identify as 'Christian' in certain social contexts? That phenomenon, often referred to as 'nominalism', is arguably the largest form of Christianity today and the least understood. The term 'nominalism' derives from the Latin word *nominalis*—'of or pertaining to names'—and in philosophy refers to a doctrine that abstractions, or universals, have no essential or substantive reality. Bill Bright, founder and President of Campus Crusade for Christ, describes nominalism both using the Latin-derived definition and a more Christian-centric version, writing:

> "Christian" nominalists make up one of the largest mission fields in the world and quite possibly the largest in the United States. . . .a Christian nominalist is one who claims the name Christian, but who has no authentic, personal, sin-forgiving and life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. His allegiance to Jesus is in name, not heart (http://www.greatcom. org/resources/tell_it_often_tell_it_well/chap10/default.htm).

These nominalist Christians are the focus for many evangelising Christians worldwide.

Social scientists, however, are not interested in the theological discussion, but the sociological one. What are the sociological implications of a sizeable portion of the population declaring themselves Christian when asked—and usually only when asked? This has important political implications as census data informs political and resource decisions affecting a range of issues, such as health, welfare, and education. In turn, headline-grabbing results shape discourse, particularly about the 'identity' of the UK. The overwhelming 'Christian' response to the census question can be read partly as a political act, best understood as performative Christianity. Performative nominalism

brings into being a Christian identity through the process of self-identification in the absence of Christian beliefs or participation in regular Christian rituals (Day 2011).

And yet, this has an impact on wider public discourse. People are increasingly concerned about religious identities. Media reports on religion appear almost daily, sometimes focusing on issues such as whether gay people should be allowed to be priests or whether abortion and stem cell research should be banned. Other issues debate links between religion, ethnic identities and violence and whether modernity and religion are incompatible. This debate demonstrates that discussion of secularisation and religion reaches to the heart of Western understandings of who we are.

The most recent national data we have on religious affiliation is the 2001 census, where 71.6 per cent of respondents identified themselves as Christian; the largest single non-Christian religious group was Muslims at three per cent. And yet, if we look more closely, we find curious anomalies: less than eight per cent of the population is in church on an average Sunday, and the number is decreasing each year. All other forms of participation in traditional Christian rites—from baptisms to confirmations, weddings and funerals—are decreasing. Most scholars in the sociology of religion explain this as 'believing without belonging', arguing that religion—at least Christianity—is simply changing and retreating from the public sphere, rather than disappearing (Davie 1994, Heelas & Woodhead 2005). Some scholars disagree and say that both practice and belief are declining and the UK and Europe is becoming secular (see Bruce 2011 for an excellent summary).

My challenge in my research was to answer the question 'what do people believe in nowadays?' Such an open question demanded an open research method, an inductive, qualitative approach where subjective meanings could be derived from the field, rather than imposed at the outset through a questionnaire. For example, when asking if someone believed in God, it may not be apparent from a survey what people may mean by belief or by 'God'. The approach characterising my research is 'symbolic interactionism': people create meanings in their lives through interacting with other people and reflecting on those interactions. That open research method led me to discovering more about what and how people believe and how that understanding can contribute to theories about religion, secularisation, social change, ideology and practice, particularly through analysis along structural lines of age, class, ethnicity and gender.

Research design

During long-term fieldwork in northern England (2003–5 and 2009–11), I conducted qualitative research with more than 200 people aged between 14 and 83, evenly split by gender and cutting across socio-economic groups. Two characteristics of my research design are somewhat unusual in my field. Firstly, I used a snowballing method where I chose certain people as 'gatekeepers' and relied on them to introduce me to others. I presented the research issue as sociological rather than specifically religious, to avoid self-selection on the basis of their interest in matters religious or spiritual. Secondly, I did not ask religious questions, apart from the final question when I asked them how they had answered the religious question on the census (or, would answer in the case of under 18s). My questions, asked in semi-structured interviews, were designed to probe what they believed in: about their moral beliefs, what was important to them, how life began, how it might end, what, if anything, life means to them, what frightened or delighted them and where those emotions and beliefs came from.

As my research question was partly motivated by why British people identified as Christian, the data would necessarily be gathered from Britain. Also, as I was intrigued by what people believed relative to their apparent Christian census identification, I would not deliberately situate the study in a location which had an unusually high proportion of people from other faiths. A potential disadvantage of any geographic focus would be its possible parochial nature. I was aware that a small-scale geographic focus could reflect an unusual bias towards certain ethnic groups or social classes. I therefore used census data to confirm that the population of the Yorkshire region I studied generally conformed to national averages, particularly related to age, gender, ethnicity and social class.

I began without knowing what I would find. My opening, audacious question was 'what do you believe in'? leaving the interpretation of belief open. When respondents asked me, as they usually did, what I meant by belief, I said, truthfully, I didn't know. This helped the interview proceed, I felt, on a more even footing and allowed them to talk about what was important to them. I then transcribed each interview verbatim and made notes on emerging themes, which I discussed with my supervisors, internal advisors, and colleagues at conferences. Using the same indirect methods in the follow-up study, I conducted semi-structured 'belief' interviews, focusing on what they believe now and how their beliefs may have changed relative to their earlier narratives. The way people described beliefs was not typically through coher-

ent, cognitively based belief statements, but stories with real characters, plots, and emotional content: what I termed 'holistic belief narratives.' Like Byron J. Good (1994) in his exploration of narratives of illness, I was to learn that rich examples, emplotment, characters, and multiple viewpoints are characteristic of such narratives. People did not typically articulate their beliefs in grammatically grand language or in flat, rehearsed, creedal monotones; their belief narratives were polyvocal, enlivened with the stories and voices of other people, alive or dead, who meant something to them in whom they 'believe'.

Following the initial re-interview phase, I created in-depth case studies with several individuals and their wider social networks. People were selected through inductive analysis, considering such significant criteria as age, gender, social class and whether they had moved from the original location. The aim was see how beliefs are shaped, resourced, performed and 'embodied'.

During the follow-up phase (2009–11) I lived in the same village of many of my participants, and bordered others, and conducted what I have categorised as 54 fieldwork data collection events, of which 22 were formal interviews recorded and transcribed, 32 were visits to people's homes, social events, places of worship, schools, significant sites (market, shops, cafes, taxi ranks) prompted by informants' insights and often accompanied by them.

Findings

Some found my opening question, 'what do you believe in?' startling because they assumed I had a set answer and often assumed I meant belief in religious terms. How they answered it revealed a lot about the ambiguity of terms like belief and religion and Christianity. I needed to coax people, almost as if I were giving them permission, to talk about beliefs which were not to do with religion.

Believing in belonging. Most people I interviewed believed in 'treating people right' and thought those beliefs derived from their childhood, by how they were shown, particularly by mothers, what was right and wrong. They thought they were reinforced by life experience. People mostly said they were happiest when they were with people whom they loved, and most frightened when they contemplated not their death, but the death of someone they loved. It was that insight and similar examples from my research that led me to my thesis: people have relationship-centred and relationship-guided belief systems, informed by experiences and the emotions they (re)produce. They 'believe in belonging'. Their sense of belonging, however, is quite specific: most

people in the post-18 age group I interviewed believe in belonging to people like themselves. Religion for them serves as a marker to help identify some people as 'us' and others as 'them'. The 'others' roughly fall into one of three categories with occasional overlap.

Ethnic others. While often prefacing their remarks by saying that they were not 'racist', many informants volunteered comments about what they saw as the threat of other 'races' and religions in the UK (see, e.g., Mason 1995 for discussion of 'race').

Young others. Older people frequently talked about young people as disrespectful, rude and dangerous (to older people).

Bad mothers. Both women and men denigrated women whom they saw as rejecting traditional roles of motherhood.

I did not find the same 'othering' tendency amongst young people I interviewed, aged between 14 and 18. They tended to cite racism as immoral and spoke with love and respect for their families (particularly their mothers) and friends. Their view of family, however, fluctuated amongst the age group and sometimes within the same interview. Members of their 'family' were those with whom they had a loving, reciprocal relationship. In contrast to the older generation I interviewed, they did not criticise their lone mothers but often railed against their absent fathers, putting a different complexion on the consequences of family restructuring.

Christian nominalism: them and us

But what about believing in Christianity, as nearly three-quarters of census respondents apparently did? In my interviews I heard people tell me many stories, happy and sad, about their triumphs and their losses, what made them laugh and cry, what gave meaning to their lives. Few people mentioned God, Jesus, religion, the church, or spirituality during our interviews. When I asked people how they'd answered the census question, 'what is your religion?' I offered the choices that had appeared on the England and Wales census—None; Christian; Buddhist; Hindu; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; any other religion, or an option not to answer the question. Thirty-seven of my 68 informants, including those who weren't even sure God existed, said 'Christian'. So why did they say that?

Of those Christians, I identified 18 as 'adherent Christians'. They professed their faith in our interviews; believed in God; attended church (and even if they didn't attend church regularly they wanted to); believed in Jesus as divine

and believed that they will go to heaven when they die. The other 19 who said they ticked Christian did so for what I have identified as three main reasons: natal, ethnic and aspirational. Natal Christians said they were Christian because they were baptised, relating their identity as Christian to their family and place of birth. Ethnic Christians described their Christianity in terms of Englishness, seeing Christianity as a way of affiliating to an ethnic group and a way to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups. Aspirational Christians talked about Christianity in terms of being good, or being respectable.

And what of the others, those who didn't tick Christian? There were a few of other religions, in line with national census data where non-Christian religions comprise about six per cent than of the total. The largest second group in my study was people who said 'none'. For them, power, agency and authority were located in the human and secular, with some exceptions: predominantly women who had been disappointed by husbands or lovers. They said they believed it was better to 'go with the flow' and wait for a benign higher power to determine their fate. I also found a fatalistic pessimism amongst some young men.

Varieties of the religious and secular

It is therefore unlikely we are seeing a simple turn to the post, the secular or even back to the religious. What occurs on the ground is far more complex, but what is happening with young people may provide the best indication of the future. While it seems apparent that most young people today are generally less religious than their parents, some people argue that young people today are purposeless, inarticulate individuals without clear beliefs, drifting through an amoral landscape, unsure of where or to whom to turn, particularly in times of change or stress (Smith & Denton 2005, Mason *et al.* 2007). Others argue that young people's relationships give them a sense of belonging that they believe in, that sustains them over time (Day 2009) and that they search, if not for religious truths, then at least for a sense of meaning and authenticity (Lynch 2002).

So, who's right? What do young people believe in and how do they perform those beliefs? Are they really incoherent, or are researchers just asking the wrong questions? Is this the new generation of secularist non-believers? Funded by the UK's AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society programme, an international network of researchers from universities across Europe and the

USA decided to take a different approach to understanding young people and belief. Led by Professor Gordon Lynch (University of Kent), and me, the network met twice and held a 'virtual conference' to discuss specific ideas and their own research projects involving young people. The central aim was to examine whether conceiving of belief and spirituality in different ways as, for example, 'cultural performance', might help us understand and analyse the presence or absence of religion in the life-worlds of young people.

Our findings were drawn from such diverse projects as, for example, Christian Punk rockers in England, Eco-Warriors in the United States, young Muslims and Sikhs in the UK, secular young people in Russia, and young Catholics in Poland.

There is no universal phenomenon called 'belief', shared across time and cultures. We agreed with scholars like Asad (1993), who have argued that religious beliefs are created and promoted in certain times and places, often to meet the objectives of religious leaders. We should therefore consider more critically research methods that assume 'belief' to be a common phenomenon amongst all research participants. This also raises critical questions about how notions of belief as a universal phenomenon circulate in non-academic contexts such as Religious Education in schools or the definition of 'religion' in the legal system.

While belief needs to be personally meaningful, young people are not individualistic. One of the most common, and striking, findings across the wide range of contexts studied was that young people typically found it important to conceive of their beliefs as authentic, personally meaningful and freely chosen. One of the statements receiving the highest levels of assent (93 %) in a survey on religion, belief and young people in Sweden presented at the workshop, was that beliefs should be meaningful and of one's own choice. And yet, belief comes from and is practised in a variety of relationships. An important relational context for the formation of young people's beliefs is their relationship with parents. It should not be assumed that young people's beliefs are formed in opposition to those of their parents, and parental beliefs (or indeed indifference to religious belief) are more likely to shape those of their children. Belief is also practised through relations with sacred figures, as well as natural spaces and animals, and people not usually associated with young people's spirituality—volunteer 'street pastors', for example, discussing young people's beliefs and problems at 2 a.m. outside a club. Beliefs are not always statements about truths, but lived and often performed realities. For example, researcher Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, Bristol University, interviewed sixty youths, age 18 to 25, in the Brixton and Whitechapel areas of London

who were involved in hip hop. Hip hop is a global cultural phenomenon that includes rap music, dance, graffiti art and fashion, as well as particular racial identities and ways of being. Some of these young people enjoy writing and performing their own hip hop raps. DeHanas was surprised to find that (even though he had made no mention of religion) most of the raps young people shared made some reference to God or to religious beliefs. Important to hip hop is 'keepin' it real', or being authentic and skilled in representing real-life experiences. For some young people, the rap expresses how he is 'real' with his listeners about the dangers of street life and also about the hope that can be found in God. Belief is therefore often inseparable from practice.

Emotion is also an important component of belief. It can at times be constructed as a sign that one is believing in the 'right way'. One young Christian, for example, was quoted as saying 'I know that I am properly committed in my relationship with God because I am happy.' Researcher Amy Wilkins examined identities among evangelical college students in the northeastern United States. The students in her project were members of a Protestant parachurch organisation she called University Unity. Wilkins found that for the evangelical students in her project, feelings were the most important marker of authentic Christianity. Participants believed that they were truly Christians when they experienced good feelings: happiness, peace, joy, and so on. Participants learned how to be happy through group emotion practices that encouraged introspection (journal writing, studying the Bible, prayer, etc.) and that taught participants to transform bad feelings into good feelings.

Sometimes, beliefs need to be expressed in hyper-rational ways, while also being relational. In her study of British contemporary conservative evangelicals, Anna Strahn, University of Kent, noticed that young people were encouraged to adopt a disciplined and academic approach to belief, studying the Bible and sermons in a logical, rational way. They distinguish between themselves, the disciplined true 'believers' and other more emotional or experiential 'unbelievers'. And yet, there were some forms of emotional relationships that were encouraged: those with God and those with fellow family members and friends who attended their church.

Belief can be an important marker of identity. In a project exploring the transmission of Sikhism among young British Sikhs, Leeds University researcher Jasjit Singh found that young Sikhs used belief as an important marker of identity. For example, one young Sikh felt that 'for someone to understand me, they would have to be aware of my religious beliefs', as 'an explanation of our key beliefs will help people understand why I may have certain opinions, or not eat certain foods' (see also Singh 2010). It is conse-

quently becoming more important for many young Sikhs to learn about their beliefs, 'so that we know where we came from and what we believe in'. This may help explain the evolution of the large number of events now being run across the UK which aim to teach young Sikhs about Sikhism.

The network found that understanding different contexts of belief and the different ways people experience, understand and perform belief demands flexibility and innovation from researchers. Different methods need to be considered, whether survey, interviews, observation or a mix. Some young people who adopt a truth or fact-based approach to belief are more likely to state these beliefs in ways that can be captured by surveys or structured interviews. Young people who do not hold beliefs in those forms are more likely to state their beliefs by illustrating them with examples or stories about what they think it means to live a good life. Researchers need to be able to adapt their methods accordingly. Assuming that young people are inarticulate or incoherent may say more about the researcher than the researched.

Conclusion

Although many people in my research stated that they were non-religious, and also Christian, I explored the ways in which such a self-applied label took on complex and diffuse ideological forms. My work therefore contradicts 'privatisation' theses which dominate the sociology of religion. I found that far from disappearing, religion is often used publicly as a marker of group identity. This is not a return to religion, or a resurgence in spirituality, but a fluctuating form of contextualised religious identity.

Christian nominalists may not believe in God or Jesus, at least if belief is understood as 'faith'. It would be incorrect, however, to dismiss them as 'unbelievers', or their nominalist beliefs as not having essential or substantive reality. They believe in many things, usually related to 'belonging'. By closely examining people's sense of Christian 'belonging', we find other more subtle, interwoven 'belongings' related to, for example, history, nation, morality, gender, and 'culture'.

A major methodological finding was that existing sociological and anthropological methods required development to allow data to be gathered and analysed holistically, to understand what belief means to different people in different places at different times. The five-part model developed during my initial work focused not just on the content of belief (usually dealt with by sociologists by asking short questions such as 'do you believe in God'), but be-

lief's *resources, practices, salience* and *functions*. To study belief longitudinally, new elements of *place* and *time* were incorporated.

This holistic, organic, multi-dimensional framework developed the research beyond standard sociological techniques to an enhanced anthropological approach introducing my performative, dynamic model of belief. A process I termed 'performative belief' refers to a neo-Durkheimian construct, where belief is a lived, embodied performance, brought into being through action. Within a social context are social relationships: performative belief plays out through the relationships in which people have faith and to which they feel they belong. Belief in social relationships is performed through social actions of both belonging and excluding.

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LISELOTTE FRISK

The practice of mindfulness

From Buddhism to secular mainstream in a post-secular society

Introduction

This paper will focus on the practice of mindfulness, which has migrated from being part of a religion, Buddhism, to being an integral part of Western psychology. Mindfulness is especially used in cognitive behavioural therapy (Plank 2011: 200), but also in, for example, dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT)[1] and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)[2]. In Sweden several doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists use and recommend mindfulness for therapeutic purposes, and some, like Åsa Nilsonne, Ola Schenström and Anna Kåver, have written well-known books about the practice (see, e.g., Nilsonne 2009 and 2011, Schenström 2007, Kåver 2011). Mindfulness is used today in many segments of mainstream medical and therapeutic care.

Mindfulness is also used outside the mainstream medical and therapeutic sector, in the area of personal development or spirituality, as well as in more traditional Buddhist groups and innovative Buddhist groups such as *vipassana* groups. One example is the group formed by S. N. Goenka.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the migration of mindfulness from a religious to a secular sphere, and to discuss whether mindfulness is a religious practice or not. I will also discuss whether 'religious' is a meaningful term in our contemporary society, and what the term 'post-secular' might mean. My main sources have been a PhD dissertation in the history of religion at Lund University by Katarina Plank (2011) as well as books written by

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1   This therapy was developed by Marsha Linehan, originally intended to help people with borderline personality disorders, but has also been used for other kinds of problems (Plank 2011: 201).
2   ACT is developed by Steven Hayes, and the strategy here is to observe and accept the emotions (Plank 2011: 202).

some of the medical doctors and psychiatrists who initiated the practice of mindfulness in the US and in Sweden.

The paper is structured so that I will first give a summary of the book *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990) by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the publication of which started the wave of using mindfulness for therapeutic purposes, and then I will relate some of the scientific studies conducted on the practice as presented in the popular books about mindfulness. After that I will discuss the historical background of mindfulness in Buddhism, and cultural and structural factors which may have been important for the rapid adoption of mindfulness into Western therapy. Finally I will discuss if and in what sense mindfulness could and should be related to Buddhism, religion and post-secularity.

Jon Kabat-Zinn and mindfulness in a therapeutic context

Jon Kabat-Zinn, a medical professor who wrote his PhD in molecular biology, published his popular book *Full Catastrophe Living* in 1990. Jon Kabat-Zinn had a background in different Buddhist environments, having attended courses by Western *vipassana* teachers such as Jack Goldstein and Joseph Kornfield, but also by the Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn, as well as by different Tibetan Buddhist teachers. From this experience, he attempted to isolate a technique, mindfulness, from its Buddhist context (Plank 2011: 200–3). His own standpoint was that the technique derived from Buddhism, but was not part of Buddhism: the essence is universal, independent of any belief system or ideology and therefore accessible to anyone. Yet, he writes, it is no coincidence that mindfulness derives from Buddhism, as Buddhism has an overriding concern for the relief of suffering and the dispelling of illusions (Kabat-Zinn 2009: 12–13). At the University of Massachusetts Kabat-Zinn developed a programme to treat chronic pain and stress related diseases called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, MBSR. It consists of different mindfulness and relaxation practices, as well as practices for cultivating a mindful attitude in daily life. It contains a programme of 8–10 weeks, where the participants meet once a week and receive instructions and practices, together with discussions about stress and coping strategies. The participants are expected to practice at home (Plank 2011: 200–1). Patients referred to this clinic may suffer from, for example, heart disease, cancer, lung disease, hypertension, headaches, chronic pain problems, sleep disorders, panic attacks, stress-related digestive problems and skin problems (Kabat-Zinn 2009: 7). Kabat-Zinn identifies his stress reduction programme as part of a new

branch of medicine known as behavioural medicine, which is based on the conviction that mental and emotional factors may have a significant effect on physical health and the capacity to recover from illness and injury (p. 1).

The book *Full Catastrophe Living* is divided into five parts. The first part describes the techniques of mindfulness used in the stress reduction programme and relates some experiences by people who have followed it. The techniques encompass sitting meditation, the practice of non-doing and presence; attention on the breath; the famous 'raisin experience', which involves eating a raisin with full attention; the body scan technique, which is a relaxation technique aimed at 'being in your body'; yoga postures; walking meditation, and attentiveness in daily life. The second part presents research findings as a background for understanding how the practice of mindfulness could be related to physical and mental health, and also presents a holistic way, or a way of 'interconnectedness', of conceiving the human being and life as a whole. In this section the loving kindness meditation—with roots in traditional Buddhism—is also presented. One chapter presents evidence suggesting that beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and emotions can both harm and heal the human being. The third part discusses stress—which is said to be the popular name for the 'full catastrophe'—and the fourth part suggests how to utilise mindfulness in specific areas; for example what to do with physical and emotional pain, as well as with fear, anxiety and sleep problems. The fifth part gives practical suggestions for maintaining and using mindfulness in all aspects of life. It is emphasised that it is important to find time for formal practice every day, but that also the informal ways of practising are important (Kabat-Zinn 2009).

What is mindfulness according to therapeutic sources?

Plank refers to Christopher Germer (2005) in identifying three key concepts in therapeutic mindfulness: 1) awareness, 2) of the present experience, 3) with acceptance (Plank 2011: 204). Kabat-Zinn emphasises paying attention to the present moment, including the full spectrum of our experiences, the good, the bad and the ugly, to be at home in one's own skin (2009: xxviii–xxix). Different kinds of stress—or pain—cannot be avoided: they have to be faced. Escape and avoidance is not a way to solution (pp. 2–3). The full catastrophe of life—the enormity of our life experience—should, according to Kabat-Zinn, be embraced, not resisted. Everything in life is temporary and constantly changing (p. 6). There is a way to learn to allow oneself to be in the moment with things exactly as they are, without trying to change anything (p. 20). Kabat-Zinn emphasises the importance of the non-judging attitude,

to be an impartial witness to the experience. You have to become aware of the constant stream of judging thoughts and reactions to inner and outer experiences that we are normally caught up in, and learn to step back from it (p. 33). Acceptance means seeing things as they actually are in the present moment. If you have a headache—accept it (p. 38). We should also learn to let go of thoughts and feelings that the mind seems to want to hold on to (p. 39). Kabat-Zinn emphasises the importance of practising every day (p. 141)—which differs from many other therapeutic contexts, where mindfulness may be practised only occasionally.

The Swedish psychiatrist Åsa Nilsonne is quite similar to Kabat-Zinn in her writings—with different chapters in one of her books dealing with, for example, thoughts, emotions, body, sleep, and people—and emphasises the effect of mindfulness in increasing the quality of life, both for people trying to make an ordinary life work, and for people with psychiatric problems (Nilsonne 2011: 10–13). Nilsonne sums up the definition of therapeutic mindfulness as an awareness of the present moment (p. 14), with four corner stones; observation, description, non-judgement, and participation (p. 22).

Mindfulness as an evidence-based practice

There have been a lot of studies on mindfulness, and there is a lot of evidence that there are effects of the practice on many different kinds of problems. This means that the practice of mindfulness has been legitimated by one of the strongest institutions for legitimation in Western society: science.

I will give a few examples of some of the studies, as they are presented in the popular books about mindfulness. The Swedish doctor Ola Schenström refers, for example, to studies of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR course, which show a significant reduction of symptoms such as pain and sleep problems. The physical symptoms decreased, according to the studies Schenström refers to, by on average 30–35 percent, and mental symptoms like anxiety and depression by 40–50 percent. Most of the patients declared improved life quality after the course. Schenström also refers to studies showing a lot of positive results from the MBSR course, including lower blood pressure, stress reduction, less pain and fewer mental symptoms from chronic pain, the improvement of chronic headaches, less pain and depression related to fibromyalgia, less anxiety and improved sleep for cancer patients, less inflammation and fewer mental symptoms for patients with rheumatic diseases, less stress and fewer symptoms for patients with multiple sclerosis, and fewer problems for patients with irritatable bowels (Schenström 2007: 71–2). Schenström also refers to other studies where DBT—in which mindfulness is an integral part—has been suc-

cessful in treating young patients with borderline personality disorders and a self destructive behaviour, as well as studies showing that a combination of cognitive therapy and mindfulness has reduced relapses into depression to half in treated patients who have had three or more depressions (2007: 73–4). Nilsonne also refers to several studies on mindfulness in different areas, some of them apparently the same as the ones Schenström refers to (2009: 88–9).

There are also a lot of recent popular books on how to use mindfulness for different kinds of problems. Examples are the use of mindfulness in treating Asperger's syndrome (Mitchell 2009), use of mindfulness in depression (Williams 2008), mindfulness in teaching (Terjestam 2010), or how to give birth with mindfulness (Engström 2010).

Mindfulness—the historic Buddhist background

The origin of mindfulness in Buddhism

Mindfulness is the English translation of the Pali concept *sati,* which is the language of the early Buddhist scriptures. *Sati* is also the seventh limb in the eightfold path, translated as 'right mindfulness'. Plank writes that *sati* is a complex and central concept in the Theravada meditation practice, which encompasses several different aspects and therefore is very difficult to translate. *Sati* is referred to, allegedly, by the Buddha in *Satipatthana Sutta* and *Mahasatipatthana Sutta,* and is there claimed to be the only way of achieving the supreme goal, *nibbana.* Plank writes that the meditation process intends to develop a realisation of the fundamental conditions of existence, and that therefore the term *vipassana* (insight, realisation) is sometimes used when *satipatthana* (foundation of mindfulness) is referred to (Plank 2011: 188–90). According to Plank, the Theravada scripture *Visuddhimagga* differs between two main kinds of meditative orientations: concentration (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*) (2011: 39). The purpose of *vipassana* is to provide realisation, or insight into the fundamental conditions of existence, an experience-based understanding of how existence is in continuous change (*anicca*), how this instability has no permanence (*anatta*) and how this results in dissatisfaction (*dukkha*). The purpose of the meditation is to transcend the self conception by seeing through its illusory solidity. It is used in both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism (Plank 2011: 42). According to Plank, *vipassana* meditation is based on interpretations of *Satipatthana Sutta,* and *vipassana* is synonymous with *satipatthana* (2011: 38).

Plank describes and discusses *sati* as a much more complex process than being 'just mindfulness' as in the contemporary therapeutic understanding, and claims that this is a simplification on several levels. In the Buddhist context *sati* is an important aspect of developing *bodhi* (awakening) and the final liberation (*nibbana*). Different frames of mind should, in traditional Buddhism, according to Plank not only be accepted—as in therapeutic mindfulness—but also seen and understood, and be replaced with more constructive ones. *Sati* in traditional Buddhism also has an important ethical dimension (Plank 2011: 188–98).

Modern Buddhism and Western Buddhism

Vipassana is the form of meditation which has spread most outside the Theravadan countries, and which has also been subjected to change by Western meditation teachers. One example is the movement started by S. N. Goenka, who started to teach *vipassana* in India at the end of the 1960s (Plank 2011: 110).

Buddhism had, however, been subject to change and modernisation in the traditionally Buddhist countries before that. The renewal of *vipassana* came from Burma, where it became a mass movement for laymen during the twentieth century, following Buddhist reform movements in the nineteenth century all over Asia. The Buddhist revival was a response to the colonial powers, and a way to confirm national identities (Plank 2011: 54–60). The wisdom of the Buddha and of enlightenment was in several ways democratised (Plank 2011: 64). Central to this was the new Buddhist institution for laymen: the meditation centre, often situated in an urban context (Plank 2011: 38).

These central characteristics of modernised Buddhism—the focus on laymen, meditation, and the urban meditation centres—were also important in the Buddhist orientations which migrated to the West from the nineteenth century onwards.

Western receptiveness: cultural and structural factors

Katarina Plank (2011: 144–8) describes how Buddhism in different forms slowly migrated into Western cultures after initial contacts made during the sixteenth century. Buddhist texts were first translated into Western languages during the nineteenth century, and thus reached the broader public of the West at that time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the first Europeans travelled to Asia to be ordinated as Buddhist monks, marking another stage at which Europeans became religious specialists and teachers of an Eastern religion.

Another institution, the Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875, came to be important for the spread of Buddhist-related teachings in the Western world, as well as contributing to create a new and positive image of Buddhism in the West. The purpose of theosophy was to find 'the essence of all religions', and in this mission it used elements from the Eastern religions, among them Buddhism.

Until the middle of the twentieth century Plank describes Theravadan groups as being dominant in the West, but after the Second World War also Mahayana groups, especially from the Zen traditions, started to spread. During the 1960s Asian teachers began visiting the West in larger numbers, and more Westerners started to travel to the East to learn more about the Eastern spiritual traditions.

Plank concludes that today two main kinds of Buddhism may be conceived of in the West: diaspora Buddhism with Asian-born participants, and a convertite Buddhism with Western-born participants. She writes that there are often barriers between these two kinds of Buddhism, relating both to language and kinds of practices (Plank 2011: 144–8).

It is a well-known fact that Buddhism has attracted Westerners partly because of the relative ease with which Buddhist perspectives can be related to secular and psychological ones. Buddhism differs in many ways from Christianity, not requiring belief in a God or in theological doctrines. Buddhism also supplies possible atheist interpretations and many theoretical elements about how the human mind works, based on the universal human experience of suffering and the problem of impermanence. This makes it easy to relate Buddhist thought to psychological and therapeutic perspectives, thereby also finding legitimation in the branch of psychology in Western science (for a discussion of similarities and differences between Buddhist perspectives and psychological ones, see, e.g., Imamura 1998).

One important route for Buddhism into Western culture was via the Human Potential Movement, which started at the beginning of the 1960s. The Human Potential Movement developed out of humanistic psychology, which emphasised a belief in a positive human potential, a holistic view of the human being, and a syncretism between science and religion, East and West. The Human Potential Movement was practice-oriented, and used many kinds of practices, both therapeutic ones and practices based in different religious traditions. Buddhist perspectives and practices, like different kinds of meditation and attention practices, thus found ways into the new human potential culture, which was, at least partly, a secular one (Anderson 2004).

The 1960s and 1970s saw many imported and innovative new religious movements arising in the West, with both Eastern and Western roots. One of them was Transcendental Meditation, which came to the West from India. With its roots in Hinduism—not Buddhism—Transcendental Meditation represents a parallel attempt to conceive of a meditative practice with Eastern religious roots as a scientific and therapeutic practice. Study of contemporary mindfulness therapy can provide something of a *déjà vu* experience for someone studying new religious movements of the 1970s. Transcendental Meditation still exists in different countries all over the world, but today operates in a much more low key mode than during the heydays of the 1970s. A quick look at their web page today demonstrates many similarities with contemporary mindfulness. It is said there that the effects of TM have been proved by more than 600 scientific studies in more than 200 research institutes and universities in about 30 countries all over the world. The effects found include, for example, improved intelligence, better memory, increased creativity, decreasing high blood pressure, improved sleep, improved relations to others, less stress, and increased self confidence (http://tm-meditation.se, accessed on 20 November 2011).

Transcendental Meditation, however, never reached the mainstream in the way that mindfulness has done today. One reason for this may be the different kinds of leading figures in the two movements. In the case of TM, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi gave the impression of being quite a traditional Indian guru, with long hair and beard and Indian robes. Jon Kabat-Zinn, on the other hand, is a Western medical doctor and a professor, working in the academic environment. Besides, TM had some features which could be interpreted as Hindu or mystical, like the mantras or the initiation ceremony, and also later developments like the TM Sidhi programme (Frisk 1993: 163). Mindfulness, on the other hand, is explained as simply 'paying attention', which seems more secular and is easier to see through purely psychological lenses.

However, this is only part of the explanation for the success of mindfulness in the secular mainstream of contemporary Western society. There has also been a long work of preparation since the 1960s, which has resulted in a cultural adaptation and habituation to Eastern thought and practices. The ground was prepared for Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1990s in another way than it was for Maharishi Mahesh Yogi two decades before.

Although in one way Jon Kabat-Zinn may talk about mindfulness in secular terms, he does not hide the fact of the Buddhist connections, nor does he refrain from practices such as the traditional Buddhist loving kindness meditation. Åsa Nilsonne also writes about Buddhism in positive terms, and ex-

plains, in a popular way, how mindfulness relates to Buddhism. Buddhism is thus conceived of in a positive way by several mindfulness therapists. It could even be that the conceived relation to Buddhism might *increase* the attractiveness of mindfulness for some people. It would be interesting to ask the question as to whether the same practice with another more secular name, such as, for instance, 'attentional control training', would have become so popular. The relation to Buddhist traditions may give a scent and atmosphere around the practice of mindfulness, which may increase the sense of meaning, identity, and connection to a tradition, thereby also influencing both the expectations and the experiences of the practice in a positive way.

In spring 2011 I made telephone calls to some of the mainstream therapists working with mindfulness in Dalarna, Sweden, to ask about how they used mindfulness.[3] Some of them asked me what I meant by mindfulness. Questioned about what they meant by that question they then replied that they knew of some therapists using some kind of relaxation as part of therapy and calling it mindfulness although it was not mindfulness in a strict sense. This indicates that 'mindfulness' may be an attractive catch-word, being used also outside of 'traditional' therapeutic mindfulness practices. If the term mindfulness is loosely used also, for example, for relaxation practices, this may indicate that there are even more simplifications in this area, altering the meaning of mindfulness and further increasing its distance from the traditional Buddhist context.

But is mindfulness Buddhism?

Everyone agrees about the historical connection between therapeutic mindfulness and Buddhism. Reading Jon Kabat-Zinn, his own relation to and inspiration from different schools of Buddhism is quite clear. Kabat-Zinn writes that it is no accident that mindfulness comes out of Buddhism, as Buddhism has as its overriding concerns the relief of suffering and the dispelling of illusions. However, he says that mindfulness is just a particular way of paying attention, and that its essence is universal, although it is most commonly taught and practised within the context of Buddhism (Kabat-Zinn 2009: 12–13).

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3   This study was part of the project 'The Meditating Dala Horse: Globalized Contemporary Religiosity in Local Expression and on New Arenas', financed by The Swedish Research Council between 2008–11, and on which I worked with Peter Åkerbäck, Stockholm University.

Katarina Plank is one academic author who wants to emphasise the differences between Buddhist ways of mindfulness and therapeutic ones. She writes that the therapeutic practice of mindfulness involves both a decontextualisation, a recontextualisation, a reinterpretation and a simplification in a way that results in profound changes in the Buddhist practice of mindfulness. She uses the concept of 'mindfulness appropriators', to indicate people who use parts of Buddhist religious sources to strengthen their own views and to legitimate their own position, but without a genuine interest in the religion itself (Plank 2011: 209–10). She summarises the criticism from some Buddhist leading figures, pointing to the fact that mindfulness in therapeutic contexts is used for worldly purposes—which results in confirming and cementing the self—instead of realisation of the impermanence of the self and spiritual awakening (Plank 2011: 216–27). Thus Plank seems to indicate that mindfulness in a therapeutic sense distorts genuine Buddhism, and in reality could not be seen as part of the Buddhist tradition.

Anne-Christine Hornborg, another academic actor in the field, on the other hand, claims that no traditional religious practice, like mindfulness, could be reducible to a mere secular technique. She writes that if a Christian priest were to suggest offering intercessory prayer in a secular school, claiming that it is merely a secular technique, nearly everyone would say that this practice is impossible to detach from religion. This could, according to Hornborg, be compared to a therapeutic and secular use of mindfulness (Hornborg 2010). Thus Hornborg seems to argue for the 'religiousness' of therapeutic mindfulness, however not saying much about the 'Buddhistness' of the practice.

The last few years have seen an academic discussion on the concept of religion. There is an increasing awareness that the boundaries of what should be conceived of as religion or not are changeable, and may vary between different cultures, contexts and times. The concept and content of religion itself has a strong Western bias, and has been constructed to a great extent based on images and expressions of Christianity, especially the Protestant versions. In other cultures there are not always clear counterparts to 'religion' as it has been constructed and delimited in the West. Further, the borders of what has been conceived of as 'religion' have been constructed in ways to make some parts of the religious spectrum either excluded or devalued, based on Christian norms and values. There are normative distinctions between different religious behaviours and beliefs, creating more or less concealed definitions of what is a 'genuine' religion and what is not, thus marginalising and privileging different orientations of the religious spectrum. Terms like 'super-

stition' or 'folk beliefs' are examples of cultural expressions often being conceived of as having less religious value and not being 'proper religion' (Asad 1993, Orsi 2005, McGuire 2008).

The conclusion of several academics in the field of religious studies is that the cultural expressions which in some contexts are defined as 'religious' apparently are just elements of cultural expressions as a whole, and that 'religion' has no special 'essence' about which it is possible to universally agree. To return to the question of whether mindfulness for therapeutic purposes is a religious practice or not, the definition of 'mindfulness' as religious or non-religious totally becomes a question of how the concept of 'religion' is defined in the actual context. It may be 'in-defined' or 'out-defined' according to taste.

In addition to the problem of how to define 'religion', there is also a great individual span as to how to conceive of the practice of mindfulness, and what it might mean to the individual person. Individuals like Jon Kabat-Zinn and Åsa Nilsonne seem to interpret their own engagement with at least some kind of relationship to Buddhism, which may also—or may not—be the case with other therapists as well as their clients. Mindfulness as a practice may relate strongly, weakly or not at all to beliefs, emotional experiences, attitudes, values, inspiration, or sense of identity. Thus we may conclude that mindfulness as a therapeutic practice may, for some people, relate to some spectrum or some part of 'religion', but that this depends both on the individual and the definition of religion used.

It is important, however, to acknowledge the fact that the practice of mindfulness has deep roots in Buddhism, as well as the fact that the practice has changed (and become simplified) in the secular and therapeutic environments of the West—as all religious or religion-related elements change in new contexts. We have a phenomenon with religious roots in a new secular context, and it is quite natural that it also changes towards possible secular interpretations.

Religion and post-secularity in the contemporary context

Based on empirical material—interviews and field observations—from the recent research project 'The Meditating Dala Horse', one impression is that several people in the field neither use the concepts of 'religious' and 'non-religious', nor seem to make this difference in their thinking and mental orientation. Many people seem to practice meditation, or some other practice, like for example, healing, Tarot, rebirthing sessions, yoga, or aroma massage,

not wondering if this should be considered a religious or spiritual practice or not. It is just something they do, an activity which may or may not relate to different beliefs, feelings or values, or, in some cases, may be considered just a leisure activity for entertainment and fun. There seems to be a transition to an increasing importance of experiences, practices, and atmospheres, and less importance of beliefs and organisations. Different aspects of what it means to be human are investigated and experienced, without dividing these experiences into the 'religious' and 'secular'. In the same way, therapeutic mindfulness is probably in many cases just experienced, without any attempts to make a distinction as to whether the experience is related to religion or not. Siv Ellen Kraft writes that the market of new religiosity is characterised by 'hybrid products', by which she means that they are open to several interpretations, with or without religious references, and that at least some of the functions are secular. The spiritual part may be either completely or partly empty (Kraft 2011: 78).

Tentatively, this tendency not to distinguish between religion and non-religion is one of the traits which characterises our contemporary society, and is what would make the notion of 'post-secularity' meaningful. Our culture is neither religious nor secular, as the question of what is religion or not has become meaningless. 'Religion' is a concept some people like to stamp on some cultural expressions, but the term is dependent on the kind of definition which is postulated, and does not answer to a difference many people today in reality make and use. If we need a term for this characteristic, 'post-secularity' may be one suggestion.

Conclusion

The practice of mindfulness has migrated from Buddhist contexts to Western therapeutic contexts, thereby going through changes and simplifications, making it potentially subject to both religious and secular interpretations, or being a 'hybrid product'. In this article, it has been suggested that the difference between 'religious' and 'secular' is losing meaning and importance in our contemporary society, and that it is precisely this element which characterises a 'post-secular' culture. Previously conceived of 'religious' elements are now spreading into many sectors of society, thereby changing, adapting, and losing aspects that used to characterise 'religion'. These practices may be individually interpreted and actively used as religious or not, depending on definition and taste. Mindfulness is one example of such practices, but there are

many more examples which are widely used in contemporary society which are finding their ways into mainstream. One example is yoga, which also has an Eastern religious background, is used in many mainstream contexts today, but may also be practised and used from many different perspectives. Other therapeutic practices, such as rebirthing, Gestalt therapy, or coaching, may or may not also include 'religious' elements. The definite point of this article, however, is that attempts at making this difference in our contemporary culture may have lost meaning, and that other terms than 'religion' may be more meaningful to use.

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INGVILD SÆLID GILHUS

Post-secular religion and the therapeutic turn

Three Norwegian examples

The focus of this article is three contemporary Norwegians, who claim that they communicate with superhuman beings and/or promote therapeutic practices based on superhuman intervention. They come from different walks of life: Margit Sandemo is a best-selling author and housewife; Joralf Gjerstad is now retired, but was a dairy assistant and a bell-ringer in the local church; Märtha Louise is a princess and trained as a physiotherapist and Rosen therapist. They can be seen as personifications of contemporary religious discourses in contemporary Norway.

What sorts of religion do they promote? How do they relate to the Church? How do they reflect the situation of post-secular religion in Norway?[1]

Margit Sandemo

Margit Sandemo was born in 1924. She is one of Scandinavia's most popular authors. Sandemo started writing novels when she was about forty years old. To begin with they were run as serials in magazines, later they were both serialised and published as books. She has written 172 novels, been translated into nine languages and sold about 40 million copies of her books, mainly across Scandinavia. The novels belong to the genre of historical fantasy and pulp fiction. A journalist in the *Guardian* describes her as 'Scandinavia's answer to Barbara Cartland, just with more magic and monsters. And sex.' (*Guardian* 23.6.2008) Margit Sandemo published her autobiography, *Livsglede* (The joy of life) in 2010.

Sandemo's parents were a local Norwegian author and a Swedish countess. She grew up in both countries, lived during her married life in Valdres

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1 The sources that I quote are mainly in Norwegian, and the translations into English are mine.

in Norway, but moved to Sweden after the death of her husband. Sandemo claims to have had supernatural experiences.

These experiences include clairvoyance, premonitions, sensing presences and seeing glimpses of ghosts and little people, as well as having a spiritual helper who acts as her guardian. She calls him 'this helper of mine, you can call it a guardian spirit or guardian angel, even though I don't believe in angels' (*Guardian* 23.6.2008). To begin with she describes him as 'he that is there' (Sandemo 2010: 105), later he acquired the name Virgil. According to Sandemo, 'it is easier to communicate with someone who has a name' (Sandemo 2010: 207). She also has, according to herself, introduced dowsing with y-rods to find other people's spiritual helpers and has assisted people in finding their invisible helpers (Penny 1997: 37).

Sandemo combines traditional Norwegian folk beliefs and New Age language. In one of her books she draws a line from traditional Scandinavian ideas about superhuman helpers, through fairies to guardian angels.[2] According to Sandemo, it is logical that everyone has someone who takes care of them, 'poor God, how could he manage to be kind to everyone?' (Sandemo 2010: 207).

She describes when she began to write books as flight from reality, but not into darkness, but into a world of novels (Sandemo 2010: 179). It is easy to see her writing as self-therapy. She describes the mission of her novels as giving people the opportunity to relax, to leave the pedestrian world and get into the spirit of fictitious people (Sandemo 2010: 199). Her writing is increasingly marked by spiritual guidance, and Sandemo has become an expert on 'the other world' (Penny 1997: 37).

To begin with Sandemo was not allowed to include supernatural experiences in her novels; the publishers always took these things out. But in 1978 when her publishers asked her to start a new series she refused to do so if she was not allowed to include the supernatural. Her publishers reluctantly gave her permission, and it was a huge success; 47 books of *Sagaen om Isfolket* (The Saga of the Ice People) were published between 1982–9 (Sandemo 2004). It is a fantasy-historical saga, starting in 1581 with a deadly plague in Norway, about a strong mountain clan whose common ancestor has made a pact with the devil and are therefore cursed. Sandemo has suggested that Lucifer made her write the books—Lucifer in her thinking is a tragic rather than evil being: in her opinion the Church has a wrong opinion of Lucifer. In an inter-

2   *Vi er ikke alene* (We are not alone, 1990) is a collection of letters from people who tell about their superhuman experiences and with comments by Margit Sandemo.

view she said that, 'all I have written about in the Icefolk is only fantasy and pure invention—except for the supernatural element' (*Norsk Ukeblad* 42/97). Sandemo has always told journalists about her experiences with her helper, the ghosts and the little people. She has received thousands and thousands of letters from people who want to say how much they like her books and people who want her help (Penny 1997: 91 ff.). Her speciality, by her account, is to remove ghosts from houses and help people who do not know what they shall do when they meet ghosts or small people. Sandemo does not believe in God and is critical of the Church. She has said as much in interviews, and has also imparted this view by means of her novels. This has led to attacks from theologians on what they take as a promotion of an occult universe.

In 1993, Arild Romarheim and Michael Holter at MF, the Norwegian School of Theology, characterised her as 'a spiritual guide for all of Scandinavia' (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 8). They see Sandemo as one who promotes an occult world-view and plays with the dark forces. According to them a special problem with Sandemo is that she blurs the distinction between fantasy and reality (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 188). They see Sandemo as the strongest influence on the beliefs of people in Norway and especially of youth, and call her world a universe of anxiety and fear (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 188–9), while the Christian universe is a universe of safety (Romarheim & Holter 1993: 194; cf. also Penny 1997: 99–103). Sandemo has accordingly experienced the same as J. K. Rowling did with her books about Harry Potter; that her novels have been used as antitypes by Christians to describe a Christian universe.

Bridget Penny discusses why the Church at the end of the nineties saw Margit Sandemo as an enemy and says that one reason is that Margit Sandemo is conceived of as a person that ought to belong to the Church (Penny 1997: 103). She also stresses the huge sales of books as a reason for the Church to engage itself and mount a critique of Sandemo.

Sandemo promotes a religious outlook which is situated partly on the fringes of the Christian universe and partly builds on traditional Scandinavian ideas about intermediary beings, as well as on New Age/spirituality. She is a spiritual guide who encourages people to get on with their lives and rely on love and compassion to make the right choices between the good and evil powers in the world. And, *nota bene*, according to Sandemo, these powers are real. There are cracks and slippages between the narratives about Sandemo's life and the universe of her novels, and the interplay between her novels and her supranormal experiences has obviously contributed to her fame.

Joralf Gjerstad

Joralf Gjerstad was born in Snåsa in 1926. He realised early on that he was clairvoyant and had the power to heal. When he lays his hands on people they feel the heat, while the hands of Gjerstad remain cold. Several have said that his laying on of hands has had an effect on their illness. In Norway he is known as 'Snåsamannen'—'the man from Snåsa'. Gjerstad lives in a truly scenic part of Norway with lakes, forests and mountains, where people are few and far between. He seems to have an almost religious relationship to nature, and lived for one year in his youth on a small farm in the mountains, contemplating—according to his memoirs—the greatness of creation and God as the creator of everything. When Gjerstad was in his teens he had a vision while he was looking at the big lake at Snåsa: 'Then I saw a strange light—a halo that created a beautiful vision and seemed to me to be pleasant and peaceful. The light, which contained all the colours of the rainbow, laid itself out on the field before me, and illuminated the birch wood.' (Gjerstad 2010: 40.) In the memoirs this narrative represents a turning point, because that day he promised to help those who needed him. Thousands of people have come to him with their illnesses; many of them claim that they were healed or suffered less after their meeting with Gjerstad. Most of the time, Gjerstad has worked as a dairy-assistant, travelling between the local farms of Snåsa. Sometimes he hears a voice saying which house he should visit to heal people. He has also been a bell-ringer at the local church, and some of those who came to church on Sunday consulted him after mass. He used to receive people in his home, running a healing practice, or talk with them and heal them by phone. Gjerstad does not charge money for his services.

In 2006, Joralf Gjerstad was presented on national television, and in 2008 a famous biographer in Norway, Ingar Sletten Kolloen, wrote a bestselling biography about him, *Snåsamannen. Kraften som helbreder* (The man from Snåsa: the power that heals), which places much emphasis on Gjerstad's alleged healing powers. It was a huge success and Gjerstad became nationally famous. He describes the book signing tour in this way: 'We continued through county after county, city after city: Trondheim, Bergen, Stavanger, Drammen, Oslo, Lillehammer and Hamar. Everywhere we came people knew about me. It was unbelievable how many had called on me in Snåsa.' (Gjerstad 2010: 131.) According to Siv Ellen Kraft, who refers to Google's trend barometer, in 2008 Gjerstad was more popular than the Norwegian prime minister, second only to another religious personality—Jesus (Kraft 2010b: 243, note 1). According to Kolloen 50,000 people, which is about one per cent of the

Norwegian population, have visited Gjerstad in Snåsa. A former Norwegian minister of health, Bjarne Håkon Hanssen, told Norwegian newspapers in 2009 that he had consulted Snåsamannen on the phone when he was still a local mayor, because of the colic of his newborn son. According to Hanssen the boy was cured (cf. Kraft 2010a: 121–39).[3]

In addition to Kolloen's biography and two television programmes, several thousand articles have been written about Joralf Gjerstad in Norwegian newspapers and journals, and he has received tens of thousands of letters. Gjerstad has published three memoirs.

In his memoirs Joralf Gjerstad comes across as a pious Christian. He stresses that the Bible is the law of life (Gjerstad 2006: 26) and promotes a type of layman Norwegian Christianity related to the rural, to nature, to the nation and to family values (cf. Kraft 2010b). It is obvious that he sees his healing powers and clairvoyance as an integrated part of his Christian world-view, and his memoirs present him as a thoughtful and pious Christian. His three memoirs are called *Det godes vilje. Minner fra liv og virke* (The will to goodness: memories from life and work, 2004), *Å stå i lyset* (To stand in the light, 2006) and *Den gode kraften* (The good power, 2010). The titles are vague, but convey something positive, though at the same time ambiguous. To stand in the light, for instance, could both mean to be exposed to the gaze of people and to be in the light of God. His healing powers are described in vague terms and could probably be fitted into almost any religious or life stance system. Gjerstad does not really try to explain his powers; on the contrary, he says that the things that he does are not possible to understand and that he cannot explain them. He stresses that his healing power is an innate ability, not to be learnt on a study course (Gjerstad 2006: 29), but he regards it as evidence of the greatness of creation (Gjerstad 2010: 45).[4] The Nobel Prize laureate in medicine, John Carew Eccles, the space and rocket technology specialist Werner von Braun, the psychiatrist Victor Frankl, the physicist Albert Einstein and the physician Albert Schweitzer are among Gjerstad's heroes. According to him, they were top scientists who combined excellent science with a religious outlook. So he summons them in his biography to make a bridge between the field of science and the field of religion.

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3   In 2008 100,000 copies of Kolloen's book had been sold, and it was still on the top of Norwegian bestseller lists.
4   Bente Gullveig Alver has stressed that for the clients, the abilities and the practice of a healer and a clairvoyant are much more important than how the practice is effectuated and explained (Alver 2011: 150).

One might say that since Gjerstad acts both as a healer and as a bell-ringer, he has two different religious roles, which are integrated within a Christian context. Taking into consideration that one of the most important roles of Jesus in the Gospels was as a miracle worker and a healer, there is nothing contradictory about acting as a healer within a Christian context. It is perhaps more strange to do it in a society that is one of the most secular in the world and which has one of the most expensive public health services, and to achieve such national acclaim. Even if critical voices exist they have in the main been drowned by the overwhelmingly positive reception.

In 2009 Bishop Tor Singsaas invited Gjerstad to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim.[5] Gjerstad was received in a crammed church with 1000 people standing outside, because there were not enough seats. The conversation between the Bishop and Gjerstad took place in the context of the divine service and ended with the Bishop blessing Gjerstad and walking with him down the aisle. The Bishop compared him to the Joseph of the Old Testament who worked in Egypt as a seer and interpreter of dreams. In other words, Gjerstad seems to have been accepted by the Church of Norway.[6]

One might think that since Gjerstad's healing practice intersects with several of the main expert systems in contemporary societies, that would have got him into trouble—but even if he is criticised by some, he has obviously found a *modus vivendi* in relation to science, medicine and religion. How is it done? One answer is that he, as mentioned, is a pious Christian, and does not make specific theological claims about, for instance, angels or miracles. He stresses that he co-operates with doctors and wants people to be treated in hospitals.

Märtha Louise

Märtha Louise was born in 1971, is a princess and has trained as a physiotherapist and Rosen therapist. Märtha Louise has started her own business, among other things working as a teller of fairytales for various organisations. She has written a children's storybook and in 2007, together with Elisabeth Samnøy, started Astarte Education, known as 'The Angel School', where people can

5   It was the cathedral of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Nidaros (1152–1537).
6   Siv Ellen Kraft has pointed out, while Gjerstad's own memoirs construct him as a pious Christian, the television programs and the biography of Kolloen present his healing powers without much stress on his Christian belonging (Kraft 2010b).

buy courses and learn about angels as personal helpers, among other things. Märtha Louise has a reputation for talking with horses, and she makes a connection between talking with horses and talking with angels. The initiation of the school was a huge media event in Norway and also abroad. On July 25, 2007, one of the BBC news headlines on the internet read: 'Norway princess "talks to angels"'. The day before the story had made the frontpages of all the national Norwegian newspapers. In the BBC version it read as follows:

> Norway's Princess Märtha Louise says she has psychic powers and can teach people to communicate with angels. The 35-year-old daughter of King Harald and Queen Sonja made the announcement on a website promoting her plans for a new alternative therapy centre. She says she realised as a child that she could read people's inner feelings, while her experiences with horses had helped her make contact with angels. Princess Martha Louise is fourth in line to the Norwegian throne. The royal palace says it has no official link to the princess's planned alternative therapy centre, the AFP news agency reports. The princess, who trained as a physical therapist, says on the website for her Astarte Education centre that she has 'always been interested in alternative forms of treatment'. Students at her centre, she says, will learn how to 'create miracles' in their lives and harness the powers of their angels, which she describes as 'forces that surround us and who are a resource and help in all aspects of our lives'. 'It was while I was taking care of the horses that I got in contact with the angels', she says. 'I have lately understood the value of this important gift and I wish to share it with other people, maybe with you.' A three-year programme at her centre costs 24,000 Norwegian crowns ($4,150; €3,000; £2,000) per year.

When the princess recently mentioned briefly that she thinks it is possible to speak with dead people there was a new media storm, but it faded out, probably because the princess for the time being did not have any intention of taking it further.[7] One could say that the princess and Samnøy have found their niche in the religious market, among other things by selling angel-therapies.[8]

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7 Lisa Williams who has appeared in television shows in several countries, was on her first tour to Norway in 2010 and allegedly talked with the dead. Her performances were in the main sold out.

8 Emma Heathcote-James, bestselling international writer about angels was taken to court for using a picture of the princess on the cover of a Norwegian translation of her book. Notto Thelle, a Norwegian professor in theology, has called his book,

While the public in general seems to accept the angels as odd, but mostly harmless, conversation with the dead was in general seen to be over the top. In 2009 Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy published the book, *Møt din skytsengel. En innføring i å møte din unike kraft* (Meet your guardian angel: an introduction to encountering your unique power). The book has been translated to eight languages and sold *ca* 100,000 copies.

In this book the princess and Samnøy make a distinction between religiosity and spirituality. Religiosity is connected to a religious society, while spirituality is 'to have spiritual experiences, which means experience of a universal power of love or a divine power of love, if you will. Therefore one can very well be a member of a religious society and still be spiritual. The spiritual tools that we offer you, are like a map and a compass to find your unique way.' (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 9.) The concept 'spiritual tools' refers to specific techniques that make the spiritual power in each human visible. It also implies that these tools can be used across religions.

Central to the book is the universal power of love, but in line with the individualising trends in modern therapies, the focus is on the individual: 'When you live life in love with yourself, you want only the best for yourself' (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 178).

The book contains a meditation technique, called 'Give to yourself' and the authors say that the 'most important thing that we want to convey is the joy and excitement in having an honest meeting with yourself' (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 11). The book presents 18 meditations. Their main points are to be present in the body, keep the aura in appropriate distance from the body, move the energies of others out, connect with the earth, connect with the universe and invite the angels into one's life.

There is a universalising trend throughout the book as well as a strong tendency to synonymise: vital energy is compared and made identical with Indian *prana*, Chinese *chi* and Japanese *reiki*. This energy is also compared to energy as a scientific concept, and the authors refer to Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein. The angels are universal and exist in almost all religions, for instance in the form of *devas* or *amesha spentas* and so forth. In some religions people have a personal angel, and the princess and Samnøy teach that everyone in reality has one. According to them, each angel has a specific tune, light, taste,

which discusses the relationship between Christianity and New Age, *Prinsessens engler* (The angels of the princess, 2010). The cover of the book alludes to the cover of the book by the princess and Samnøy, which, similar to their book, has the wing of an angel.

smell, feeling and colour that it can recall in you (Märtha Louise & Samnøy 2009: 164). Angels communicate with us in as many ways as there are people on earth. In other words, angels and the experience of them are flexible and accessible.

In several ways Märtha Louise and Samnøy offer typical, contemporary, spiritualised therapies. Anne-Christine Hornborg mentions four characteristics of such contemporary rites: they are individual-centred; it is important to realise one's authentic Self; the leaders are self-appointed (mainly women); and a radical transformation of one's being is an intensively emotional experience. A fifth characteristic, is commercialisation. (Hornborg 2010.) These characteristics fit very well the meditation techniques and the communication with angels that are offered by Märtha Louise and Samnøy.

While angels are part of the Christian universe, traditionally these intermediate beings remain on the fringes of the Lutheran supernatural universe and act as messengers for God, not as helpers who come at the beck and call of humans (Gilhus 2012). Representatives of the Church and the theological faculties have criticised the views about angels that are presented by Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy (Thelle 2010; cf. below).

Blurred boundaries and post-secular religion

To understand the function and meaning of Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy, they should be seen in a broader cultural and religious context. To do this, we will use a spatial model of religion.

Jonathan Z. Smith has presented a model of religion in late antiquity as 'religion here, there and anywhere'. Religion *here* is religion as practised in the home; religion *there* is religion practised in the temple/church as public, civic and state religion; while religion *anywhere* is religion practised by religious entrepreneurs as magicians, fortune tellers and prophets. (Smith 2003.) The last type of religion occupies an interstitial space between religion *here* and religion *there*. In late antiquity, according to Smith, the third locus became expanded and more prominent.

The spatial model can fruitfully be applied to contemporary religion as well, but in addition to religion *here*, *there* and *anywhere*, we will add the dimension of *everywhere*, which is dependent on processes of mediation. Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy are religious entrepreneurs who personify religion *anywhere*—as for instance when they appear at alternative fairs, bookfairs, angel-congresses and magical weeks. But they are

also examples of religion *everywhere*. They write books, appear in newspapers, radio and television and are discussed in the public sphere, and are therefore known by virtually everyone in Norway. The focus on the individual and on the intensive interaction between religion *anywhere* and religion *everywhere* are clues to modern religious success stories.

In Jonathan Z. Smith's model, *here* is the home and the graveyard—places that are connected to the family. One might also include in the *here* dimension places connected to where one lives and to family roots, in other words, the local aspect can be seen as part of the *here* dimension of religion. In the case of Joralf Gjerstad the local aspect is Snåsa, for Margit Sandemo it is Valdres. The local aspect, especially of Joralf Gjerstad—frequently called 'Snåsamannen' (the man from Snåsa)—is stressed in the way he is presented in the media. The three spaces of religion in Smith's model are sometimes in tension with each other. Religious entrepreneurs frequently challenge the *there*-dimension of contemporary religion in Norway, which is dominated by the Church.

The therapeutic turn in modern culture has a huge influence on religion. Judith A. Macpherson points out that 'one of the most visible aspects of New Age thought and practice is the widespread concern with health' (2008: 55). Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy are Norwegian examples of the therapeutic turn in post-secular religion. All relate some way or another to science in their practice and/or books. Gjerstad relates more directly to medicine.

In 2004 a law concerning alternative medicine was passed in Norway. It replaced the Law of Quackery from 1936. The new law has a customer view of medicine and shows greater tolerance for what is usually regarded as harmless varieties of alternative and complementary therapies. A National Research Centre for Alternative and Complementary Medicine (NAFKAM, Nasjonalt forskningssenter innen komplementær og alternativ medisin) and an information centre (NIFAB, Nasjonalt informasjonssenter for alternativ behandling) were established in 2000 at the University of Tromsø. One can see these initiatives as reflections of a more open attitude, but also as a means to take control of alternative medicine and fix it in one place, both in geographical space and within the Norwegian medicine/health system. Kolloen (2008: 227) urges Gjerstad's former patients to join the Registry of Exceptional Courses of Disease (Register for eksepsjonelle sykdomsforløp), a body which collects information from people who have experienced an unexpected outcome of a disease subsequent to using alternative treatment, as compared to what was expected based on medical examination.

Gjerstad's attitude towards his patients makes his treatment complementary rather than alternative in relation to medicine/science, and he does not want to replace, but to supplement medical treatment. As mentioned on the cover of Ingar Kolloen's book (2008), Gjerstad does not want to be called a healer. This implies that Gjerstad creates a boundary between his own and other types of alternative therapies/treatments and does not want to be associated with the latter.

Meredith McGuire (1988: 18–31) has described five types of ritual healing in suburban America: 1) imitating Jesus as healer, 2) healing through harmony, for instance meditation, 3) ego generated illnesses, 4) healing by means of external powers, 5) specific practices. The typology is useful in a Norwegian context as well, to highlight the differences between Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy.

McGuire proposes that Christian healing is primarily based on the New Testament with Jesus as the model (1988: 19). The healing practice of Joralf Gjerstad is in line with this approach (type 1). Margit Sandemo heals houses and does so by means of external powers, which makes her in line with types 4 and 5. Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy combine healing through harmony with use of external powers, which makes them in line with types 2 and 4.

Joralf Gjerstad is unique among the examples in this article because of his positive relationship with and acceptance by the Church.[9] He follows a biblical model, and tries neither to explain his experiences and practices, nor to challenge the creed and dogmas of the Church. In other words, he does not interfere with its theology in a non-acceptable way. One might say that Joralf Gjerstad is a Christian answer to the therapeutic turn in religion.

Angels have for centuries been at the margins of Protestantism, but are today being invited in. This new openness can partly be explained by a certain angel craze in contemporary culture, starting in the United States, and partly by the Church having realised that angels are in danger of being overtaken by New Age/spiritualism. The Church has signalled a wish to defend what is 'theirs' and to use the angels more actively in the service of the Church (Gilhus 2012). The angels of Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy are seen by theologians as too subordinate to their human masters and to have maintained too little of their quality as messengers of God to be accepted by the

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9   The Church of Norway is Evangelical-Lutheran. Eighty-one per cent of Norwegians are members. The Church is strong on rituals of passage—baptisms, weddings and funerals. People seem to belong, but without believing strongly.

Church. This leaves Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy in a more ambiguous situation in relation to the Church than Joralf Gjerstad (cf. Thelle 2010).

Sandemo uses traditional Norwegian intermediary beings, Christian figures (Lucifer and Virgil who guided Dante) and New Age concepts. She maintains a boundary towards the Church and the Church maintains a boundary towards her supernatural universe.

While the spokesmen of the Church, to a certain degree, have treated Margit Sandemo as an enemy in the latter part of the twentieth century, at the beginning of the twenty-first century Joralf Gjerstad is being treated as a friend of the Church. When the alternative has become mainstream and the post-secular has turned multicultural and potentially multi-religious, the Church needs friends and success stories. Joralf Gjerstad, the man from Snåsa, has given it exactly that.

Conclusion

Contemporary, post-secular religion in Norway is expressed by Marit Sandemo, Joralf Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Elisabeth Samnøy, among others. They personify in different ways the therapeutic turn of contemporary culture and religion, which challenges traditional religion as well as the field of medicine/science.

Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy try to solve everyday problems—illness, difficulties in mastering life and personal relations, the need for safety, feelings of unease in one's house—problems that are basic in human life, but in some cases neglected by the expert fields or not able to be solved within them.

Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy allegedly interact with intermediate superhuman beings (Sandemo and Märtha Louise and Samnøy) or superhuman power (Gjerstad) and represent a return to elementary or basic forms of religious life (cf. Sutcliffe 2006). The intermediate beings are close to the human sphere, as seen in the case of Märtha Louise/Samnøy and Sandemo, unexplained and mysterious in the case of Gjerstad. However, in Gjerstad's case, the Christian universe is clearly the context for his beliefs and practices.

Sandemo, Gjerstad and Märtha Louise and Samnøy personify different aspects of contemporary religion—connected to Christianity and healing (Gjerstad), connected to spirituality and angels (Märtha Louise and Samnøy) and connected to traditional non-Christian conceptions and beliefs

(Sandemo). Their religious practices are developed in interaction with the secular media. They represent a strong combination of religion *anywhere* (religious entrepreneurs) and religion *everywhere* (mediated religion), which is a striking dimension of post-secular religion. Gjerstad draws in the *here*-dimension with his connection to Snåsa and he relates positively to the *there*-dimension, the Church, as well.

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CÉLINE GRÜNHAGEN

Healing chants and *Singing Hospitals*

Towards an analysis of the implementation of spiritual practices as therapeutic means

Introduction

In the following approach I intend to combine two very interesting fields of research: the one concerning issues of health and well-being in 'post-secular' religious practices, the other one striving towards a wider recognition and comprehension of the aural or acoustic side of religions and religious practice, respectively. While research into post-secular religious practice has naturally evolved only very recently, the same can be said about researching the aural aspect of religions, although the latter is an inherent aspect of religious practice and meditation. As Udo Tworuschka points out, the study of religions joined other scientific disciplines in the so called 'visible', 'pictorial' or 'iconic' turn from a predominantly text-oriented research to the experience, documentation, and analysis of what can be seen by the (researcher's) eye. It did not however satisfactorily turn to the aural and the acoustic sphere and its effects and functions on the auditorium at a time after the 1990s when these aspects were gaining greater recognition within other disciplines (Tworuschka 2009: 84). The aural and the acoustic have been widely neglected in religious studies despite of their importance, a situation which presents a vast and extensively uncharted field of study.

Specific spiritual songs, chants or mantras are known by every religious tradition. Also various forms of new religions embed chants into their ceremonies and spiritual practices. Music in general has to be understood as a highly symbolic medium. As Marilyn Walker—applying Clifford Geertz's terminology—notes, 'music is a "thick" experience' (Walker 2003: 43; cf. Mastnak 1993: 78). Her findings regarding this field in shamanism among northern peoples, especially Siberian indigenous peoples, are not limited to these ethnic or regional groups, but may be observed universally:

> The music of northern peoples encompasses a wide range of genres. Songs are commemorative and celebratory. They lament the passing of traditions, people, places, and ways. There are songs of hunting, songs of courtship, love songs, healing songs, and epic songs. Songs and dances convey rights to the performance of a piece and convey messages of ownership. They encode intellectual property rights, as well as concepts of proprietorship over land and resources and the associated rights and obligations. Song accompanies storytelling and many stories are told in song and dance. . .Siberian indigenous peoples say that music allows them to express things that are too important for mere speech. I have been told how music affects you 'deeply', 'deep inside,' as the speaker puts a hand over the heart. (Walker 2003: 43; cf. Mastnak 1993: 80.)

Music, songs and singing go beyond speech, through rhythm and rhyme and also, due to the feelings they evoke, they leave a deeper and lasting impression on individuals and groups. They are used in worship or in communal meetings wherein they usually function to pass on a specific world view, myths and rules, to praise the Divine or the Creation, and to mediate a feeling of bonding between the participants. The adoption of the medium of music by post-secular spiritual groups or movements is self-evident. The feeling of bonding may or may not be a deliberately utilized effect, but it surely is the most obvious quality of singing in a group. The experience of connectedness itself is beneficial to the human well-being but there are numerous additional proven salutary effects to the singing legitimating its implementation as therapeutic means.

Regarding the facts and reports about singing, the present paper draws on the findings of scientists and researchers that have a relevant specialization in the research and analysis of the impact of rhythm, sound, or music and so on (by, for example, neurobiologists, medical professionals, psychologists and psychiatrists, and of course musicologists and music therapists).

A person to highlight is Wolfgang Bossinger, a German music therapist and psychotherapist, who is involved in several important studies on the healing effect of music and who has published or co-published several books on the subject (Bossinger & Friederich 2008, Bossinger & Eckle 2010, Bossinger 2011).

As a result of their findings Bossinger and his affiliates promote the implementation of music and singing in healthcare settings as therapeutic means and/or as initiator of a state of mind and consciousness that is fostering healing. For that purpose they have formed an international network by the name of *Singing Hospitals* that will be introduced below.

Interestingly Wolfgang Bossinger, who is chairman of the steering committee of the Singing Hospitals and one of its main representatives, also performs in and initiates so called *Nights of Spiritual Songs* where people come together to sing simple songs of various spiritual traditions of the world, to 'celebrate peace, unity and the connectedness of everything' (my translation).[1] He is explicitly referring to a spiritual dimension of singing and so-called *Strong Experiences with Singing* (SES) and *Transcendent Experiences with Singing* (TES) that are part of his therapeutic approach and will be specified below.[2]

One of the main sources the present article draws from, Bossinger and Friederich's publication, entitled *Chanten: Eintauchen in die Welt des heilsamen Singens* (2008), provides us with essential and well-founded information on the healing impact of singing. Besides it is also a guide including lyrics and sheet music and a CD to sing along to, which allows the reader and listener, respectively, to actually immerge into the realm of chanting him/herself.

Before analyzing the healing and harmonizing impact on the human body, mind and soul that is ascribed to the chanting and singing, lined with scientific research on its effects on the human organism, some thoughts about singing in general and a definition of 'chanting' as distinguished from 'singing' will be given.

Preliminary remarks on singing

The generation of rhythmic sounds, music and singing is a natural form of human expression, it can be traced back to prehistoric times. Musical instruments date back thousands of years; the oldest instrument found being a flute made of swan's bone which was made 35,000 years ago. We certainly cannot find evidence of the actual sounds and voices of prehistoric times so there is no unquestionable evidence that people have been singing all along, but it is likely, since as soon as writing was invented hymns and mantras were noted down. Furthermore evidence of musical activity can be found worldwide in every ethnic or cultural setting; it is a universal form of expression. Some even consider music to have been established as a form of human expression even before humans began to develop language (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 9; Walker 2003: 43; Gilliland 1944: 18).

1   http://www.nacht-der-spirituellen-lieder.eu/
2   http://www.healingsongs.de/042cb89a89012d310/042cb89a89089f508/index.html

In western societies at about the time of Hellenism there was a shift towards an idealization of sound to the detriment of rhythm (Werber 2007: 345). Music and singing became attached to terms of beauty, harmony and art. It was linked to special ideals of how it should sound and thus became performance-oriented. To successfully sing one had (and still has) to be qualified. This is a characteristically western view, unknown to other cultures. The act of singing should be a pleasure practised naturally, but due to a cultural orientation towards achievemet, many people have had traumatic experiences—for example in school where they were told that they cannot sing because they failed to hit the right note—causing them to feel self-conscious when it comes to singing, especially in a group of people. Music therapists are aware that singing in a choir is not suitable for everybody—instead of being calming, which is a reputed impact of singing, it can be rather stressful (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 9–10; Werber 2007: 347).

Chanting as distinguished from singing

In contrast to the performance-oriented approach that is common to singing, the point about chanting is to just 'let it flow': it is about singing without any attachment to how it sounds or should sound—detached from notions of achievement and perfection. It tends solely to evoke pleasure and joy and the beneficial qualities of singing. Wolfgang Bossinger notes that chanting is the experience of pure being. It involves the intention to express and experience oneself within one's own being and in inter-connection with the whole world. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 9–10.)

The verb 'to chant' stems from the Latin 'cantare': signifying a repetitive recitation of sounds, tones, or melodies. Accordingly, 'the chant' is a rhythmically repeated exclamation or song originally related to a spiritual or religious tradition (for example in the form of mantras). Characteristically, the short texts and melodies a chant is composed of are catchy, easy to learn, and they inspire individuals to sing along. They can easily be sung repeatedly, to unfold a profound impression. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 11.) A considerable number of chants could be signified as *mantras* and mantras are chanted and utilized also in the practice of singing as therapeutic method, respectively (see below).

A mantra is a sound, syllable, word, or group of sounds or words that is considered capable of creating transformation due to an innate effective power and its musical quality. It evokes resonance within the human mind, body, and soul, using, for example, rhythms, repetitions, and inversions. Mantras originate from the Vedic tradition of India but later have become an essential

part of the Hindu traditions and have also been incorporated into the other Indian religious traditions, namely Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Today the term has been used to name similar phenomena in other religious traditions and new religions as well. (Böttger 2008: 29–32; Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 35; Burchett 2008: 813–18, 826–9.)

In that sense, for example the Hindu *Om nama shivaya* or *Jay mata Kali* and the Tibetan Buddhist *Om mani padmi hum* or *Om tare tuttare ture soha* may be seen as original *mantras*. In a wider sense also the Islamic *Allahu akbar*, as recited repeatedly in the Sufi's *dhikr;* the *Halleluja*, *Ave Maria*, or *In manus tuas, Pater* in Christian traditions; the Jewish *Shalom Aleichem* and similar short chants in various indigenous traditions qualify as mantras. New religions have also made up distinct mantras or chants to serve the same purpose; for example, those recently written within the goddess movement. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 11, 35.)

Chants and mantras may be handed down through generations. The actual meaning of the incantation may be lost, but that is of no importance. One need not understand the actual words; it is believed that the words have power in themselves. Their innate power is intensified by their repetition with intent, meaning a specific inner attitude and focus. Considering the attributed power or energy, the emphasis of a specific attitude and the spiritual message the chants and *mantras* usually have, they can be understood as sung prayers. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 11–14; Burchett 2008: 813–14, 828–9; Walker 2003: 44.)

Physical and psychic impacts of singing/chanting

The act of singing involves the whole body: Not only the vocal folds that produce a sound when breath is exhaled, but also numerous muscles and resonating cavities of the body as well as the whole body itself as a resonating cavity. Furthermore it resonates with other bodies around it, at least when singing in a group. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 30–1.)

Besides the already mentioned effect of a feeling of belonging and bonding with the other participants, which results from the fact that every participant tunes in to the same rhythm of breathing by the utterance of the same verses, another main effect of singing is the compensation of stress and its relief. It leads to a relaxation of the whole body and mind. Dr Herbert Benson, an American researcher on stress, detected as early as the 1970s, that the repetitive singing of chants and mantras evokes what he calls a *relaxation*

response within the human organism. It calms down body, mind and soul. This relaxation response is reflected by an increased occurrence of slow alpha brain-waves, which characteristically indicate a meditative, relaxed condition. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 33; Burchett 2008: 827.)

The lowering effect of chanting on blood pressure as well as a slowing down of the heart rate has also been scientifically documented. The parasympathetic nervous system is activated, stress hormones are reduced, the bodily rhythms are brought into balance and the immune system is strengthened. Singing activates a deep and wholesome breathing that leads to an increased oxygen supply of the whole body. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 33–4.)

Especially the characteristic repetition of a chant or mantra calms down the process of breathing and thus leads to a beneficial rhythmization not only of the breathing, but also of the heart-rate and blood pressure. Interestingly the chanting of a mantra has been proven to induce a rhythmization and synchronization of the heart-rates of all the participants (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 47–50; cf. Moser *et al.* 2010).

In times of stress and strain we tend to breathe fast and shallowly, or even stop breathing, which results in a high pulse rate and the release of stress hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol. These hormones have a negative effect on the immune system when released continually (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 20). Thus the relaxation response introduced by the chanting should not be underestimated; in a large number of cases, stress and strain increase the likelihood of ailments and medical conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, cardiac arrhythmia, angina pectoris, nervousness, allergic responses, anxieties, depressions; asthma bronchiale, constipation or diarrhea and stomach ulcers and so on, or even directly cause them. Furthermore all sorts of physical pain can be intensified by stress and or caused by tension. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 34–6.)

Not only does singing bring about relaxation and thereby reduces the release of stress hormones, at the same time it increases the release of a range of beneficial hormones and messengers such as serotonin and endorphins which cause feelings of happiness and also reduce the perception of pain. Another hormone that is released only after a few minutes of singing is oxytocin, which is usually released by women giving birth or nursing an infant and by both sexes when sharing intimacy or having sex. This hormone increases or produces feelings of bonding and love. At the same time it is evidenced to augment processes of healing.

Furthermore the hormones melatonin and DHEA (dehydroepiandrosteron) are released. Melatonin plays an important role in the control of our

biorhythms and in a healthy sleep. It supports the immune system by reducing free radicals, which abet pathological developments within the body, especially the emergence of cancerous cells. An increased level of melatonin effectuates an increased production of the cell hormones interleukin 2 and interleukin 4, which activate defence cells in the body which are able to track down cancerous cells and render them innocuous. A similar effect on cancerous cells is discussed in the case of DHEA (which is a preliminary stage of the human's sexual hormones). Both of them exhibit a proven anti-ageing-effect; therefore DHEA is also popular as a dietary supplement. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 18–20; cf. Gilliland 1944: 18; Mastnak 1993: 79.)

With reference to the release of the above-mentioned hormones affecting the feeling of happiness and well-being, the psychic impact of singing and chanting respectively is not strictly distinguishable from their physical impact. The physical benefits however can be further emphasized by psychological research. Based on the broad empirical data the music psychologist Dr Karl Adamek was able to attain in his research, he was able to conclude that people who sing regularly are physically and mentally healthier than those who do not. They

- have higher self-esteem,
- are more content, confident and balanced,
- are good-humoured and less depressive,
- are less fractious and have a higher frustration tolerance,
- are calmer and less violence-prone,
- are more perceptive, cooperative and charitable.

Altogether, individuals who sing on a regular basis are mentally and emotionally more resilient than those who do not. The act of singing and especially the chanting has a balancing effect. (Adamek 2010: 177–9; cf. Böttger 2008: 26–8, 39.)

This is based on the fact that the expression of feelings is extremely important for our health and well-being. In the course of their lives many people have learned to repress their feelings, which can lead to severe psychosomatic disorders, which again can result in organic affections.

Suppressed feelings such as rage, anger, grief and sorrow entail reactions of stress in the body; thereby hampering the immune system and initiating a cycle of discomfort. Unhindered emotional expression however can help to maintain a healthy balance. In that respect one should be reminded of the high potential of—for example—songs of lament and sorrow for coping with

personal tragedies. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 22–3.) In contrast to the act of talking, singing or chanting involves a much stronger emotional participation. The uttered words and their meanings become perceptible, thereby increasing their positive effect on physical as well as mental processes and strengthening hope and confidence. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 25.)

Implementation of singing/chanting as a therapeutic means or remedy

Due to their favourable qualities, singing and chanting are increasingly implemented in therapeutic programmes. On the one hand we can find self-employed or affiliated music therapists, on the other hand psychotherapists and medical or healthcare staff are increasingly getting acquainted with certain techniques and methods featuring the human voice or musical instruments and music in general.

To vitalize this, national foundations and international networks such as 'il canto del mondo', Musica Humana or the Singing Hospitals engage in research, fundraising, promotion, the education of instructors and so on. This is not an entirely new effort as the implementation of music as therapeutic means in hospitals and healthcare settings has been an issue since the 1940s in the United States, where the National Federation of Music Clubs and the American Red Cross engaged in a project called 'Music in Hospitals' (Gilliland 1944: 18–20). In the following the concept of the 'Singing Hospitals' shall be briefly introduced as an example of such efforts.

The Singing Hospitals
The Singing Hospitals is an international network of medical professionals, music therapists, musicologists, neurobiologists and related groups or initiatives. They aim

- to promote the beneficial effects of singing for health and healing in healthcare settings on an international level. This is accomplished by participating in conferences and organizing special congresses and through various publications by their members;
- to establish a worldwide network of singing groups for patients, former patients, patients' relatives and healthcare staff. Practically this means the establishment of local groups, for example in hospitals and

> hospices, homes for the elderly or the disabled as well as in rehabilitation facilities;
> - to contribute to a positive cultural and social ethos in healthcare settings. The network perceives this as achieved or at least fostered by the bonding effect of singing in groups and also by its spiritual dimension, which leads to an experience of the interconnectedness of everything.[3]

At present the Singing Hospitals network includes hospitals and health centres in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Romania and Sri Lanka. The network has ambassadors in the USA, Argentina, the UK, the Netherlands and many other countries.[4]

The above-mentioned bodies aim to contribute to a positive ethos which leads to the perception or anticipation of a certain set of beliefs, or a certain valuation of the contemporary age shared by the members of the network.

Spiritual impact of singing/chanting

Wolfgang Bossinger, a main representative of the Singing Hospitals, and Wolfgang Friederich indicate that nowadays many people are feeling a void. They have the impression that people are discontent and unhappy about the fast moving consumer society and the decay of moral values. They stress that everybody is a spiritual being with religious and mystical needs—even though these needs have been repressed for a long time due to the rational, technological and scientific orientation of our times. These unfulfilled needs contribute to an impaired condition of mankind that is furthermore reflected in the condition of the humans' overall health. Humans are understood as naturally spiritual beings that need to re-connect with the cosmos—they have to be in tune, unison with the cosmos and its rhythm. In line with a variety of other alternative healing approaches the representatives of the beneficial effects of chanting intend to counteract and provide auxiliary means. In the practice of chanting they detect a return to the roots, because they understand its beneficial and transcendental power to be a primordial knowledge inherent to mankind. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 8–9.)

They emphasize that especially chanting—as distinguished from singing in terms of the already mentioned characteristics—is not only beneficial to

[3]   www.singing-hospitals.com, www.singende-krankenhaeuser.de
[4]   www.singing-hospitals.com, www.singende-krankenhaeuser.de

the physical and mental health, but can also enable individuals to make the leap into spiritual dimensions. It helps to satisfy the human being's need for meaningfulness and fulfillment—without insistence on theoretical insights or dogmas but through allowing each and everyone to partake of and have real feelings and sensations. In that sense chanting facilitates so called 'peak experiences', a term formed by the notable psychologist Abraham Maslow signifying phenomena of sudden mystical experiences, moments of awe and bliss or even entrancement and ecstasy. Moments in which any doubt, anxiety, restraints and frailties are overcome. Actually the ego itself is overcome and the person experiencing this situation feels united with the world and the universe or the divine, respectively. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 8.) This reminds us of the *unio mystica* the members of mystical traditions are striving for. Wolfgang Mastnak stresses that

> the metaphysical aspect of music points to a non-verbally expressible facing of the essential questions of mankind. Sometimes quite close to alternative psychotherapeutic methods such as Rebirthing or Holotropic Integration, the arts, especially music, have opened insights which cannot be explained by scientific research or an everyday life-experience: eternity, the essence of life or the sense of delivering the spirit from the body within the process of death etc. (Mastnak 1993: 80.)

The emeritus Professor Alf Gabrielsson, a musicologist at the University of Uppsala, specialized in these kind of experiences and termed them *Strong Experiences with Music* (SEM). Apart from the already mentioned health-giving effects of singing (and music in general) on the body and the mind or psyche, he and his fellow employees detected that music can evoke open-mindedness and feelings of freedom. Music allows a new understanding and insights regarding relationships, the individual lifestyle and life in general. Music can be utilized to deliberately influence one's own emotional state. It is able to evoke a strong feeling of one's own identity, the terms and conditions of human life and the existence in general.[5]

Wolfgang Bossinger translated this to the practice of singing, where he discovered the same effects, signifying it as *Strong Experiences with Singing* (SES). Within this category he however distinguishes so called *Transcendent Experiences with Singing* (TES) as a sub-category comprising the transcendent or spiritual experiences, which can take the practitioner as far as experi-

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5   http://www.healingsongs.de/042cb89a89012d310/042cb89a89089f508/index.html

encing the mystical unity and interconnectedness of everything. Herein the practitioner enters an altered state of mind to the point of trance.[6] This can be conjured especially by singing chants and mantras that have been passed on and on within religious traditions for centuries and that have been held in honour and sung an inconceivable number of times (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 59).

Theses chants are believed to have a special power in the sense that they are loaded by the emotions and intentions of the myriads of people who have sung them before. Bossinger and Friederich allude to Rupert Sheldrake, an English biologist and author who devised the theory of morphic resonance or morphogenetic fields within which nature (or in our case the chant) saves information that has been gathered by the by and memorized. They influence the further development or impact of the system they belong to.[7] His hypothesis is of course very controversial because for now energetic fields like these cannot be evidenced by scientific methods. Bossinger and Friederich however accentuate this by highlighting empirical observations made in the context of circle singing. Within those participants repeatedly report on the sudden impression that there are many more voices to be heard than singers are participating. Another commonly reported experience is the overtaking of one's own voice by something else. (Bossinger & Friederich 2008: 13–14.)[8]

These experiences and perceptions point to an identification of chanting as a highly valuable instrument to evoke or permit the sensation of spirituality and transcendence.

Conclusion

The potential to experience transcendence and to be affirmed in one's own spirituality as it is ascribed to chanting accords with its beneficial effects on human health. These two aspects of the chanting, utilised in part at the same time by the same persons, movements or institutions, have to be understood as an example of the remarkable present trend towards a more holistic understanding of the world, the cosmos and the human being within it. In post-secular societies the human body, mind and psyche are increasingly

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6   http://www.healingsongs.de/042cb89a89012d310/042cb89a89089f508/index.html
7   Cf. http://www.sheldrake.org/Research/morphic.
8   Observations like these support the reference to an occurrence of trance. Trance again favours spiritual experiences and furthermore has itself a scientifically documented healthful potential.

understood as being interwoven with the world and the cosmos and with other human, non-human and also divine beings. Within this world-view all is different and all is one—everything is interconnected. Consequently religion or spirituality has no specific sphere of its own that is separated from the other spheres of life; it is part of everything and as such it also concerns the human's well-being and health and mingles or goes along with alternative healing methods such as for example in the case of the presented singing or chanting, as elements of spirituality and therapeutic means. One could say that the religious or spiritual side of life is re-established within the profane—not quite like the traditional unilateral religions, but rather in the form of a very individual understanding and actual living of spirituality. Thus in a way secularism is overcome, as is implied by the term post-secular, but also the traditional religion is overcome. Thus, referring to religion the present can be characterized not only as post-secular but also as post-traditional.

This is an interesting and worthwhile challenge for the study of religion, requiring us to acknowledge a wide range of beliefs and activities that are religiously or spiritually influenced, beneficial and healthful at the same time.

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TINA HAMRIN-DAHL

The philosophy of nature as a springboard into social realism

About Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* and a post-secular interpretation of the drama by Hilda Hellwig

Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854) was a significant cultural influence when Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) lived in Germany in the 1850s. However, because of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, which stood out as irreconcilable with the scientific philosophy of the positivists, Schelling came to be more and more neglected after the mid-nineteenth century. His pronounced idealism, belief in God, and metaphysical comments were branded 'old-fashioned' soon after his death. But Schelling's ideas were still there and many thinkers were curious about them. Søren Kirkegaard (1813–55) was one of them. Today, Schelling is mentioned in contexts where ideas about 'mindfulness' are of importance. In 1979 Jon Kabat-Zinn, with a PhD in molecular biology, founded a clinic for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and his programme became a course at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (Kabat-Zinn 1982). Although originally articulated as an element of Buddhism, it is pointed out by committed practitioners that there is nothing inherently religious about mindfulness. It is however about integrating the healing aspects of Buddhist meditation practices with the concept of psychological awareness and healing. To a high degree in Western countries, psychotherapists have adapted and developed mindfulness techniques (Kabat-Zinn *et al.* 1985, Bishop *et al.* 2004).

When it comes to metaphysics, Schelling's influence on the religious ideas that were accepted by Ibsen was never acknowledged. Ibsen is often studied from a Hegelian perspective. This text will throw some light upon Schelling as a source of inspiration for Ibsen and his milieu. Is it so, that Schelling's ideas not until our 'post-secular' epoch have come into their own? Ibsen producers and actors are familiar with 'New World Mindfulness' and the history of mindfulness in the West, from the 'American Founding Fathers', Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), up to present-day

leaders in the field, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn. That Emerson was influenced by Schelling is a well-known fact.

In this 'POST-ERA', with post-empiricists proclaiming the unavailability of absolutely certain knowledge, we are better able to appreciate Schelling's importance than the empiricists did. *Naturphilosophie* is not seen as presenting an obstacle to scientific truth any longer. Now when serious attention is being paid to the role of all aspects of language in scientific discovery, the rigid division between the empirical and the speculative is broken down. Well, the crisis of reason is hardly a new philosophical topic, it was the vital point in the 'Pantheism controversy' which began in 1783. Nihilism was a lurking danger, and Spinozism, that was seen as reducing our understanding of what we are to what science can tell us on the basis of casual laws, was also presenting a threat (cf. Bowie 1993). When Heidegger studied Schelling, he realised that the philosophical debate caused by F. H. Jacobi had an enormous influence on the development of German Idealism. Jacobi's thesis, that speculative metaphysics leads to 'nihilism', became a challenge for the entire Idealistic-Romantic school, and creating a 'system' of 'Being' which was not nihilistic became a task for Hegel. But it was Schelling's ambition to penetrate the nature of Being that later fascinated Heidegger, and his high opinion of Schelling's work was rather unusual at the time (Hedley 2000: 143–5).

Great playwrights

One of the greatest German dramatists of the mid-nineteenth century was Friedrich Hebbel (1813–63), born at Wesselburen in Holstein. In his early twenties, Hebbel wanted to hear Schelling, who lectured in Munich. The journey to Munich was made by foot and he reached the city in September 1836, remaining there until March 1839. Hebbel's two and a half years in Munich were years of solitude, illness, and battles against despair, but they were also the finishing school of his personality. He heard the lectures of Schelling at the university, and his own reading began to suggest to him innumerable subjects for tragedies, such as Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Julian the Apostate, and the Maid of Orleans, in whom Hebbel saw the destiny of mankind typified. A couple of years later, in 1842–3, he spent the winter in Copenhagen, where the Danish-German dramatist Adam Oehlenschläger (1779–1850) helped him (Howard 2004). In the summer of 1802, Oehlenschläger liked the company of the young Norwegian philosopher Henrik Steffens (1773–1845), who then came back to Copenhagen after a long visit in Germany, as a friend of

Schelling, full of new romantic ideas. Thereafter, Friedrich Schelling's philosophy was interpreted in Denmark by Henrik Steffens.

Hebbel and Ibsen were already being compared in 1896 (Berg 1896: 258–73), and in 1908, Josef Wiehr wrote about the close points of similarity between Ibsen and Hebbel, and, of course, Ibsen was very influenced by Hebbel, who was a great favourite (Wiehr 2010). Ibsen was affected by Hebbel to such a high degree, that in 1852, when he read *Das moderne Drama* by Hermann Hettner (1821–82), he saw a lot of Hebbel in Hettner. In fact, it was thanks to Hebbel, that Hettner, a professor in the history of art, learned about the special character dramas, dramatic guilt, and how to give dramatised conflicts depth. It was from Hebbel that Hettner got the idea of a synthesis: to mix classical antiquity with Shakespearian dramas. Hebbel's special talent for developing different productions, tragedies of supraindividual kinds, was part of the nature of the mature artist, and the influence on Hettner's reasoning was immense (Lorenz 1932: 117).

So, in the early 1850s Ibsen attempted to carry on the tradition of Hebbel, and during a study tour of Copenhagen and Dresden in 1852, he came across Hettner's dramaturgical work, newly released in Germany. This programmatic treatise for a new topical theatre deeply affected Ibsen's development as a dramatist. But at the same time, Ibsen was influenced by Kierkegaard. The poetic dimension of aesthetics was not exclusively about the symbolic-allegorical divide. Ibsen drew on a different model altogether, which derived from Kierkegaard's radical re-consideration of the Incarnation and his concomitant theory of indirect communication. This Kierkegaardian paradigm perhaps offers a means of understanding producer Hilda Hellwig's interest in the incarnation/resurrection theme, showing that modernism is not merely a continuation of either the Romantic or Realist traditions. When she produced Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (*Enten – Eller*) at Teater Aurora in 1997, Hellwig was investigating 'fringe areas', as 'resurrection but no Paradise, and vice versa' (private email with Hellwig 30.3.2011 and 8.4.2011).[1]

In October 1841 Kierkegaard went to Berlin, where he attended Friedrich Schelling's lectures. In Berlin for four months, Kierkegaard was very productive: while also taking five courses, he wrote *Either/Or* and *Two Upbuilding Discourses* (*To opbyggelige Taler*). Full of Schelling, Kierkegaard returned to

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1 Parts of *Enten – Eller* were included in the play by Kierkegaard with the title *Hør, Hør, Mozarts 'Don Juan'* that was staged at Det Kongelige Teater in Copenhagen 1968–9. Ingmar Simonsson translated the book into a play for Theatre Aurora in 1986, with the Swedish title *Antingen – eller*.

Denmark and began a period of astounding literary productivity. At the same time, in 1844, Ibsen moved to Grimstad and stayed there until 1850. He was in his early twenties and wrote his first drama: *Catiline* (*Catilina*).[2] When in 1875 Ibsen produced a second edition, Georg Brandes reviewed it, and underlined the fact, that the Oehlenschläger style of diction had been transformed into a style specific to Ibsen (Brandes 2007: 264–5).

The Emperor Julian

Classical antiquity and the tragic Emperor Julian fascinated Ibsen. In 1873, Ibsen published the drama which he himself regarded as his 'main work', or masterpiece: *Emperor and Galilean* (*Kejser og Galilæer*).[3] 'It was a vast historical canvas which he unfolded here, much broader than any of his earlier dramas. Years of painstaking labour, including a close study of the historical sources, went into this evocation of characters and events from a distant past: the Roman Empire of the fourth century AD, and the last twelve years of the life of Julian the Apostate.' (Hemmer 1994.) When Henrik Ibsen was considering the idea of writing a play about Emperor Julian (332–363), he was influenced by the work of Eduard Gerhard, who between 1863 and 1865 published his research on the site of the Great Mysteries of Eleusis. The celebrations of the *Magna Mater* thus became known to Ibsen when he came to Rome in 1864, to do research into the life of Emperor Julian, with the aim of writing a play. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter explains the Eleusinian Mysteries, both in terms of the reunion of the two goddesses, and as a result of the failure of the attempt to immortalise Demophoon, King Keleos of Eleusis' son. When Demeter tried to burn Demophoon's immortal spirit away, she was unable to complete the ritual, because Metaneira (the boy's mother) interfered with the process. According to Mircea Eliade, Demeter did not manage to transform a man into a god (Eliade 1978: 291). Therefore, according to the myth, the initiate into the Eleusinian Mysteries did not obtain immortality. However, through the initiation, the human condition was modified. The few ancient texts that refer directly to the Mysteries emphasise the postmortem bliss of

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2 *Catiline* had the production title *Catilina* on the very first occasion that it was staged. The producer Ludig Josephson presented the play in Swedish, at Nya Teatern in Stockholm, on December 3, 1881.

3 With the production title *Kaiser und Galiläer* opened on February 27, 1896, staged by Akadmischer Studentenverein in Kaimscher Konzertsaal, Munich, Germany.

the initiated: often mentioned are Pindar, Sophocles and Didot (cf. Wasson *et al.* 1998: 87; Hofmann 1997: 31–40). The Eleusinian Mysteries 'can be regarded as a religious system that complemented the Olympian religion and the public cults without, however, opposing the traditional religious institutions of the city. The chief contribution of Eleusis was soteriological in nature, and that is why the Mysteries were accepted and very soon patronised by Athens.' (Eliade 1978: 299.) As Christianity gained in popularity in the fourth and fifth centuries, Eleusis' prestige began to fade. Julian was the last emperor to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The drama

The idea of resurrection was important when Ibsen was planning the new drama, and 'the play *Emperor and Galilean* depicts a dilemma which arises because of the irreconcilable contrasts between the pagan idea of spiritual resurrection. . .and the theological idea demonstrated with the Christian creed of the resurrection of the flesh' (Ólafsson 2008: 22).

In my study of a special production of this particular Ibsen drama, presented in Bergen, Norway, from 24 May to 9 June 2000, by the very competent producer Hilda Hellwig, I try to focus on Hellwig's interpretation and understanding of Ibsen's view, and his reading of Julian, and the spirit of the times, in the middle of the fourth century. But I concentrate on a specific event, a sort of 'postliminal rite' which occurs when Julian has a moment before been initiated into something secret, and the crucified Jesus Christ is present. These symbolic acts, being expressed at several levels, are merged into a dramatic scene that is full to bursting with the 'paschal mystery', as it is seen in trinitarian theology.

The transition period that is portrayed in the play is a time of unrest and upheaval, and in her production, Hilda Hellwig manages to make Ibsen an analyst not only of his own times, but also of the beginning of the twenty-first century. All well-produced, well-organised and concentrated. As the reviewer Hans Rossiné wrote after the première:

> The producer Hilda Hellwig has trimmed down the almost twelve hour long drama to five hours, without losing the all-round effect that comes with the broad perspective, or the enthralling changes of direction that come with the many transitional stages; neither on the inner plane, nor on the outer, are there any pauses to lessen the impact. The production is a

delight; rough and brutal, severe and austere, and visually very well-real-
ised. Whenever the threat of stagnation looms, Hellwig slips a tonal effect
or some kind of sound into the play; changes the volume, or arranges the
actors and scenic settings in an expressive way, all plastic, humorous, chic
and stylish. Hellwig's arrangements give the production vitality through-
out its five hours' duration. (Rossiné 2000.)

Over and over again, the *Emperor and Galilean* has been interpreted by edi-
tors and reviewers as a 'typically Hegelian' play. Halvdan Koht, who published
a *Life of Ibsen* in 1971, 'points out that the idea of gradual evolution of knowl-
edge, manifested in the concept of the third empire, entered quite naturally
into Hegelian dialectics, which seeks to reconcile opposites in a higher unity'
(Ólafsson 2008: 58). Hegel might very well be the lodestar for any Hegelian
scholar who analyses all the Ibsen plays that belong to the so called 'Realist
Cycle', that is the plays from *Pillars of Society* (*Samfundets Støtter*, 1877) to

Den Nationale Scene is the oldest stage still functioning as a great theatre in Norway. It
was inaugurated in 1850, then called 'Det Norske Theater i Bergen'. The founder was Ole
Bull, a world famous violinist and composer. Bjørnsterne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen were
both very active here, Bjørnson as theatrical manager and Ibsen as playwright, dramaturge
and assistant producer. Today, Den Nationale Scene is the most important theatrical stage
outside Oslo. The 3.5 metre high statue of Ibsen, located in front of the theatre, was made
by Nils Raa in 1981. http://v6.cache1.c.bigcache.googleapis.com/static.panoramio.com/
photos/original/40147836.jpg?redirect_counter=1.

When We Dead Awaken (*Når vi døde vågner,* 1899), labelled so by Brian Johnston, who argued that the twelve plays constitute a single, tripartite cycle whose subject is modern humanity undergoing (in Hegelian terms), a great journey of spiritual recollection (Johnston 1992).

Schelling

I do not argue against any of these interpretations, but why has Schelling been forgotten? Ibsen was certainly not well up on Hegel's philosophy, in any profound way. He knew that Hegel saw history from the widest possible perspective: a world-historical view, and in a 'Hegelian way' Ibsen also viewed history as a process of self-realisation, but it was through Georg Brandes and other Danish thinkers that he got Hegel served in sufficiently heavy portions. Ibsen was not deeply penetrating Hegel's grandiose metaphysical system.

Throughout his works Ibsen employs certain fundamental thematic structures, which appear in various forms. One of these is linked to variations on the problems of the liberal dilemma and idealism, and the theme appears in Ibsen's first play *Catiline*—acted in Roman dress—which is based on the revolution of 1848. *Emperor and Galilean* was the last of Ibsen's history plays; from then on he became preoccupied with contemporary issues and addressed these within a modern framework (Rønning 1997: 171–201).

Schelling had opened up the possibility of a modern hermeneutic view of nature that did not restrict nature's significance to what could be established about it in scientific terms. It is clear, that Schelling's critique of Hegelian idealism influenced both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and the latter was embraced by Brandes, who in many ways influenced Ibsen. The playwright realised that no social order can succeed unless it founds itself as carefully upon man's instincts and needs as it does upon the laws that man has discovered in nature (Smith 1911: 147–57).

In Hellwig's production, the years between 351 and 363 symbolize the 'Ages of the World'. Portions of the scenery are Roman, but the people in Athens are dressed in clothes from the 1920s, and there are machine-guns, and television cameras, so that there are all ages in one.

Between 1809 and 1827 Schelling was developing a philosophy of the Ages of the World (*Weltalter*, Schelling 2002). In broad outline, Schelling insisted that there must be that against which freedom can be manifest—a being which is not free and is therefore necessitated—for it to be meaningful freedom at all. The theory is based on the antagonisms between opposing forces

which constitute the 'Ages of the World', past, present, and future. He argued that the world whose origins the *Weltalter* wishes to understand must entail the same conflicting forces which still act, though not necessarily in the same form, in this world, of which the mind is an aspect: poured from the source of things and the same as the source, the human soul has a co-knowledge/con-science (*Mitwissenschaft*) of creation. Schelling suggests that there are two principles in us: an unconscious, dark principle and a conscious principle, which must yet in some way be identical. The same structure applies to what Schelling means by God. As that which makes the world intelligible, God relates to the ground in such a way that the 'real', which takes the form of material nature, is 'in God' but is not God seen absolutely, that is insofar as He exists; for it is only the ground of His existence, it is nature in God, an essence which is inseparable from God, but different from Him. The point is that God would be just some kind of inarticulable, static One if it were not the case that He transcends all. Without opposition, Schelling argues, there is no life and no sense of development, which are the highest aspects of reality (Schelling 2002, Bowie 2010).

One aspect of being, the dark force, which he sometimes terms 'gravity', is contractive, the other expansive, which he terms 'light'. Dynamic processes are the result of the interchange between these ultimately identical forces. If they were wholly separate there would either be no manifest universe, because contraction would dominate, or the universe would dissipate at infinite speed because expansion would dominate. The result would be the same: there would not be a world. If something is to be as something, it must both be pronominal and have a relationship to what it is not (in order to be determinate). This brings it into the realm of predication by taking it beyond itself. In the *Weltalter* the One comes into conflict with itself and the two forces constantly vie with each other. Differences must, however, be grounded in unity, as otherwise they could not be manifest at all as differences. The ground is now increasingly regarded as the source of the transitory nature of everything particular, and less and less as the source of tranquil insight into how we can be reconciled to finite existence. The mood of the *Weltalter* is summed up in Schelling's reference to the 'veil of melancholy which is spread over the whole of nature, the deep indestructible melancholy of all life' (Bowie 1997: 199). The source of this melancholy is that everything finite must 'go to ground' and that we are aware of this (Voegelin 1989–2009).[4]

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4   CW 25 (HPI-VIII), The Last Orientation Chapter 2, Schelling § 6 Promethean Existence, pp. 220–2.

> In *Emperor and Galilean* Ibsen contemplates the idea of resurrection and
> how to respond to that concept. . .constantly reminding the audience of
> the importance of spiritual awareness, of which the playwright obviously
> thinks that a perspective on the idea of resurrection is an inevitable part
> (Ólafsson 2008: 66).

Schelling has Jesus Christ as a mediator, as an 'intermediary being', since
Christ is outside God by virtue of his eternal humanity, outside and inde-
pendent of the human by virtue of his divinity. For Schelling, Christ is neither
divine, nor human, but something in between. Schelling argues that Christ's
resurrection is proof of the irrevocability of the Incarnation.

> If the notion of paganism had not been abstracted from public religion,
> one would long ago have realised how paganism and Christianity were
> together all along and how the latter emerged from the former only by
> making the mystery cults public—a truth that can be deduced historically
> from most of the Christian customs, their symbolic rituals and initiations,
> which were obvious imitations of those prevailing in the mystery cults
> (Schelling 2010: 52).

According to Schelling's philosophy, nature is a 'spirit-degree'/'degree of
spirit', with a soul, expressing and manifesting the striving Will of the World
(*världsviljan*). In the drama produced by Hellwig, the theurg Maximus has a
revelation and is told that Julian is destined to be the instrument of the Will
of the World. This 'tool-election' puts ideas into the head of Julian; he has vi-
sions of 'the Third Empire' on earth, a divine world in the here and now, in
which Hellenism and Christianity, God and Emperor, faith and doubt, soul
and body are being united into One. In Ibsen's text, Julian dies onstage, but
the play ends with a declaration that he will return, reincarnated, to found the
prophesied 'Third Empire' (cf. Sage 2006).[5]

The God-images of the drama

Who was Maximus then, in history? He was a student of Iamblichus (d. 330),
who in turn was a student of Porphyry. Iamblichus made a tripartite division
of Soul, positing a cosmic or All-Soul, and two lesser souls, corresponding to

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5   Paraphrases in Hitler's recorded conversation indicated knowledge of the drama.

the rational and irrational faculties, respectively. This idea led Iamblichus to posit an array of intermediate spiritual beings between the lower souls and the intelligible realm—daemons, the souls of heroes, and angels of all sorts. By placing so much distance between the earthly soul and the intelligible realm, Iamblichus made it difficult for Julian to gain an intuitive knowledge of the higher Soul, although he insisted that everyone possesses such knowledge, coupled with an innate desire for the Good. Iamblichus established the practice of theurgy, which he insisted does not draw the gods down to man, but rather renders humankind (Fowden 1986: 133). What is the sign of the presence of a god or an angel, asks Iamblichus, then: 'I declare that their manifestations are in accordance with their true natures, their potentialities and activities. For as they are, so they appear to those invoking them. . .' (Iamblichus 2003: 87.)

Emperor Julian considered himself to be an integral part of a divine salvific movement. He believed in his personal pre-existence and that his present condition was really a living incarnation brought about by the power of King Helios. Julian seems to have been convinced that he, like the minor deities, had been endowed with qualities that would enable him to perform the mission essentially of being an effective rival of the false god of the Galileans.

In Asia Minor, where Julian spent many years of education, there was a phenomenon that Hellwig evokes, when she puts Julian together with angels and Christ. The most influential sect throughout much of central Anatolia in the fourth century was called 'the Novatian', to whom Easter was of the greatest importance, celebrated to coincide with the Passover. Those Phrygian Christians who celebrated Jewish festivals were problematic to several potentates of the Church Council. In a Novatian inscription, you can read 'I shall sing a hymn for the first angel, who is Jesus Christ', 'precisely reflecting the religious environment of third and fourth century Lycaonia. It treated Christ not as a being who encroached on the uniqueness of God, but as the first of His angels.' (Mitchell 1999: 123.)

Emperor Constantine was a worshipper of Apollo, the sun-god, but via a vision of a solar halo (which he took to resemble a cross), he converted to Christianity, and Julian worshipped Helios. 'The cult of Theos Hypsistos was palpably linked by many followers with worship of the sun' (Mitchell 1999: 124). In the area in which Julian lived, Helios and Zeus were inveterate pagan gods, according to Christians.

> The cult of Zeus Hypsistos in Greece and Macedonia surely developed from local roots. . .[but] [t]he concept of a highest god and his angels is likely to have evolved independently in the unhellenized communities of the interior Asia Minor. . .it drew on an indigenous tradition which favoured both monotheism and an ascetic religious morality. (Mitchell 1999: 126.)

A quasi-monotheistic worship was successful:

> The notion of a supreme and abstract deity, supported by lesser divine beings. . .found a perfect expository partner in Neoplatonic philosophy. This enabled a popular cult to evolve into a highly sophisticated theological system, which appealed to intellectuals and the educated elite as well as to ordinary people. (Mitchell 1999: 127.)

Hypsistarians, the worshippers of the Hypsistos, the 'Most High God', belonged to various groups, mostly in Asia Minor (Cappadocia, Bithynia and Pontus), from 200 BC to about AD 400. 'Hypsianistai' and 'Hypsianoi' first occur in Gregory of Nazianzus (*c.* 329–89/90), and 'Hypsistianoi' appears about 374 in a text by Gregory of Nyssa (*c.* 335–95). A great number of votive tablets, inscriptions and oracles of Didyma and Klaros establish beyond doubt that the cult of the Hypsistos, often with the addition of Zeus or Attis, or Theos, was widespread around the Bosphorus. Klaros often delivered her prophesies in a dark crypt-like *adyton* under the Temple of Apollo, reminiscent of the pit in which Hellwig put Maximus during the event that I will focus on. In Acts 16:17 you have: 'these men are servants of the most high God', and the Hypsistarians mentioned were then connected to the oracle of the pythonissa at Philippi (Arendzen 2011).

> Both Hypsistarian worship and magical practice involve the lighting of lamps, while the Magical Papyri, the Chaldean Revelations, and the prophecies delivered by late antique oracles often suggest that the first principle is fiery, or they identify it with the sun. Admittedly this is a supra-mundane sun, as in Julian's Hymn to King Helios. (Athanassiadi & Frede 1999: 18.)

In Hellwig's production, each religious hero has a blood-stained handkerchief wrapped around his head, but this symbol of some kind of belonging, a marker of intellectual fellowship, indicating that the wearer has been initiated into

a mystery cult, can also be interpreted as a sign of mortality. Merely human, not divine! In the Gospel of John (20:6–9), the immortal, divine One, has his head cloth wrapped up and put away, because he is coming back from the dead.

Even if Ibsen was fascinated by Neo-Platonism, he was stuck in his trinitarian belief. The fact that he decided to have his funeral in the Holy Trinity Church (Trefoldighetskirken), does more than merely indicate that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, with three hypostases in one divine Being (*Ousia*), was Ibsen's belief, after all. Whatever attributes and power 'God the Father' has, 'God the Son' and 'God the Holy Spirit' also have power. Thus, 'God the Son' and 'God the Holy Spirit' are also eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely loving, omniscient. The doctrine developed from the biblical language used in New Testament passages and took substantially its present form after Emperor Julian's death, by the end of the fourth century, as a result of controversies concerning the proper sense in which to apply to God and Christ terms such as 'person', 'nature', 'essence', and 'substance'.

Toril Moi (2006) sees the *Emperor and Galilean* as a play that looks ahead, indicating progress, a step into modernity. But there is, in Hellwig's interpretation, another future taking us beyond modernity. An aesthetically grounded idealism that asserts the progressive unity of ego and non-ego, humanity and nature, God and the world—a very good example of a post-secular event. This implies that Schelling is teaching Hebbel, and in the great play *Emperor and Galilean*, the panentheism of Schelling (at his time, spoken of as 'pantheism') becomes a trinitarian panentheism, thanks to Hilda Hellwig's *Fingerspitzengefühl* and ability to interpret Ibsen's subtext better than any director previously has done. She has discovered the process philosophy that carries a process theology, which can be labelled panentheism, expressed in many ways, sometimes just hinted at in a frame story, through the interplay between Ibsen himself and his protagonist. Both the young and the old Ibsen come down from heaven (on ropes that lowered the actors) to follow the drama, symbolising the active One, taking part in the world that is a component of God, who is more than the world. According to Schelling, God's self-actualisation requires free human action. The procession of things from God is God's self-revelation. But God can only reveal himself in creatures who resemble him, in free, self-activating beings (Schelling 1936).

World history is God's history, and it is redemptive history. Contrary to Hegel, Schelling denies that philosophy can dispel the mystery of God, which is rooted in divine–human freedom. Ibsen, who through Hellwig combines

trinitarian panentheism with human freedom in a non-deterministic view of history, reflects more of Schelling than Hegel.

I will focus on 'the crucified God', who plays an important role in the plot of the play that is under scrutiny here. Schelling said something that Jürgen Moltmann emphasises: 'Every being can be revealed only in its opposite. Love only in hatred, unity only in conflict.' (Moltmann 1974: 27.) To Christians at the end of Julian's reign, God was revealed as God in his opposite, it was about godlessness and abandonment by God. In concrete terms, God was revealed on the cross of the Christ who was abandoned by God. Through the cross on stage in Bergen, which Christ freely walks away from, we realise that a dialectical exposition of the crucifixion is complex. The relation between God and Jesus on the cross is not between the immutable, transcendent God and the human nature of Jesus, but within God. What happened on the cross is an event between God and God. The drama presents a deep division in God himself, insofar as God abandoned God and contradicted himself, and also presents at the same time a unity in God, insofar as God was at one with God and corresponded to himself. This dialectical division and reconciliation within God is how the persons of the Trinity become who they are. These persons constitute themselves in their relationship with each other. The Father and the Son constitute one another in their mutual, suffering love. The Son suffers in his love being forsaken by the Father as he dies. The Father suffers in his love the grief of the death of the Son. The Spirit is the spirit of love between the Father and the Son. Thus the Trinity is actualised on the cross. Without the cross there would be no Trinity (cf. Moltmann 1974). This is not a Hegelian way of thinking. Hegel posits the negation of the Father in the incarnation of the Son and then the negation of the Son in the crucifixion. Both Father and Son are dialectically transformed into the Spirit that lives in the Church and Christendom.

To Ibsen, God is an event, he is not a heavenly person or a moral authority. A free Christian person prays in God, in this event, through the Son to the Father in the Spirit. He participates in the event of God. Ibsen affirms God and human freedom, but rejects the traditional view of God. God is not only other-wordly but also this-wordly, he is not only God, but also man; he is not only rule, authority and law, but the event of suffering, liberating love. Here we have process theology, since Ibsen recognises two divine natures: God both transcends the world and is immanent in history, God and humans participate in a common history. In the dialectical tradition that was popular when Ibsen wrote the play, an idea about the crucified God can use an implicit panentheism. If we think of the Trinity as a dialectical event, indeed

as the event of the cross and then as eschatologically open history, we can understand that Ibsen saw Julian as participating in the trinitarian process of God's history. There is a divine pathos, as presented by Makrina: God's feeling our feelings and suffering our pain. Maximus says, that the world-will shall answer for Julian's soul. The more history progresses, the more God becomes One. Since divine unification involves not only the three persons but also creation, Ibsen's trinitarianism is panentheistic as well as eschatological. God's full self-unity depends upon his complete communion with creation. Ibsen does not cross the border, in his belief, but he lets Julian show signs of tritheism, affirming three divine beings without ontological unity. Ibsen adopts an ontology of persons that is social: personal existence is essentially communal and developmental. Surveying the concepts of the divine person in the history of trinitarian theology, he discovered in Hegel the view that he looked for. The substantial understanding of person (Boethius) and the relational understanding of person (Augustine) was now expanded by the historical understanding of person (Hegel). The persons do not merely 'exist' in their relations, they also realise themselves in one another by virtue of self-surrendering love. As persons in this sense, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute One God. But it was not Ibsen's mission to provide a strong ontological account of essential, divine unity. Hegel's social ontology implies that persons are essentially interdependent and that communities are ontological units that are more than aggregates of individuals. As Schelling knew, Hegel's analysis does not make social units anything other than communities of persons. A family is ontologically real, but even a perfect family unit is not an analogy for the oneness of God. Through the words of Makrina, the entire history and destiny of the world became included in the life of the Trinity. Ibsen gives a hint through Julian. Like Schelling and the Neo-Platonic tradition, Ibsen views history as the means by which God actualises and finally transcends the primordial non-being inherent in himself. Ibsen does not, like Hegel, assimilate Christianity into philosophy. When lecturing in Berlin in 1831, Hegel asserted that the immanent Trinity precedes history. He called it the kingdom of the Father, and saw history in terms of the kingdom of the Son that would be reconciled to the kingdom of the Father in and through the kingdom of the Spirit. Thus, Hegel affirms that the suffering and death of Jesus enter eternally into the life of the Trinity. Otherness, the negative, is known to be a moment of the divine nature itself. The dialectics of Hegel constrains God's actions. From a post-secular perspective, God must be free to be God. Yet this freedom constitutes itself in love. Beyond being and non-being, the Trinity nonetheless freely ties itself to what it has created. It does

so because it is love: among other things, the doctrine of the Trinity means that God's very act of being is social. The divine persons exist as relations, not subjects, the theology of history therefore has to be rejected. Discussions around the doctrine are mere hairsplitting (Herrick 2006; Moltmann 1977: 64). But according to Kevin Hart, the Trinity is not offered to experience in the present moment. It offers itself, rather, as a trace that passes through those experiences that help bring on the Basileia (Hart 2003: 153–73).

Ibsen employed a trinitarian way of thinking, but could easily switch to tritheism, and through Hellwig it becomes clear: the primary goddess can equally well be called Hecate, and in her Persephone aspect she exemplifies the Greek idea of non-being while in her Demeter aspect she is the Hellenic form of the idea of the All-Mother. The idea of non-being in Greek religion forms the root-aspect of being (cf. Kerényi 1935). In the Eleusinian Mysteries the Kore and Demeter are connected, the daughter as a goddess originally independent of her mother is unthinkable, since there is a primordial identity of mother and daughter. Persephone's whole being is summed up in an incident that is at once the story of Demeter's own sufferings. The daughter's being is revealed like a flash in her mother's. The double-figure of Demeter and the Kore unfolds into three divinities: Hecate, Demeter, and Persephone. At the centre of Hecate's sphere of influence stands the moon. Karl Kerényi defined the world of Hecate as the lunar aspect of the Demeter world. Fertility and death are somehow related to those aspects of the world ruled by the moon. When Julian was initiated, it was in honour of Persephone, but at the same time in honour of Demeter, and Hecate too was operative. When Hellwig put Maximus in the underworld on stage, it was above all the underworldly Persephone, the Queen of the Dead, to whom the road of this initiation led. The head of Julian, the initiant, was wrapped in a blood-stained cloth, a symbol of darkness (brides in antiquity and those devoted to the Underworld were also veiled). The triad of the Mother, Daughter and the moon-goddess Hecate can be seen together on sacred monuments; the torch appears to be the attribute of each of them. The light-bringing torch is characteristic not only of Hecate, since it plays an important part in the Demeter and Persephone cult. Even outside the Homeric world, Hecate is a second Demeter (Rudloff 1999: 57–8; cf. Kerényi 1950). Besides her Kore quality, her affinity with the moon and with a primitive world of ghosts, a sort of motherliness also pertains to the idea of Hecate. It is not the classical, nor still later, Hectate that comes closest to the fundamental idea, but an original Demeter and Hecate in one person (Jung & Kerényi 1969: 133).

Finishing off

According to Schelling, mythology is a phenomenon which in its profundity, permanence, and universality is comparable only with Nature itself. Ibsen agreed with him on that: whether we look at trinitarian theology, or mythology, in the drama *Emperor and Galilean*, history counts; but we can anticipate the 'social models' of trinitarian theology that became part of 'modernism'. Through this grand drama, Ibsen keeps pre-Hegelian German ideology alive. Ibsen took human acts of intellect and will as a way of explicating the mystery of the Trinity and the immanent processions.[6]

A characteristic feature of Hellwig's production is a very strong emphasis on the personal, relational, and social aspect of being, as well as the ramifications of this for human beings, coupled with a rejection of any hint of an essentialist metaphysics that accords priority to categories of substance over categories of relation. In our post-secular era, we can experience a production in which the sheer mystery of the Trinity, as revealed in Jesus, is brought out: a profoundly inspired and highly evocative reflection on the Trinity as it is revealed in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.[7] Ibsen (through Hellwig) explicates God's being, through Makrina, in terms of the self-emptying, self-sacrificing, and intrinsically dynamic nature of love, as revealed in the paschal mystery.[8] In this we can see a sophisticated critique of Augustinian-Thomistic trinitarian theology. In contrast to the social models, it is suddenly doxological. Faith is first of all an aesthetic act, it is a seeing or a beholding, before it is a believing and before it finds expression in praxis. The whole drama expresses the new religion that Schelling was aiming for, but it is not labelled as a religion.

Hilda Hellwig has demonstrated a drama in which different religions are very important, but everything is there to be contemplated, not served up in order to give something specific a plug. The frustration of doubt is handed over to the audience as a phenomenon to be pondered on here and now in

6   And there is black humour, as, analogous to Jesus' 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?', Julian whines: 'Oh, Helios, Helios, why didst thou betray me?'

7   The Paschal Mystery refers to the suffering (sometimes called the passion), death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ. The essence of the work the Father sent Jesus to do on earth is referred to as the Paschal Mystery. The word 'paschal' comes from a Hebrew word meaning 'the passing over'.

8   'Den mildt gudfryktige Makrina (Stine Varvin) sier til Julian i en fin og bevegende scene: "Kristus er ikke død. Ditt hat til ham gjør at han lever, like meget som min kjærlighet til ham gjør det."' (Rossiné 2000.)

a positive way. Hellwig demonstrates an object lesson in mindfulness. Schelling thought, that out of the symbolic classical antiquity and the allegorical modernity, a new religion would sprout up. Christianity was not the goal of history, but a way there, its outer form should dissolve and disappear. After 200 years of secularisation, we might wonder if 'a new religion' is the religious phenomenon he was thinking of. In Schelling's mind, the new religion's most excellent quality would be that nature was reborn as a symbol

Trond Espen Seim, who is a well-known film actor, has a background in theatre (educated at Statens teaterhøgskole). While working at Den Nationale Scene in the year 2000, he was awarded the 'Hedda Prize', for his part as Julian in *Emperor and Galilean*. The prize has a very high prestige among stage people and in Norwegian theatrical/drama circles. Here we can see a cruciformed emperor. Photo by Jan Lundberg.

of the eternal unity, and in its traces a new, deeper symbolic art would appear, a synthesis built up on Greek nature symbolism and Christian modern 'infinite allegory'. With Schelling's philosophy of nature as a messenger, or maybe a 'harbinger', the mindfulness of Jon Kabat-Zinn *et consortes* has entered the stage. Schelling's philosophy of nature, particularly his intention to construct a programme which covers both nature and the intellectual in a single system and method, and restore nature as a central theme of philosophy, has been re-evaluated in the contemporary context. Each stage is a thesis that eventually runs into its own limitations, which triggers a self-transcendence to a new synthesis, which both negates and preserves its predecessor. Thus, spirit tries to know itself first through sensation, then perception, then impulse. At this point, spirit is still unselfconscious, thus Schelling refers to the whole of Nature as a 'slumbering spirit'.

Nature is a self-organising, dynamic system, but it is, according to Schelling, spirit slumbering because spirit has not yet become self-conscious. With the emergence of mind, spirit becomes self-conscious. Spirit seeks to know itself through symbols, concepts, and reason, and the result is that the universe begins to think about the universe, which produces the world of reason and, in particular, the world of conscious morals. Thus, says Schelling, where nature was objective spirit, mind is subjective spirit. In the world of mindfulness, spirit goes out of itself to produce objective nature, awakens to itself in subjective mind, and then recovers itself in pure, non-dual percep-

tion, where subject and object are one pure act of non-dual awareness that unifies both nature and mind in realised spirit (Wilber 2008).

A long drama by Ibsen is mindfulness, both to the actors and the spectators, because 'wherever you go, there you are'. The practice of pantheist mindfulness can very well be what Schelling hoped for. When pantheists 'take a walk in the woods'—they engage in fundamental spiritual devotion. By so doing they refresh themselves, and feel peace and joy in nature. Pantheists are engaged in the reality. There is no argument about 'your beliefs *vs.* my beliefs'. They think that the practice of pantheist mindfulness enhances the relationship with the sacred that is the whole point of religion (Wood 2005). According to Schelling, nature is one of the stages of development by an autonomous, primary principle that is the Self. Nature exists because Self preliminarily was nature. In Ibsen's poem, *On the Heights* (*På Vidderne*), the main character of the poem needed time alone in the mountains to be able to decide what life to choose. Ibsen's text is interpreted as being based on deep eco-philosophical thinking; Ibsen shares his joy and enthusiasm about life in the mountains. He promotes a simple, beautiful, and seductive life in nature *(Elgvin 2009)*. The drama discussed in this text, *Emperor and Galilean*, was set up in 2000 at Den Nationale Scene (see picture above). Henrik Ibsen was one of the first writers-in-residence and art-directors of the theatre. From the end of May until the beginning of June, the most dazzling, flowery time of the year, with glowing mountains surrounding the gorgeous stage, the drama was to many spectators interested in 'pantheist mindfulness' a 'religious experience', irrespective of definitions of 'religion'.

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ANNE-CHRISTINE HORNBORG

'Are you content with being just ordinary?
Or do you wish to make progress and be outstanding?'

New ritual practices in contemporary Sweden

This article examines the emergence and features of new practices in contemporary Sweden, which are being sold to individuals as therapy or coaching in order for them find their 'inner potential' as a means to achieve health, self-realisation and prosperity in life as well as in work. The focus on the inner self and the formation of a new personhood demands new ritual creativity, responding to the individual's longing for intense experiences of transformation and the authentic self. The development of a new outlook on the self is thus the focus of these practices, that is to say, individuals are encouraged to stage new ways to perform themselves. In this construction of a new self, or the image of an ideal self, the layman therapist or coach is very much in demand. In order to discuss these new practices, I have chosen one out of a myriad of enterprises: Health Academy Europe (Hälsoakademin Europa). One reason for a closer study of this enterprise is that it was one of the coaching enterprises chosen in 2009 by the Swedish public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) to give employment coaching, when the Swedish government allocated 300 million euros to buy the services of 1,500 coaches to help approximately 250,000 unemployed Swedes to get work (Hornborg 2009a–b).

From New Age to Next Age

When what scholars have referred to as New Age practices were introduced into Swedish society in the 1960s they were part of a counter-culture including alternative movements against consumer culture. Fifty years later we see less of a cultural critique in contemporary alternative practices, but rather an increasing focus on the individual, who today will not merely be enchanted and enlightened by spiritual wisdom in private life: now the individual can also be given the opportunity to explore a variety of techniques in order to

be enlightened and successful in the market-led society. Massimo Introvigne has discussed this shifting perspective as a 'Next Age' and describes (2001: 59) this further development as the second stage of the New Age movement. Individual happiness, self-development and prosperity are more in focus than the transformation of society and this shift includes a commercialisation of the practices involved.

Paul Heelas has examined how New Age practitioners in the UK in the 1990s developed new ways of selling their courses and expanding into workplaces. The courses were marketed as means to 'enable the person to operate more successfully in obtaining what the world has to offer' (Heelas 1993: 107; cf. Hornborg 2010a, 2007a; Salamon 2002, 2005). Heelas classifies the new rhetoric behind these courses as 'the language of individualistic enterprise culture', employing practices which trigger feelings of being newborn in the 'heartland of capitalism' (Heelas 1993: 107). Often these courses in self-development use a specific psychological (or, as Heelas labels it, 'quasi-secular') jargon and promote the idea that the individuals have unknown inner resources, which with the right guidance, could be released, making them more aware of their potential. From this notion, it does not take much to transform 'the potential' into an idea of a single source, or an essence, dwelling deep inside the individual, as a spiritual quality. Or as Heelas puts it (1993: 108): '. . .what lies within now lies beyond the ego'.

Most of these new entrepreneurs at first followed the practices of the 1960s counter-culture movements in rejecting religion, pronouncing it to be hierarchical, dogmatic, and offering mostly formulaic rituals (Hammer 2004: 298). As an alternative some of them promoted a spirituality which was said to have the capacity to bring empowerment into the life of the individual. In order to put this 'inner, empowering Source' into practice, a new category of courses was constructed to improve the capacity of the individuals in the service of the company (Heelas 1992; Bovbjerg 1995, 2001). The historian of religions Joel Haviv (2007: 11) analyses these courses as cosmic capitalism, and describes them as a new phenomenon in contemporary society. They have been generated by a change in the market society, caused by the growth of an immaterial economy. The aim of these new practices is that workplaces shall be benefited by releasing inner human resources, hidden inner energies and so forth. In order to materialise this project, new staffs of consultants, therapists and coaches are in great demand and their mission is to stimulate the transformation of the individual. Capitalist society and the market have become enchanted arenas, where individuals realise cosmic visions of the capacities of their inner selves.

NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), coaching, mindfulness and meditation are examples of practices being used to stimulate the growth of this cosmic capital. Haviv lists (2007: 4) some of the core values needed to promote 'cosmic capitalism', such as intuition, charisma, creativity, flexibility and engagement. Often the aims of the new practices are framed in a spiritualised rhetoric, including terms such as vision, path, mission (Salamon 2001: 155, see also Salamon's analysis of spiritual leadership in 2002 and 2005). One of the main prerequisites for introducing these new practices is globalisation, which makes it possible to introduce religious practices such as the Buddhist practice of *sati* in a Western context under the auspices of the popular concept of mindfulness. Another important factor is the impact of popular culture and the media which in symbiosis with a late modern therapeutic culture (Furedi 2004) puts the individuals and their life-stories at the centre, as is evidenced in talk-shows, soap operas, blogs, Twitter and so on. This Western, individualistic project of acting out one's private life in a public arena is also reflected in the new practices at workplaces, including finding the real or authentic Self.

Examples from Sweden: a brief history

How is the presence of these Next Age practices visible in Swedish society? Reports from studies in the early 2000s drew attention to the fact that various forms of illness were on the increase in Sweden (SCB 2004). The need for different kinds of treatments, including courses in dealing with stress and shortcomings in individuals' private and working lives, had also opened up a market for new practices in Sweden in the late 1990s, which also offered their services to societal institutions. At first the new entrepreneurs sold neo-spiritual, or quasi-scientific therapies, including courses in training to become therapists. To these therapeutic activities were later on added coaching and coaching training courses. Coaching in Sweden is a new phenomenon, originally used in sports as a win-win concept, and later on transferred into a practice to develop good leadership skills in workplaces. Today coaching practices have rapidly increased and are now sold as practices for individual treatments (for example life coaching) as well as practices in the workplace (for example management coaching). Often coaching and layman therapies are sold by the same enterprises or entrepreneurs. These healing or coaching treatments and educational courses have developed outside the formal Swedish education system, and are not included in the control or validation

processes overseen by formal societal institutions such as Högskoleverket (the Swedish Agency for National Education, an authority for higher education) or Socialstyrelsen (the National Board of Health and Education, a government agency in Sweden, which applies supervision to ensure that medical standards are observed, and to improve patient safety). The new, ritual entrepreneurs are prohibited according to the Swedish law from using what society has defined and protected as titles (for example *legitimerad psykoterapeut*— registered psychotherapist), but have instead invented new titles similar to this protected title, such as authorised, certified, diploma'd, accredited or licensed therapist[1]. Since the title coach (as is therapist) is not a protected one in Sweden, everyone is free to use it and often the term coach is combined in the enterprises with the same prefix as that used by their layman therapists.

We thus find in Sweden a similar development of these new therapies and coaching activities, as was described by Heelas in the UK during 1990s. In many of these practices the notion of finding the spiritual essence within the individual is in focus. More often, this image is converted into an image of an 'inner potential', an essence in urgent need of being liberated to bring flow to an individual's life. 'Potential' has become the new key word, and it is found on nearly every coach or layman therapist's homepage. The concept is mostly embedded in a quasi-scientific rhetoric, but regardless if the inner essence of humanity is introduced as being spiritual or coined into quasi-scientific words such as potential, we come up against a religious mode of thinking here. Cecilie Eriksen characterises this mode of thinking as 'spiritual essentialism'; the image of an inherent inner, empowering, divine kernel, which the individual should seek out and develop (Eriksen 2007: 81; cf. Haviv 2007: 147; Frisk 1997: 91; Ahlin 2001: 222).

In order to reinforce this concept of a hidden Self, the new ritual practices are designed as individual-centred performances aimed at developing a new orientation in life for the individual and are often followed by intense feelings of inner transformation. Catherine Bell has even proclaimed the birth of a new paradigm of ritual, which is emerging to attract individuals in contemporary society:

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1   The Swedish title *legitimerad psykoterapeut* is tricky to translate into English, since licensed and authorised are not protected titles and signify the title of an alternative therapist.

114

> In this newer model, ritual is a medium of expression, a special language suited to what it is there to express, namely, internal spiritual-emotional resources tied to our true identities, but frequently unknown and undeveloped. . .The new paradigm is directed more inward than outward, apt to define community and society in terms of the self rather than the self in terms of the community. (Bell 1997: 241; cf. Hornborg 2010a–b, 2007a–b, 2006.)

In spite of the practitioners' reluctance to talk about their practices as rites, there are reasons, with Bell's definition of the new rituals in mind, to classify them as such. The acts of designing the 'inner self' are ritualised and cast within a formal framing, suited for late modern society, which focuses on 'internal spiritual-emotional resources' and 'our true identities'.

Several of these expanding neo-spiritual and coaching activities are influenced by the idea of mind–body therapy, which has been classified as 'varieties of techniques designed to enhance the mind's capacity to affect bodily functions and symptoms' (FAS 2007: 5). Also a typology of rituals of what Catherine Bell has classified as East–West hybrids are popular and marketed as yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, Qi gong, Reiki and so forth. She says that in these hybrids 'doctrine and ethical teachings are downplayed in favour of language that stresses highly personal processes of transformation, realisation, and commitment' (Bell 1997: 189–90). One example of these very popular East–West hybrids is the previously mentioned mindfulness. In a similar way as spirituality in neo-spiritual or some coaching contexts is introduced as a universal human essence, rites such as the Buddhist practice of *sati* are disembedded from their religious context and introduced as a pure technique. They are practised in at least three contexts in Sweden: in clinical therapy as stress reduction, in Buddhist religious contexts, but principally in the new, expansive sector of private enterprises which offer mindfulness techniques to individuals or workplaces as a means of reducing stress, anxiety and of increasing working capacity.

One of these enterprises which offers both coaching and layman therapy is the Health Academy. Since it is one of the coaching companies in Sweden that was employed to give employment coaching, I will now continue this article by introducing and discussing this enterprise as one example of these new, self-certified entrepreneurs and practices.

Health Academy Europe

The Health Academy was founded in 1995 by two women, and has been to date (2011) expanding, now offering a variety of courses, including ones which offer individuals training to become therapists, coaches, or to experience 'happiness and mindfulness'. The leaders have, among a variety of newly constructed titles, chosen to refer to themselves as a certified (therapist or coach) or diploma'd coach of health. The focuses of the practices are health, rehabilitation, coaching and how to feel good. On the website of the enterprise there is a video which starts with a group of women dressed in white walking along a sandy beach (just to mention: the leadership in layman therapy and coaching could be estimated at 80 % female). The message is that the Health Academy uses cognitive methods in its therapeutic and coaching practices, and it declares that the solution to a variety of problems lies within the individual: 'you are your future' (Health Academy 2011k). According to the spokesmen, 4,000 participants over 15 years have been involved in the enterprise's activities. In the marketing of the Health Academy's services, the enterprise stresses its unique competence, which is 'to support individuals in reaching their goals, by applying, amongst other things, mental training, mindfulness, and training in communication skills' (Health Academy 2011h). The message is 'Are you content being just ordinary? Or do you wish to make progress and be outstanding?' (Health Academy 2010b)— both the coach and therapist training courses are said to provide 'an inner as well as an outer journey' (Health Academy 2011e). The goal is described thus: 'what we together create will cultivate your—and others'—lives' (Health Academy 2011c).

Inner potential as a key concept

How can practices such as the ones the Health Academy offers be classified? What is the key concept in these practices? In 2006 the Health Academy had 'spirituality' on their website as a part of their educational programme to become a certified coach, but in 2011 references to spirituality are all gone (Health Academy 2006).

Today the Health Academy, like similar enterprises, prefers instead to refer to the key concept of 'inner potential'. One reason for abandoning the image of an empowering spirituality in coaching (and therapeutic) practices and introducing 'potential' instead could be that this concept is easier to market to public institutions. The goal for a certified therapist is to '. . .offer guidance

for individuals to find and express their unique *potential* in order to follow a path to greater freedom and human growth' (Health Academy 2010a: 4, my italics). Potential is also a key-word for the certified coach, who is given the goal to '. . .release the full *potential* of the individuals, in private life and at the workplace' (Health Academy 2011f: my italics). This inner potential is further referred to in explaining why the individual is responding in different ways in communicating with others: 'When I meet some people, I become my potential and when I meet others I move as far from it as possible. I can see that who I become, and am, is to a great extent a function of how others view me, how they relate to me, and if they relate to my potential or not.' (Health Academy 2011i.)

The concept of inner potential comes close to what Cecilie Eriksen defined above as 'spiritual essentialism'. But how can we classify these practices? Are they rites? This focus on the inner self—'potential'—and the formation of a new, late modern selfhood demands surely a new, ritual creativity. The Health Academy's practices could be analysed as formalised acts which follow these new ritual models, the individual-centred rites, using a 'special language', aiming to express 'internal spiritual-emotional resources', as described above by Bell. The enterprise's advice is to 'lead yourself and others to a harmonious life!' (Health Academy 2011k) and the goal is to design improvement for the life of the individual by employing these kinds of individual-centred rites: 'The practice of coaching is thus offered for all kinds of being in the world: life coaching, health, career. . .even in working with developing organisations, management coaching and a coaching leadership' (Health Academy 2011f). Coaching, defined as an individual-centred rite, will give an individual the means to transcend the 'ordinary' everyday life and thus find a more unique and self-fulfilled position in this new life.

Science as the key reference

When the alternative, or counter-culture movement known as New Age developed in the 1960s, many practitioners had an ambivalent relationship to science. Some of them clearly marked a difference—their practices were radically different from scientifically based ones: some said that science had limited techniques and that they added alternative practices to fulfil healing outcomes, while others said that science and alternative practices were in parallel, only using different languages (Hammer 2004: 238–41). But for the Next Age practices, science has become an important point of reference in

the branding of enterprises. In order to sell their courses to 'secular' individuals, as well as to public institutions, it is important for the Health Academy and similar practices to gain legitimacy. They clearly stress that they work according to scientific methods—in this case the cognitive method—including referring to research reports at the Departments of Psychology at Lund and Stockholm University. But what is not said is that Health Academy layman therapy is not included in these research reports, nor do they mention that it is not even included in the universities' programmes.

The Health Academy has chosen 'academy' as a key word in the branding of their enterprise's name and writes on its homepage about the training of certified therapists:

> We have a partnership agreement with Lund University. The Health Academy AB works with the Department for Service Management at Lund University. This partnership implies that students at the university may get in contact with us during their education, including as part of lectures and academic project works. (Health Academy 2010a: 2.)[2]

Their coaching training prospectus also refers to a 'partnership with Lund University which for us is. . .an inspiration and for you a guarantee of quality' (Health Academy 2010b: 2), but in what way Lund University can guarantee the quality of the enterprise's education is not explained. Further the enterprise refers to studies carried out at Stockholm University concerning the benefit of using cognitive models in working with stress and mental illness:

> Sick-leave, allowances and production losses caused by mental illness in Sweden cost billions each year. Organisations which use cognitive methods for their employees may, according to the above-mentioned examinations, reduce the amount of sick leave taken and thereby reduce production losses. (Health Academy 2010b: 3.)

2   According to the Dean of the Department for Service Management, the enterprise has been invited to the department to introduce their company, but the Health Academy's education is not a part of the university. The Dean says there are partnership agreements with many companies whose activities are of interest to the Department for Service Management, but which in no way imply that within the frame of this partnership any validation of the enterprise is undertaken. (Personal communication with the Dean, September 10, 2010.)

Thus the Health Academy also introduces its training courses and treatments as having a 'cognitive orientation': '[t]he Health Academy AB has chosen the cognitive method as part of the coaching training course, since it has well documented beneficial effects' (Health Academy 2010b: 3).

In validating the enterprise, the Health Academy refers to students at the Department of Psychology at Lund University who are said to have conducted a survey about the coaching training course, which shows that approximately 3/4 of all the participants who have finished their coaching education at the Health Academy saw positive changes in their general condition of health, in their ability to handle stress and in their prosperity in both their private and professional lives. Further, the results show that approximately 90 per cent of the participants experienced improvements concerning their working skills, relationships, ability to work according to goals and competencies (Health Academy 2010b: 4–5).[3]

When the Health Academy offers the course in 'Happiness and Mind-fulness' it is introduced like this: 'The most popular course in the student body at Harvard has now come to Sweden! The course is based on scientific research which is introduced in a happy, easy-going and fun manner.' (Health Academy 2011g.)

The above quotations show that science and references to scientific reports are important for the Health Academy. Since the enterprise and its education is not a part of the formal Swedish educational system and the public authority that oversees higher educational institutions, it refers, as do many other Swedish coaching companies, to membership of ICF, the International Coach Federation, which presents itself thus:

> . . .founded in 1995, the ICF is the leading global organisation dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification, and building a worldwide network of accredited coaches. . .With more than 17,000 professional personal and business coaches representing more than 100 countries, the ICF is the voice of the global coaching profession. (Coach Federation 2011.)

3   According to the Dean at the Department for Psychology, Lund University, it is not with the Department itself that this cooperation has been agreed, but the enterprise has asked students in psychology to act as consultants in order to produce these reports (Health Academy 2010b: 4–5).

Although the ICF is one of the largest organisations of coaches, there are many others in the United Kingdom and USA, and it is hard to judge which one of these to choose as the most credible (Coutu & Kaufman 2009: 96). Also it is not indicated how the ICF validates or reviews the practices of each coaching entrepreneur.

Prosperity and branding

For the Health Academy coaching is a means of becoming prosperous —'Coaching gives prosperity' (Health Academy 2011f)—in private as well as in professional life: 'The training course for a certificate in coaching sees the individual as a whole. A human being who experiences a balance between work and leisure time and is in a good relationship with family and friends not only feels better, but performs more effectively in all areas of life.' (Health Academy 2010b: 2.) The Health Academy says its ambition is to create work-places which promote the joy of working, which further increases the profit for the company: 'Feeling good in the workplace produces better results' (Health Academy 2010b: 3). The individual is given 'the tools to develop and use the full potential of the organisation' (Health Academy 2010b: 3). In one of the toolkits offered, the participant is encouraged to 'sell oneself' and in the other to 'develop oneself' (Health Academy 2011j). It is important for the new entrepreneurs to study branding and marketing, in order to succeed when they are offering their services on the market, and this is thus included in the training: 'Your new profession demands a knowledge of branding and marketing' (Health Academy 2011f).

The Health Academy also gives references from participants who have completed their training. On their website we can read stories of how coaching has changed the lives of the participants:

> After my training with the Health Academy I have acquired new values.
> To be able to inspire and motivate others is a wonderful opportunity. . .
> I have knowledge of how to motivate, coach and listen to clients in a
> radically new way. I see the possibilities inherent in everyday life, and the
> Health Academy has given me inspiration and pointers which I use every-
> day (Health Academy 2011d).

The Health Academy, along with similar entrepreneurial organisations, has found a new niche in contemporary society, selling courses which put health,

self-affirmation and self-development at the centre. Their models of how to achieve prosperity clearly reflect contemporary society, but they are also models *for* the individuals, showing them how to find ways of fullfilling their dreams in their own social context. The dreams are however embedded in a list of prizes for the courses. Compared with a formal, public training to become, for example, a psychotherapist, the attainment of a therapist certificate involves a relatively small amount of supervision or meeting time. The courses are also easy to attend; for example the coaching training course is designed so that 'you may combine your work with your education' (Health Academy 2010b: 2). To become a certified coach at the Health Academy includes five meetings and the fee is 3,900 euros (Health Academy 2011n). To become a certified (layman) therapist costs 9,500 euros (Health Academy 2011l). One week is needed to acquire a diploma in health coaching, and the fee is 950 euros (Health Academy 2011m).

Employment coaching

As mentioned before, the Health Academy was one of the enterprises that was engaged by the public sector for employment coaching. It was clearly marked in the instructions from the government that employment coaching should not be a therapeutic practice, or include rehabilitation for the unemployed. Since coaching is a layman practice, and not formally defined, the practice of employment coaching was left for the entrepreneurs to define. One newspaper in Sweden, *Aftonbladet*, found that 10 per cent of the employment coaches offered exercises in affirmation or visualisation, Sedona or EFT healing (Pettersson & Sundell 2009) and the television Channel 4 showed that many of the employment coaches practised the unscientific method of Neuro Linguistic Programming (for the discussion of NLP and science see, e.g., Heap 1989: 141–2, 148–9; Sharpley 1987: 106; Craft 2001). These investigations by the media opened up a debate about employment coaching and its relation to New Age, or layman neo-spiritual, therapeutic practices.

How did the Health Academy describe their method of employment coaching? It was said to be based on the 'latest research' (but there are no references except from a book written by one of the enterprise's spokespersons) and the model that is introduced is said to be useful for 'personal development' (Health Academy 2011a). Although unemployment has societal, structural causes and it was said in the instruction from the government that employment coaching should not be therapeutic, we see in the employment

coaching model of the Health Academy an individual-centred rite with therapeutic ambitions involving transformation of the individual by designing a new way of being. The rite is made up of four steps which '[i]dentify your personality and your needs, devising a plan of action based on the steps that is unique for you and your situation' (Health Academy 2011a). The unemployed clients were thus enjoined to follow four different stages: Fire, Sun, Meadow and Ocean:

> *Fire: possibilities*
> Who am I? What do I want? What is my goal? What is my field of excellence?
> STEP 1: Identify your personality…
>
> *Sun: inspiration and motivation*
> What inspires me? If everything is possible, then what shall I do?. . .
> How do I want to feel when I achieve my goal?
> STEP 2: Design yourself. You are unique and totally fantastic when you are you!
>
> *Meadow: how it is and how it can be*
> What resources do I have? How can I use them?
> STEP 3: Focusing on the goal and taking the first steps forwards.
>
> *Ocean: goal*
> What to do when I have achieved my goals?
> STEP 4: Define your goals. Now it is up to you to make everything come true according to the goals and qualities you have set.
> (Health Academy 2011a.)

Focus on the individual lies in the phrase that introduces the rite 'Who am I?' Employment here includes more than getting a job; the individual is encouraged to '[i]dentify your personality' in order not to just get a job, but a job that is perfectly suited for him or her: 'everything is possible' (Health Academy 2011b). The individual-centred rite follows the pattern for transformation of the individual, since the mission is to 'design yourself'. We also find a way to sacralise the Self: 'You are unique and totally fantastic when you are you!'

It is also said that the responsibility of the individual to get a job rests on the individual—not the coach—and this is stressed in the coaching practices. The problem with the individual-centred rites (compared with the traditional

liturgical rituals) is that the rite may fail. The advantage with the traditional liturgical rituals is that they use a secure 'language', whatever the intentions of the individuals are (Rappaport 1999: 115, 164, 252, 323). As long as the liturgical rules are followed, the performative quality is guaranteed. But, if the participant doesn't experience strong feelings of transformation during the coaching process—one of the main performative tasks for the individual-centred rites—the result could turn into a critique of the coach, offering useless practices. But the coach always has a backdoor and it is all down to the individuals if they fail. The Health Academy includes in their description of the employment coach's responsibility the proviso that

> [t]he person you are coaching is fully responsible for everything. . . : his or her project to find a job, his or her life, family, economy and dog. . .It is not you as a coach who shall deliver or produce anything. . .It is the responsibility of the unemployed to attain their goals, whatever the circumstances are. If there are no jobs, the individual needs to take more responsibility. To wait and hope that the situation will get better is to be a victim of the circumstances. (Health Academy 2011i.)

It is obvious in this instruction that the coach only has responsibility for the conversation; to find a job is in the hands of the unemployed client, that is the 'project' of the unemployed person. If there are no jobs, the unemployed person must take more responsibility, because it is not the coach 'who shall deliver or produce anything'; that is to say, the smaller the number of jobs on the market (which is a structural problem), the more responsibility lies on the individual (the responsibility of the individual is at the centre). The most sinful thing is to act as a victim of the circumstances.

According to this view it is only the unemployed person who can fail, not the coach. However, the reports on the Health Academy website, written by people who have participated in employment coaching, say that even those who didn't get a job were content. Partaking in the coaching practices gave even these people strong feelings of having changed and of self-affirmation: 'my self-confidence grew', 'I got the tools to manage on my own', 'I know that everything is now possible if I only believe in myself', 'she [the coach] made me realise what my ambition was in life and how I can, by myself, make this come true', 'by focusing on my inner strengths and qualities I got my motivation back and could focus on what I really wanted', 'I have moved from being an insecure young woman who didn't believe in herself and her ideas to being a strong woman with all my trust within, looking at a bright future'

(Health Academy 2011d). Since these stories from the participants are put on the Health Academy's website, they must, of course, be interpreted as commercials for the company, but they also show how the individual-centred rite creates strong feelings of transformation. These practices of transformation which offer a new direction in life, including discussing existential questions with the coach about how to perform this new life, are situated in a new context in Swedish society: within the public sector employment service. By offering coaching practices, this public institution has become an enchanted and enchanting place where individuals can devise a new outlook on their lives and in practising this, empower themselves.

Some remarks

Coaching and neo-spiritual therapies clearly reflect their contemporary context in their efforts to devise practices that will work both as models *of* society, and as models *for* society. These new practices could be classified as new rituals, adapted to late modern society with a focus on the individual, the inner self and prosperity. The ambition is to encourage the participant to design a new, empowered self in order to turn dreams into reality and to find hope for better circumstances in life. If the concept of the market is prosperity, these practices also promise (instant) prosperity, both in life and at work. Structural problems are often reformulated to be individualised and are depicted as arising from a lack of connection with the inner self. The new entrepreneurs are more adapted to contemporary society than the earlier alternative movements of the 1960s, specifically in their construction of titles, in the importance of references to science and in the lack of a critique of the market society. As representatives for the 'Next Age' practices, they have, more easily than the former New Age practices, managed to be employed in workplaces and even in the public sector.

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TUIJA HOVI

Clinical services instead of sermons

Today, we are facing the decline of institutional religion. In Finland, the decrease in membership of the mainstream Evangelical Lutheran Church has been unusually rapid over the past few years, but, at the same time, the variety of religious supply has significantly increased. Criticism of the mainstream church has been twofold: on the one hand the church has been regarded as being too liberal, accepting almost anything without being able to draw the line and be explicit about its moral principles. On the other hand, the church has been criticised for being too hierarchical, conservative and normative, not paying enough attention to differences and the contemporary needs of society. In addition to non-Christian spiritual and religious alternatives, innumerable lay movements, functions and practices are also offering their services within the Christian field, both in non-denominational circles and in those more or less linked to the mainstream church.

The changes that occur in the religious field in Finland take place largely within the Christian cultural field. In addition to the obvious organisational changes taking place in the religious landscape of Finland, there is a certain fragmentation of contemporary religious attitudes. Such changes have been identified throughout the Western world—conventional definitions of 'believing' and 'belonging' do not seem to fit anything properly anymore. Furthermore, 'practising' and 'participating' as dynamic aspects of religiosity make the general view even more nuanced. As an example of religious involvement within this frame, I present here a Christian intercessory prayer service called the Healing Rooms. It is a religious practice that is attempting to accommodate the contemporary situation of post-secular Finland, and simultaneously advocating its traditional mission of evangelicism. This article is based on ethnographic material and a questionnaire that was distributed to people who use these services.

Believing, belonging, practising and participating

Defining religiosity as *believing without belonging* (Davie 1994), or being *spiritual but not religious* (Fuller 2001), refers to an attitude which also seems to be widespread among present day Finns who have resigned from official religious affiliations and institutionalised organisations. Despite of the lack of the social dimension, these people may acknowledge a spiritual aspect to their lives, in the sense of seeing meaning and a social connectedness to something greater than themselves, but they do not want to be tied to a particular religious tradition or deity (e.g. Bandura 2003: 170). Typically, they see no connection between their spiritual life and any organised religious group (McGuire 2008: 98). Membership of a community of believers is not an issue in their spiritual lives; 'the sacred persists but not necessarily in traditional forms', as Grace Davie has summarised the situation (Davie 1994: 228). However, as a psychologist of religion Ulrike Popp-Baier points out, the often-cited argument that 'I am spiritual but not religious' has different connotations depending on what is meant by 'spirituality', which is a far from straightforward concept. In some cases, it refers to a rejection of conservative and institutional Christianity in favour of more liberal interpretations of the same religion and more personal involvement. Nevertheless, it is often used also in the meaning of being *not Christian* but having a personal relationship with God, the divine, the universal energy and so forth, or of discovering the divine in oneself, being aware of one's inner self or being connected to the universe, just to mention a few definitions. (Popp-Baier 2010: 44.)

Whereas believing without belonging has been seen as a trend in secularised Western societies since Grace Davie's (1994) findings on post-war Britain, it is surprising that otherwise non-religious and non-spiritual people may claim a religious affiliation to demonstrate their togetherness as church members. However, considering the still relatively high church membership rates in Finland[1] in spite of recent 'mass resignations', *belonging without believing* seems to be a relevant religious orientation in many cases for the Finns. While some people find spiritual development and support as the result of being members of congregation, others may use their membership as

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[1]   78.2 per cent of roughly 5 million inhabitants were officially members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church at the end of 2010 (The website of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland). However, according to a survey a couple of years earlier, only 3.1 per cent of the members were active church-goers (Kääriäinen *et al.* 2008: 73). In that sense, the situation in Finland is quite similar to that of the neighbouring Nordic countries (e.g. Furseth 2006).

the performance of a desirable identity (McGuire 2008: 98; cf. Day 2010: 19). It may also be seen as *believing in belonging*, as Abby Day has characterised this particular attitude among the young people in Britain, emphasising the importance of the social aspect of a religious affiliation to the detriment of holding religious beliefs to be true and meaningful as such. Day even gives enlightening examples of 'unbelieving Christians' (Day 2009).

Contemporary religiosity is in a process of transfer that emphasises and combines processes such as individualisation, democratisation, fluidity, hybridism, relocation and the breaking of boundaries. But traditional religion has *not* lost its influence and relevance either, as scholars of post-secularity claim (e.g. Habermas 2006, Taylor 2007). On the contrary, an increase in new kinds of religious and spiritual activities and practices, a process of fragmentation and the emergence of global networking are expanding the spectrum of choices in the field of spiritual and religious services. Furthermore, strict commitment and extremist attitudes are openly expressed, too, even though they do not appeal to the majority. Among other indicators of this, the rise of fundamentalist Christianity such as Evangelical and Charismatic-Pentecostal movements has been seen as one of the examples of searching for Christian spirituality in present day Western cultures (e.g. Woodhead 2002, Roof *et al.* 1995).

In Finland, various independent Neo-charismatic congregations have been offering fundamentalist Christian choices to meet the need for more experiential religiosity since the early 1990s. However, the actual number of committed members of these groups remains rather small. Instead, loosely organised prayer communities and networks, evangelising events and spiritual aid services have acquired more supporters and users than congregations have new committed members. These new trends have gained footholds both outside and inside the mainstream church; typically, as lay activities. Good examples of this which are also in touch with the mainstream Evangelical Lutheran Church are home cells and prayer groups, alternative services like the *St Thomas Mass*[2] where laypersons have active roles during the proced-

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2   The St Thomas Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 6 p.m. at Mikael Agricola Church in Helsinki. The St Thomas Mass is a Lutheran act of worship, which has been influenced by ancient liturgical traditions of the Church, as well as by the spirit of ecumenism. It has been named after the Apostle Thomas, who seemed to have more questions than answers in his faith. The St Thomas Mass is a celebration. Its starting point is the biblical story about the dinner celebration in the house of a Pharisee, with Jesus, the host, a prostitute and village folk all present. (The website of the St Thomas Mass.)

ure; charismatic events called *the Word and Prayer*, as well as practices focusing on faith healing, life coaching and marriage consultancy. After all, the changes that occur in the religious field in Finland take place largely within its Christian culture or in some kind of related field.

A recent newcomer to the Finnish religious landscape, the Christian 'prayer clinic' practice called Healing Rooms, has already gained a firm foothold in the country after five years of intensive campaigning. It is an example of relocating religious, in this very case Christian, practices in a novel form outside the congregational functions and without being tied to any particular church, organised congregation or any given Christian movement. Simultaneously, it represents Charismatic Christianity with its ideas of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is *charismata*; healing being one of them. The Healing Rooms operates as a very specialised form of function with the mission of increasing health and well-being as an outcome of an anticipated growth of Christian faith. The intercessory prayer service has, of course, the implicit basic mission of winning new followers over to Christianity.

The Healing Rooms—history

I introduce the Healing Rooms as a kind of a Charismatic Christian response to the post-secular situation, where formal institutional frames are seen as restrictive factors in an individual's inner development and well-being, which are understood to be spiritual challenges. The Healing Rooms is an international, intercessory prayer service movement that operates locally as clinical receptions mostly in urban settings. The idea dates back to the first decades of the last century. It was launched by John Lake, a Pentecostal pastor in Spokane (Washington, USA) in the beginning of the 1930s. It was the short-term revival of a single charismatic leader, and soon after the death of Lake in 1935 its activities ran out for several decades. However, the Healing Rooms was revived again in the 1990s by another Pentecostal pastor, Cal Pierce, who discovered the history of the already forgotten ideas of Doctor Lake and started to spread the idea of a non-denominational network throughout the world by starting to found local *prayer clinics*, as this concept of intercessionary service was named.

The comeback of the Healing Rooms in the 1990s followed the rise of the Neo-charismatic movements, which are often characterised as the Health and Wealth Gospel because of a strong emphasis on healing, well-being and prosperity as privileges for true believers. So *thematically*, it is a kind of continu-

ation of, or supplement to the Pentecostal-Charismatic revival, even though it is not associated unambiguously with it. The Healing Rooms might rather be called an 'inter-charismatic' network without clearly committing itself to any single Christian church or movement, but rather aiming to co-operate with all of them. The Healing Rooms is also a story of successful global networking. That is to say, it has expanded very quickly to every continent, taking advantage of already existing and functioning local religious infrastructures. The headquarters of the movement is located in Spokane, Washington in the United States. The International Association of the Healing Rooms was founded in 2001. (The website of the international headquarters of the Healing Rooms Ministries.)

The Healing Rooms was introduced to Finland by a married couple who got to know the prayer clinic service on a holiday trip to California, at a local Vineyard congregation. They founded the first prayer clinic in Finland in 2006 and started to run the organisation, developing a training course for those who want to become prayer team members at local clinics. By autumn 2011, 26 prayer clinics had been founded around the country. The organisation operates in several different organisational contexts in Finland, such as the Pentecostal and Free Church congregations, as well as in the context of the mainstream Evangelical Lutheran Church. So, it crosses the borders between different churches and denominations. Prayer clinics may also work in purely secular surroundings like shopping malls, or in other public spaces. The Finnish leaders explained that the arrangements at local prayer clinics are based on the principle that a prayer clinic should be accessible to everyone; accessible both mentally and physically (IF mgt 2011/105). In order to make the clinics accessible, they are always situated in urban centres with functioning public transport. The spaces where the clinics operate on a regular basis are carefully chosen so that the threshold of access would not be prohibitive for anyone. For that reason, a prayer clinic is never arranged in a church building.

The settings and actors of the Healing Rooms practice

The description of prayer clinic practice is based on my ethnographic fieldwork, carried out during the spring term of 2011. I compiled the material that I am referring to in this article by such methods as thematic interview and participant observation, as well as by means of a questionnaire. I interviewed the leading couple in the Finnish headquarters of the movement, and

28 members of prayer teams representing five other clinics altogether, including the headquarters in Espoo. The short questionnaire was directed to the clients of every prayer clinic in the country.

At prayer clinics, there are two interacting groups: the inner circle community of carefully selected and trained prayer team members and their clients[3], that is to say people who visit the prayer clinic in order to be prayed for. The local Healing Rooms clinics are arranged once a week or fortnightly. Before the actual clinical reception opens for the clients, the prayer teams prepare by praising and praying by themselves for an hour. This meditative get together helps the prayer team members to concentrate on their task and be present for the clients. The prayer team members whom I interviewed regard this moment of preparation as a necessary step towards being able to take on the role of a mediator, to be *a channel*, as they call themselves, between God and a client. After having done their spiritual preparations, the team members form serving teams each of three members, preferably having representatives of both sexes in each team.

The actual reception of the clients takes two hours. The clients wait for their turn to be prayed for in a waiting room where a receptionist has given every client a form to fill in. After the clients have written down their prayer requests, they are invited one by one to the prayer room—as to a doctor's surgery—where the team of three trained prayer team members prays for each client personally in private, according to his or her request. In the course of one reception, there are usually on average 10 visitors and 2 to 4 teams working for them.

Discussion with the client is meant to be minimal. It is expressly emphasised that the Healing Rooms service is not supposed to involve a therapy style conversation. For this reason, all actors, both the prayer team members and the client, stand during the prayer, which takes, depending on the case, 10 to 20 minutes. If people were sitting during this process, the situation could easily be interpreted as a therapy session, and that is not in the provision of

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3   The term 'client' may sound misleading in this context because it is usually understood to be connected with the exchange of products and money. Even though Healing Room services are based on voluntary work and are free of charge for those who use them, I call the visitors to the clinics by the name 'clients' because most of the members of the prayer teams in Finland do so. The Finnish word *asiakas* literally means 'a client' in English. Basically, the interviewed prayer team members did not see any problem with the term, even though as used in other contexts it has a commercial connotation. Occasionally, Healing Room clients are referred to by other terms, such as *kävijät* (attenders/visitors) or *rukoiltavat* (those who are prayed for).

the Healing Rooms at all. The clients may stay in the waiting room afterwards as long as they like, have refreshments and read leaflets, but there is no other programme offered to them; no teaching, no hymn singing. Praying for solutions to various problems is the only service provided, and in a case of other needs, clients are advised to turn to their home congregations, physicians, or other professional helpers.

The standardised training is an absolute precondition for being authorised as a prayer team member in the Healing Rooms. The two day long training course includes praying demonstrations and charisma teaching, as well as an orientation to the strict and explicit rules for a team member to observe when encountering a client. A client must be treated respectfully and in a calm and discreet manner, and for instance, praying in tongues is not allowed because it may make somebody feel uncomfortable. The 'Laying on of hands' is a typical Christian ritual gesture especially for blessing or healing. However, in the Healing Rooms, a client is not touched without his/her permission, which is always asked for. Taking into account these cultural norms of proximity is regarded as an important aspect of respecting privacy. This is a remarkable detail because, as in the Nordic countries it is not normally acceptable to go and touch or hug people whom you do not know personally. However, in Charismatic meetings, the typical situation it is rather the other way around and it often confuses newcomers. The Healing Rooms represents, in this respect, less intrusive style of approach that is more familiar to most of the Finns, also within the mainstream church.[4]

The prayer teams serve at local Healing Rooms clinics as volunteer workers. However, they are selected and trained to encounter people from different backgrounds. The most important criterion is that a team member is a believer who belongs to a Christian church or congregation, no matter which one. The standardised training is an absolute precondition for being authorised as a prayer team member in the Healing Rooms. In fact, Healing Rooms training courses gather believers from different Christian backgrounds, even those without any intention of joining a prayer team. In Finland, they come from various Christian backgrounds, mostly the mainstream church, Pentecostalism and the Free Church.

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4   The Finnish leaders explained carefully the importance of 'acculturating' the Healing Room concept to make it easily adaptable to the Finnish culture and society (IF mgt 2011/105). Respecting the cultural norms of social interaction can be seen as an example of this.

The clients, for their part, are not required to reveal their religious affiliations or to confess anything if they do not wish to do so. The atmosphere is meant to be easy, safe and comfortable for clients, and not at all judgemental. However, if a client is not a believer, their conversion is also prayed for somehow between the lines. After all, winning new followers for Christianity is the underlying purpose of the Healing Rooms prayer service. All my interviewees had a very strong motivation for evangelising. The main theme that the Healing Rooms advocates is holistic well-being which is said to *preconceive* a Christian way of life, but a confession is not pushed openly. Active proselytizing is not allowed and team-members are urged to be sensitive to clients' experiences of unpleasant situations and also receptive to any feedback from clients.

Consumers of the Healing Rooms prayer service

The questionnaire (HRQ2011) to the clients was distributed to all 24 prayer clinics that were operating in the country between late March and early May 2011. It was requested that the questionnaire was offered to the clients at the reception desk. The response rates varied very much from one clinic to another, because the 'customer flow' was not the same everywhere. According to the interviewees, the average number of clients per night was 5–10. Eventually, the Healing Rooms Finland headquarters in Espoo gave the best result (22 responses), while there were 3 prayer clinics that did not send out one single response. On the whole, I got back 124 responses. It goes without saying that this kind of questionnaire distribution excluded those clients who have visited a prayer clinic only once and, for one reason or another, do not go there again. Nevertheless, their experiences would also be most valuable, but it was not possible to reach them via the clinics.

Among the clients who did answer to the questionnaire, there were *occasional visitors* and *regular customers*, that is to say, both those who came for the first time and those who were already familiar with the service. First time visitors were 30.64 per cent of the respondents, which means that most of them are more or less regular customers. The great majority of the respondents—74.19 per cent—also belonged to the mainstream church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, as most of the population do. Seven respondents did not belong to any religious community and quite as many belonged to neo-charismatic communities. Others were Free Church members (9.7 %) and Pentecostalists (12.9 %).

Nevertheless, nominal membership does not say much about an individual's religiosity. In order to get more information about it, I also asked about attendance and interest in religious activities; that is to say, about practice and participation. It was no big surprise that 78 per cent of the respondents participated regularly at more or less charismatic Christian services and meetings. 12.9 per cent of the respondents denied participating any other religious or spiritual events, except for occasional or regular visits to a local prayer clinic. On the whole, interest in spiritual services (other than Christian) among the respondents was quite limited. According to the questionnaire responses, the circle of customers using the Healing Rooms services is principally made up of Christian believers, who draw a strict line between Christian ideas and New Age. This leads to the conclusion that the Healing Rooms appeals mostly to those who are already more or less familiar with the Pentecostal-Charismatic type of Christianity. Furthermore, their responses reflect internalised Christian attitudes, such as references to Jesus and God's power. However, 20.26 per cent of the respondents indicated having tried or used other spiritual services; most of them mentioned Reiki, a spiritual healer, clairvoyant, angle therapy, energy healing and Rosen therapy.[5]

Most of the respondents were women (71 %). This is also typical, considering that women are said to partake more actively in religious life in Finland, no matter how it is measured (Kääriäinen *et al.* 2005). However, according to interviewees, the number of male clients was gradually increasing during the spring of 2011. As a result of the questionnaire, men covered 25 per cent of the respondents. A few people did not want to indicate their gender. As regards to the age of clients, the clinical intercessory prayer service seems to appeal most of all to the middle-aged. The biggest age group among the respondents was 36–45 years (31.45 %), while the second biggest groups were 46–55 years (24.19 %) and 56–65 years (20.16 %). Clients younger than 30 years and over 60 years were few and both very old and very young people were missing. Clients basically represent actively working age groups.

To the question of education, 44.35 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had a vocational training, while little less, 36.30 per cent of them, checked an academic education. The rest were students or had done only basic schooling. Considering the age groups, surprisingly many were retired (29 %). The result may indicate, for instance, the frequency of people drawing disability pension among the clients. The largest professional category

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5   Such alternatives as TM, homeopathy, hypnosis, intuitive healing, fire healing, stone therapy, chakra opening and flower therapy were mentioned only once each.

among the respondents was made up of clerical employees (31.44 %), labourers (17 %) were the second biggest professional category while 7.25 per cent of the respondents represented entrepreneurs. In the spring of 2011 in Finland, the unemployment rate was around 8 per cent, which was visible also in the questionnaire responses—8.87 per cent of the respondents were unemployed.

A practical perspective on faith

As the title of my article implies, institutionalised forms of religion may not be quite enough even for all members of those institutions, while for the others, they obviously are too much. The prayer service that is completely outside of normal worship service and congregational life seems to appeal to those who seek practical and focused spiritual aid, either for their everyday lives, or for some specific acute trouble. In addition to being easily accessible, the low admittance threshold in the Healing Rooms means also that nothing is too trivial for a prayer request and all requests are taken equally seriously, as a very active male prayer team member vigorously explained:

> . . .when a client comes, well, if his/her cat's collar is missing and he/she wants a prayer for the collar to be found, we pray for it. It is no more freaky than if somebody asks to be prayed for a bad cancer. . .It is important to that person. . . .If God makes contact with the person by letting the cat's collar to be found, why not? (IF mgt 2011/075.)

Typical prayer requests most often deal with physical illness, but also social relationships and psychological problems. Solutions to financial problems and unemployment are often asked to be prayed for, too. The underlying purpose of the Healing Rooms function, though, is evangelising, but it is implemented exclusively by praying for clients following their own wishes. Clients write down their requests for prayers of intercession on a form that is taken to the prayer team in advance. Principally prayer requests fall into two categories. Firstly, there is the category of physical illness and discomfort, and secondly, the category of social relationships and emotional or mental problems. The typical physical problems that are prayed for are prolonged or constant pain, chronic illness or a poor condition that has not necessarily been medically diagnosed, but is experienced as painful and restrictive.

The second category of prayer requests covers everyday life from home to work and social relationships; also praying for someone's next of kin, and psy-

chological problems such as anxiety, depression or insomnia. According to the team members, there has been a shift in prayer requests from physical illnesses and practical matters to more psychological and also expressively spiritual areas. Difficulties in social relationships and crises in marriage and the family, loneliness and burnout in working life, as well as unemployment are all mentioned as being common prayer requests. 'Becoming whole' emotionally and spiritually has become more frequently an issue in healing evenings during its five years of active work, while in the beginning, the focus was on physical healing. This may partly be interpreted as a result of the majority of the clientele being regular customers; the clients may have a tendency to change their prayer requests from being concerned with the immediate needs of daily life to more abstract themes in the process of time, after becoming more acquainted with the practice.

79.2 per cent of the respondents had had some kind of medical treatment because of the disease that was being prayed for. 33.6 per cent of the respondents had had psychotherapeutic care for the problem presented as a prayer request. Thus obviously, the services of the Healing Rooms are used in a spiritually supportive capacity, not as a cure-all. According to the prayer team members, clients are never advised to give up the medical treatment, if they have any, and rest in the hope of a miraculous healing. On the contrary, they are encouraged to be careful with medication and look for professional help for their diseases.

Personal evaluations of the effects of prayer were traced in the questionnaire by asking 'have you had an experience of a prayer helping you?' and 'have you had an experience of a prayer not helping you?' There was also some space to specify these experiences on the form. According to the answers to these questions, 94.4 per cent of the respondents felt that an intercessory prayer had had a positive effect on their life situation and it had helped them in one way or another. Quite a few of the respondents (64.8%) cared to give an example of, or an explanation for the beneficial effects of the prayer in their lives. Some answers were only slogan-like summaries of the effects:

God answers my requests (HRQ 2011/120).

It heals (HRQ2011/038).

It makes me feel better (HRQ2011/114).

IT WORKS!! (HRQ2011/085)

Some respondents gave more detailed information of what they had experienced. Physical healing and miracles are often propagated as the most significant outcomes of faith healing and, above all, at the rhetorical level, for instance, in Pentecostal-Charismatic sermon speech. Considering the physical and miraculous public image of faith healing, surprisingly few respondents reported having experienced something so concrete and outright. Specifically, only 16 per cent of the respondents checked having actually been healed of an illness, injury or bodily pain. This result indicates that the circle of customers in the Healing Rooms mostly look for something other than simply a physical cure.

A little more than half of the respondents, who gave some kind of a description for the question of how prayer has helped (53/101), explained it in terms of their life situation and state of mind. The feelings after the prayer service and its effects were described, for instance like this:

> With the help of a prayer, the situation gets clearer and the problem comes into the right perspective (HRQ2011/081).

> It calms me, I have had a chance to share the burden and have felt that somebody prays for me, cares (HRQ2011/079).

> I get into a better mood, sometimes for several days (HRQ2011/021).

> I get courage, understanding about a problem, help with emotional troubles, for example, peace (HRQ2011/080).

The therapeutic function of the prayer service is obvious. As especially the second citation above shows, the interpersonal level, the interaction between a client and a prayer team member as an experience of being cared for refers to having received social support that had been lacking. Current difficulties may also be seen in a different light, and thus, finding solutions to the problems may feel more attainable. Regarding the used vocabulary in the answers, evidently doctrinal references to Christianity were quite numerous. However, only one respondent explicitly referred to the idea of charisma as a channel:

> . . .I have got messages and answers from God through the prayer team members' visions (HRQ2011/031).

The prayer team members, for their part, talked a lot during the interviews about the role of charismata in their work. Nevertheless, as they drew a strict line between their inner circle meetings and the customer work, they emphasised the principle of not expressly using their charismata, such as glossolalia, or speaking out prophesies to a client. Thus in this case, the clients' personal knowledge of the charismatic Christian tradition is evident. More often the answers dealt with the controlling and helping superhuman entity, God's kindness, some also commented on the strengthening of faith:

> It calms me, it helps me to understand that there is something bigger than us in the world (HRQ2011/095).

> God has released me from the chains, given me joy instead of depression (HRQ2011/060).

> Jesus becomes very dear (HRQ2011/086).

However, 41.6 per cent, that is nearly half of the respondents had also had an experience of getting no benefit from being prayed for. Those respondents who had experienced failure despite being prayed for, were not as eager to give explanations as those who reported having got positive results. If non-functioning prayer was explained or commented on, it was almost invariably done in biblical terms, mostly by referring to God's will (20 %). One respondent explained the lack of 'prayer answers' curtly as Satan's intervention, and disbelief was mentioned here twice. More often the reason was seen as it not being the right time for prayers to come true yet (16.8 %). The notion of the wrong kinds of requests, those that do not please God, or are not good for the person himself, were assessed as 'personal faults' (19.2 %), as well as impatience, not being relaxed and restlessness[6], stubbornness, biased wishes, haste, uncertainty and being unforgiven. Basically, all responses were serious; only one respondent approached the issue with a piece of humour signifying it with a smiley:

> God probably had other engagements. . . ☺ (HRQ2011/090).

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6   This was the answer of a person who also meditated and was familiar with intuitive healing.

13.6 per cent of the respondents expressed their ignorance with regard to the reasons for a non-functioning prayer, and almost half of them (47.2 %) did not comment on the possibility of not being helped by a prayer in any way. One respondent obviously regarded the question as irrelevant by having scored it off.

On the grounds of the questionnaire responses, it is obvious that most of the Healing Rooms' clientele represent different intensities of Christian belief. Those few of the respondents who did not belong to any religious community, seemed to find the individually organised prayer service as the right kind of spiritual activity for themselves—without an obligation of *belonging* to any religious community.

Discussion

Instead of discussing the diminishing role of religion in society, it is more illuminating to study how religious traditions accommodate to new situations; for instance, as different practices that may, in some cases, even contest each other. Another interesting point is how traditions absorb functionally relevant elements and ideas to compromise and make the most of new situations. In Finland, the Healing Rooms prayer service seems to have found its niche somewhere between the traditional, but for many people too binding, congregational participation and the spiritual therapy of pastoral care. It has also met an interest in individual spirituality and well-being in society. The perspective of holistic well-being has an appeal that may also attract many of those who do not find collective worship or liturgical services sufficient, interesting enough, or suitable for their religious needs.

Thus, the Healing Rooms is accommodating the basic Christian evangelising mission to the present day Western religious and spiritual marketplace, where vital issues are well-being and healing. It is noteworthy and symptomatic that even though the Healing Rooms actively resists and fights against the New Age type of spirituality and the idea of healing in other contexts as Christian, it quite as actively also involves that scene, namely, the scene of holistic well-being. As Marion Bowman has pointed out, a striking feature in twentieth century spirituality—and undoubtedly in the spirituality of the twenty-first century, too—is a perception of the need for healing. It seems that for many people nowadays, healing is the new *soteriology*. Nevertheless, the emphasis has shifted from questions of salvation to questions of healing. Instead of asking 'what can I do to be saved?' and 'what can I do to save the

world?' one asks 'what can I do to be healed?' or 'how can I heal the world?'
(Bowman 1999: 1).

To propagate the interpretation of the Biblical healing following Jesus'
work as an exemplar, the Healing Rooms introduces its work at the well-
known annual New Age happenings in Finland, *The Fair of the Spirit and
Knowledge* ('Hengen ja tiedon messut') and *The I Am Fair* ('Minä Olen -mes-
sut'). These are events where various New Age practitioners present their
services for a couple of days every autumn. It is an important forum for the
Healing Rooms, too, because that fair is 'the place where the seekers are'. Thus,
it is taken as an opportunity to win new followers for Christianity by using the
spiritual theme of healing. As the great mission, the Healing Rooms claims
to 'rehabilitate the concept of healing and bring it back to its original biblical
meaning after having been stolen by New Age thinkers' as the leading couple
of the Healing Rooms Finland argued (IF mgt 2011/105). The setting as an
interaction between practitioners and clients, and the clinical arrangements
for praying for healing, accommodate the idea of a prayer clinic to the field of
alternative well-being practices.

Of course, healing has often been related to religion (Bowman 1999: 4).
In Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity particularly, saving and healing have
traditionally gone hand in hand, and the idea of holistic healing, covering si-
multaneously the body, mind and spirit is the very focus of the doctrine. This
theme and its practical manifestations have been even more emphasised since
the rise of Neo-charismatic movements, such as Vineyard, Toronto Blessing,
Word of Faith and so forth. As the responses that I received to my question-
naire showed, the Healing Rooms service appeals mostly to those who are
already more or less familiar with Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. So its
recruiting function works as an attempt to make passive believers more active
in their faith. In the light of the questionnaire results, participating without
believing was not observed.

Conclusion

After five years of intensive campaigning, the Healing Rooms has gained a
foothold in Finland's Christian culture. The clinical practice type of interces-
sory prayer service seems to make a functioning symbiosis between the mem-
bers of prayer teams and their clients. For team members, the active role of
a prayer, as well as worshipping in a coherent and democratic community of
believers provides a chance for personal spiritual self-actualisation in a sup-

portive spiritual community which is focused on a structured mission for its members instead of sitting in a pew. It creates more active agency for those believers who find their role and subjectivity restricted in one way or another as lay members in their own hierarchical churches. By serving as 'clinic practitioners', trained prayer team members enact their subjectivity and are able to occupy a spiritually more rewarding role, so to say: to live their religion.

For clients, the Healing Rooms provides no community to join as a member, but a prayer clinic offers a tailor-made support for the seamy side of life—discreet and individual care with easy access that does not take much time, is free of charge, and which demands nothing in return. For the client, it serves as a practice to be used when needed without any obligations of committing oneself to anything permanently. It is simply a place to visit when spiritual care or treatment is needed to solve a problem or to feel better. On the clients' side, it is practising and participating without belonging.

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ANNE KALVIG

Facing suffering and death

Alternative therapy as post-secular religious practice

Introduction

The idea of religious practice being 'post-secular' raises questions concerning secularisation, sacralisation and the various meanings of the prefix 'post'. In what follows, I will investigate a kind of practice that is ever increasing in late modern, Western societies and elsewhere; namely, the practice of alternative therapy and the conceptualisations and world-views pertaining to it. I will here focus on the themes of suffering and death in relation to alternative spirituality and therapy.

Alternative therapy is a highly debated, and illuminating, field of post-secular religious practice, both as a scholarly subject and as a topic of public debate which includes governmental responses in Norway, for example. I will not elaborate on the question of 'post-secular', however, but take as my vantage point the notion of alternative therapy as (among other things) an expression of late modern spirituality, where postmodern tendencies may or may not be present (as deconstructive tendencies within contested meta-narratives). I here present this field as a sacralised, cultural field, avoiding the discussion of whether there ever was a secularised situation from which 'we' now have departed. I do view the situation as one which is characterised as being 'in the making', where the term 'practice' hints at appropriate perspectives. I do not view the religious realities of the past as necessarily and qualitatively more coherent and monolithic than today's practices, though of course, that idea presents important challenges and issues in fields such as the science of religion and the study of folklore, among other scholarly fields, as well as being all the more recognised as a perspective within those branches of research that could be said to be part of a 'cultural scientific paradigm' as opposed to a 'phenomenological paradigm' (Gilhus & Mikaelsson 2001: 34–5).

In this paper, I intend to give some answers to the following questions: is alternative therapy a kind of post-secular religious practice? If so, what kinds of answers or consolations does alternative therapy offer in the face of suffer-

ing and death? How do possible 'alternative theodicies' relate to holism as a paradigmatic principle? To what extent does, for example, 'reincarnationism' seem to function as explanatory model regarding suffering, evil and death?

The empirical basis of my study centres on alternative therapists in Norway, an analysis of which was offered as a PhD thesis entitled *Åndeleg helse. Ein kulturanalytisk studie av menneske- og livssyn hos alternative terapeuter* (Spiritual health: a cultural analysis of views of life among alternative therapists, Kalvig 2011). In this study, I conducted an in-depth analysis of responses from nine people; three men and six women, all working full-time as spiritually oriented alternative therapists in the south western area of Norway (the field-work was conducted between 2006 and 2008). They provided answers to the following questions: what 'is' the body, soul, spirit, sex/gender, sickness/illness and suffering, and what is, or could be, alternative therapy's role in providing an alternative future, or a paradigm shift, on a collective level? The thesis is for the main part an exploration of these answers, each given a chapter or more and analysed in relation to adjacent socio-cultural discourses that are explored through a range of materials, including alternative and non-alternative literature and media representations.

Alternative therapies as spiritual practice?

The labelling of alternative therapists as 'spiritually oriented' needs qualification. In my research, I wanted to investigate alternative therapists as participants in a late modern, spiritual discourse, an ongoing cultural process of producing and negotiating the intersections of spirituality, medicine/therapy and society. I did not and do not propose that all alternative practices regarding health, well-being and self-development are by definition spiritual. By 'alternative' I mean those practices that one normally does not encounter within the public health care sector—this in itself being a manoeuvre of designation which reveals rather blurred borders, since public medical care, 'school medicine' or 'biomedicine' is an ever changing field of practices and concepts, where, for example, acupuncture is becoming increasingly integrated, and where some specialists in general medical practice are known as belonging to both the conventional and alternative medical fields (Kalvig 2011: 8 ff.). Nursing as a scholarly field and nurses as a professional group have, over the years, shown themselves to be primary agents of change here, with a tendency to integrate alternative views of health, and alternative practices, such as acupuncture and therapeutic touch (TT). The nursing ethos of providing

care from a holistic understanding of the human nature and situation, characterised by the interconnectedness of the physical, psychological, social and *spiritual* dimensions of life, is of vital importance here (Johannessen 2006, Partridge 2006).

Although the health care field consists of different, but at times overlapping and intersecting concepts and practices, pointing to a vital field of *alternative* health care practices and therapies is possible and necessary. My understanding of the term 'spiritual', in this area, is to refer to ways of relating material and spiritual realms into a meaningful system, characterised by holism (interconnectedness); the 'spiritual' being those realms of a 'less solid' kind, conventionally called the supernatural, trans-empirical and the like. The spiritual realms, or dimensions, are often understood to be of a higher, more conscious, truer and/or more essential nature than the 'purely' material, although the interconnections between the spiritual and the material is of great, and unsettled, interest within this field. The terms spiritual and spirituality are, following the idea of holism and interconnectedness, easily both wide and/or empty and at the same time too narrow: within the field of alternative spirituality, the idea that the spiritual is part and parcel of our everyday lives, of our empirical, natural existence, points to a linguistic and epistemological paradox or challenge. In this respect, I hold that our definitions of religion or spirituality simply cannot be very precise, but only function as working definitions and vantage points. Both religion and spirituality I will henceforth employ as designations of what could be thought of as 'clusters of concepts and practices, in various combinations, referring to a spiritual reality of relevance for human beings and their relation to all that exists' (Kalvig 2011: 17–18).

So what of alternative therapies being spiritual, or spiritually oriented? My data consists of therapists and their therapies whose methods, techniques and practices are outside of conventional medicine, and which involve a holistic approach to human beings, sickness/illness and health. This means the therapists relate to spiritual as well as other dimensions in their various therapies, and the aspects of the *meaning* of sickness/illness, suffering, development and/or health can be integrated into their ways of relating to and interpreting the dimensions of reality and people seeking therapy. It is actually difficult to maintain certain and fixed dividing lines between more and less spiritual alternative therapies, claiming that for example reflexology, acupuncture or vitamin therapy are more pragmatic and 'physiological' practices, whereas healing, astrology or regression therapy represent the more spiritual practices. The preferences of the therapist (and client), their different ways

of interpreting whatever technique or method employed, and the tendency among most therapists (that I have met or heard of) of exploring and offering a whole range of different therapies, say from reflexology and neuro linguistic programming (NLP) to healing and regression therapy, makes this picture complex, dynamic, and changeable, as well as being a good illustration of holistic challenges in themselves.

Still, can alternative therapy be regarded a post-secular religious practice? Yes, indeed. It follows, though, from what has already been said, that this does not necessarily mean that the 50 per cent of the Norwegian population that actually make use of alternative therapy,[1] partake in spiritual practices. At times it is overtly spiritual, at other times the therapeutic situation is far from involving spiritual considerations. The field of alternative therapy is closely connected to and intertwined with various other fields that we meet and interact with throughout our daily lives. I do not consider the changed, religious landscapes of our late modern Western societies to be a spiritual revolution as in the terms suggested by Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005), because this involves dualist conceptions, or notions, of religion versus spirituality that I do not find fruitful or compelling. Neither would we understand the meaning and relevance of the cultural and spiritual therapeutic expressions and practices, were we to consider them as representing the 'fag end' of the New Age or alternative spirituality (as discussed in Heelas 2008), or as only epitomising features of capitalism in a plural, basically secular, or secularising world (Bruce 2000, 2002).

I would rather view the spiritual traits of late modern life as 'occulture', following Christopher Partridge, where this means (paraphrasing A. D. Duncan, 1969, in his definition of the occult):

> 'not so much a religion or a system as a "general heading" under which a huge variety of speculation flourishes, a good deal of it directly contradictory'. Occulture is the new spiritual environment in the West; the reservoir feeding new spiritual springs; the soil in which new spiritualities

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1   Report from the National Centre for Information on Alternative Treatment (Nasjonalt informasjonssenter for alternative behandling, NIFAB): with 48.7 % responding positively to having used alternative therapy during the last year. Another major, national survey, 'Levekår 2008', indicates a far lower percentage, only 16, but in this survey only eight specific therapies and practices are included. http://nifab.no/om_alternativ_behandling/alternativ_behandling_i_norge/nifab_undersoekelsen (accessed on 10 November 2011).

are growing. Things have changed. Spiritualities are not what they used to be—that's why they're flourishing. (Partridge 2004: 4.)

I will express some reservations about the claim that spiritualities are not what they used to be—another perspective may be that the spiritualities of the late modern era in fact resemble the situation of quite a few earlier epochs, at least if one focuses on the popular or folk aspects of today's situation. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus and Lisbeth Mikaelsson (1998) have suggested, earlier than most, that the new religiosity could best be viewed as an integral part of late modern culture, a claim asserted by them from the mid-nineties and formulated as the 're-enchantment of culture', their research being part of a interdisciplinary study called 'Myth, Magic and Miracle Meeting the Modern' (1995–9). I also find their category 'multi-religious actors' (Gilhus & Mikaelsson 2000) useful and enlightening, developed by them in response to the fact that many, maybe most, Norwegian alternative spiritual seekers or experimenters are members of the Norwegian state church (the Lutheran church, of which membership is held by approximately 80 per cent of the total population). Alternative therapists, alternative therapies and the clients seeking alternative therapy (including the therapists themselves), then, represent a substantial element in our late modern society, marked by occulture and enchantment, and people often appear to be multireligious actors, where involvement in spiritual activities can be of a changeable character, and with varying degrees of commitment.

Facing suffering and death

Alternative therapists are likely to meet people in distress and/or at various stages of crisis, as well as to interact with people using alternative therapies and techniques mainly to sustain a healthy way of life and experience spiritual self development (these groups of clients may overlap, of course). Considering the first group, what kinds of answers would alternative therapists provide them with? Would they present them, in addition to more bodily centred practices, with holistic cosmologies, including 'theodicies', that confirm or challenge cultural ideas of good and evil?

First, what would these 'cultural ideas' of ethics, morals and possible cosmic connections be? Acting in what could be termed a culturally Christian-dominated context, therapists and clients are familiar with theological notions of suffering and death being the result of a dual cosmos, where God's opponent, Satan, has some influence, where the human being, though fallen,

has been given the right to free will and where Jesus Christ has acted as our saviour, washing away original sin for all believers through His sacrifice on the cross. In times of real suffering, sickness, tragedy, and death, evil is nevertheless not likely to come into focus as an integrated part of our world in the Christian sense, giving an explanation for ill fortune and misery. A more commonly expressed view, if religious (Christian) views are employed at all, is that 'the Lord acts in mysterious ways', implying that it is better not to try to make sense out of evil schemes within the frame of God's omnipotence. Focus is more likely to be placed on God's everlasting love and compassion for his suffering creatures, as well as the hope for a radically different world under the reign of God at the end of times. The secular, humanistic strain is more prominent in the Norwegian publicity than the religious one, partially inhibiting religious interpretations in the media and restraining religious explanatory models on a general cultural basis. In the humanist ethical universe, evil is simply a fact of life. There would be no higher meaning to 'inexplicable misery' than that 'shit happens' (and often for obvious, human, power-imbued reasons); all we can do is to take care of each other and stay human. Yet another saying or perspective is of the type 'the best among us are the ones to go first', or 's/he was too good for this world', indicating that there might be some 'craving' for the most brilliant persons and their souls, from 'the other side', be this understood as Christian or as, in folkloric or more alternative spiritual schemas, a 'spirit world'.

The therapists interviewed during my fieldwork, came up with a range of different explanations and arguments considering both individual and collective suffering and death. Initially, I only asked 'what "is" sickness/illness?'[2] Sickness/illness could be summed up as an 'imbalance' (in intricate blends of perceived material and spiritual dimensions), but the reason for the imbalance, its consequences and its potential meaning, is what came to be discussed in relation to the notion of 'suffering'. Although radical solipsism—the notion of an idealist universe unfolding from every individual's mental projections—is implied in some of the therapists' utterances, it is far from unambiguous, as we shall also see later. 'Suffering and sickness/illness: we must discriminate between them, suffering is how you relate to a condition—you have a choice; the moment you start to suffer, the pain will be tenfold', said Kari, one of

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2   Sickness/illness is contained by one single word in Norwegian, *sjukdom*, involving both the meanings of the two English words, that is to say, both factual sickness and the experience of sickness, which is more implied in the word illness, at least the way it is used in nursing and alternative literature.

my informants. Sickness/illness always has a potential in itself for facilitating growth, insight, release and relief, even in cases where the condition's inevitable result will be death: 'I've met people who have characterised their final days as being the most promising and fulfilling', as the therapist Turid told me.

But what of 'real' suffering; misery, children dying, whole groups and nations experiencing extremities of repeated catastrophe and with death lurking around every corner? Even though the potential for spiritual growth might be acknowledged in the situation of therapy-seeking, adult Westerners who have the opportunity to view sickness/illness in this way, would this be possible from an ethical point of view with regard to the deaths of innocent children, for example, and the unevenly distributed misery and despair in the world? Here the therapists presented a range of explanations, or considerations, more correctly, for most of them could not or would not come up with definitive explanations here. It was also often I who urged them to consider how their individually derived explanations of suffering and the problem of evil/negative conditions would fit, if transmitted to the world as a whole. We also discussed to what extent their more cosmological and ethically challenging or thought-provoking stances would actually be transmitted to a client in a therapeutic situation. Most of them underlined a careful, empathetic and humble approach here, with a thorough consideration as to whether passing on these stances would do any good for a client in need of help. Nevertheless, even if their understanding of suffering and 'evil' would only to a minor degree be transmitted in therapeutic relations and situations, these world-views are part of the culture's total fabric of ideas, conceptions and perspectives, sometimes making their way through the secular or Christian 'official' layers of cultural understanding. At times, we see this harshly debated in the Norwegian general public arena, as responses to certain alternative actors' public utterances, to which we shall later return.

The therapists' considerations could be grouped into the thematic fields which explain suffering as the result of *unproductive thinking* (in a more general sense); of systemic and inherited *'bugs' in the holistic fabric of wholeness and love energy within specific families*:[3] of *souls needed on 'the other side' in an anthroposophical sense*; and the doxic status of the idea of *reincarnation functioning as a partly explanatory model*. Now these different considerations related to the suffering, misery and death not only of individuals within the clientele of the therapists, but of humanity as a whole, led to several possible

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3   From 'family constellation' therapeutic thinking in the tradition following German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger (b. 1925).

systemisations. I consider these answers as ethical stances as well as cosmic explanations, and I employ in my thesis the notion of 'theodicy'. The notion of God (theodicy as the 'defence of God' in the encounter of evil) is to be understood in a 'New Age' or spiritual way, including but not confined to Biblical and traditional notions, and summed up, in addition to 'God', by the therapists as 'All There Is', 'Infinite Love and Thruth', 'the Source' and the like.

Even though his *opus magnum*, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* was written 15 years ago, Wouter Hanegraaff (1996) still provides one of the most extensive surveys with which to contextualise my findings when it comes to structuring the therapists' various statements and referred practices into some kind of system. Instead of representing their views and ways of doing things as a mumbo-jumbo of easily-accessed techniques and conceptions chosen on an epistemological individualist basis, I wanted to search for structures that could possibly, but not necessarily, be present at some level. I found that holistic structures were indeed present, sometimes in paradoxical bits and pieces, but prevalent to an extent that had to be accounted for. As a further investigation of how suffering and the problems of evil and death are handled by the therapists, we shall turn to the next question, cited at the beginning of this article; namely, how possible 'alternative theodicies' relate to holism as a paradigmatic principle, and thereby have a somewhat closer look at some of the themes of consideration mentioned above.

Holistic 'theodicies'?

The concept of holism is often used, both by scholars and in the field, in an even less concrete and/or less grounded manner than the concept of New Age. Hanegraaff (1996: 119–58), on the other hand, gives a rather profound account of holism, organised into two main and two minor versions. The two main versions he labels 'the ultimate source of manifestation' and 'universal interrelatedness', the two minor ones are based on a universal dialectics between complementary polarities and on an analogy between the whole of existence, or important subsystems thereof, and organisms. These four forms, Hanegraaff claims, only have in common the urge to overcome non-holistic views, such as dualism and reductionism, seen as representing the 'old age' or the 'old culture'. There is a built-in ambivalence in much holistic reflection, between transcendence and immanence, between monism and pantheism, or between absolutism and 'generative source' thinking (which can be derived from the first version of holism). This ambivalence, however, cannot

necessarily be found as explicitly formulated world-views, as there is a difference between this, and what Hanegraaff terms 'metaphysical pathos' (1996: 127). The difference between a holism understood as an ultimate, perfect, transcendent whole and a holism understood as a generative source of all life, where we are co-creators, Hanegraaff finds illustrated by those two channelled giants, *A Course in Miracles* and *The Seth Material*. The second, main version of holism, the universal interrelatedness-holism, also appears in a range of different versions with different implications, as is also the case with the two minor versions of holism.

Now, I found those varying holisms throughout my material, underlying many different kinds of reflection—and not restricted to the intellectually unconvincing realms of metaphysical pathos—although this 'realm' of course also could be discerned. The challenges of holism for both practitioner and scholar become evident when related to the discussion of suffering. When the therapists were relating their practice to the problem of evil, or suffering as such, some of them were making a gnostic-like association of the 'earth-plane' with negativity, whereas the spiritual dimensions, the higher plane or our Higher Selves are associated with positivity, dualist conceptions which of course in themselves point to a holistic paradox, of which there should not be made too strong an emphasis. Holism *can* be ethical, though this is an emic, and not etic, claim, according to Hanegraaff:

> Suffering is not felt to be a pressing problem requiring an explanation, but is accepted as a necessary aspect of life and evolution. Although it is quite possible to construct a rational New Age theodicy on the basis of reincarnation, cosmic evolution and karma, the truth is that the very questions in answer to which theodicies have traditionally been constructed do not even arise in the New Age context. In short: suffering is not regarded as a moral problem at all; if anything, it is a psychological problem. (Hanegraaff 1996: 280.)

The therapists provided a range of different explanations and reflections on suffering, the problem of evil and death, where moral issues were central, as opposed to Hanegraaff's claim. I found for several of their reflections a fundamental focus on consciousness and intentions (being understood as more crucial than the seemingly obvious or immediate consequences of various actions). The focus on consciousness, less than material structures, actions and happenings, is often difficult to maintain consistently, however, when one is 'stuck on the earth-plane', and at any rate when talking to an interviewer

focusing to some degree, on consequence analysis regarding the claims of this worldly level. Therapeutic methods and tools also partly appear to be a mode of action in response to evil, which Hanegraaff finds so weakly developed in his textual sources, in favour of a focus on unconditional love and forgiveness, for example—even though, in a holistic cosmos, where the boundaries between I and you have perished, this could be regarded as active, or actionist, in the last resort.

Some explanations of suffering and death: in the ether of the family

Most of my informants defy the assertion that suffering is a necessary aspect of life and evolution. Suffering was presented by them as meaningless, bad and counterproductive, whereas *pain* would better fit the above description from Hanegraaff. The informant Nina puts it this way:

> Suffering and pain: we have to discern between the two. To be in a body, is tantamount to possibly experiencing pain. Suffering is where there is a lack of consciousness. When the consciousness of the heart, that 'things could not be otherwise, given those premises', is not present.

Nina then goes on to describe how a person can experience an 'opening up'; where pain, sickness/illness and death can be seen in connection with a greater whole or web of existence. Though, when tragedy strikes children, for example, it is close to incomprehensible for us. Still, she holds:

> But seen in relation to family structures—I work with family constellation therapy—then a child can take on disease in blind love. Disease that a grandfather perhaps died from. . .out of blind love and consciousness for the suffering of others; children do that, it lies in the ether, in the space around us.

According to the understanding of family constellation therapy, families are surrounded by a kind of systemic energy, a love energy, which follows its own, internal logic or law, through so-called 'soul-movements'. When the 'love balance' is disturbed or distorted through traumatic events such as premature death, sickness, violence or other crimes, especially children in the family will try to restore the balance by 'taking on' destructive familial patterns, even ill-

ness, in a vain attempt to ease the parent's or other family member's pain. This explanation may be called systemic, but it is grounded on metaphysical or abstract principles, where 'ether', 'evolution' and 'love' somehow play their parts when suffering and evil conditions are transmitted through the generations.

Nina and another family constellation-oriented therapist from my material, Therese, actually express understandings of suffering that to some extent are concordant with the Christian notion of sin (note that the founder of family constellation therapy, Bert Hellinger, is a theologian in addition to being a psychotherapist). Says Therese: 'The more pain the parents suppress, the more their children will inherit it.' Within Christianity, the death of one man, Jesus Christ, gave redemption and life to all—a reversal of the one man's fall (Adam's), creating original sin, that subsequently transmitted through the generations (cf. Rom. 5:18–19). Nina and Therese are not supposed to sacrifice themselves, as therapists, but they assert an understanding and a doctrine that holds that the 'sin' of all, or our unacknowledged pain, *can* be abolished, for the 'redemption and life' for future generations. There is in this respect a certain Christian bent to reflect upon the transmission of sin, or, rather, suffering, through the generations, by unconsciously not being in the 'love-flow' and thereby creating or continuing pain, sickness and death. The point of difference is of course that the redemption here is not Jesus Christ, but the spark or capacity for life and love that lies within us all, or that we all are surrounded by (the 'ether'), and the possibility of realising this through family constellation therapeutic consciousness raising, thereby profoundly altering the relationship between parent and child. The line of thought, in a culturally Christian culture like ours, thus goes from the mystical focus on person (from Christianity's Adam–Christ-constellation) to the mystical focus on system (the constellation where the system [the ether, evolution], transmits suffering, but where consciousness about and active efforts in relation to the system, can do away with it). Although it can be argued that these thoughts ought to be labelled as gnostic or theosophically inspired, rather than Christian, the focus on family ties and heritage, rather than the isolated awakening of the individual through gnosis, makes the Christian influence more prominent.

Suffering, sudden death and higher meaning

The therapist Gunnar discussed suffering in relation to the catastrophe of the tsunami of 2004, where hundreds of thousands of people perished. This was a response to me putting this question to him (in italics):

> *Several therapists posit suffering as being different things—as arising from a lack of consciousness; as a learning process; but I guess they have also pondered on why suffering then is concentrated in certain parts of the world, on children suffering: how would one place this meaningfully in a cosmos where spirit is omnipresent?* Well, those of us who study Steiner and have done so for quite some time, we meet when there is a felt need to lift things into the light, to try to find meaning, to see cosmological perspectives. After the tsunami we met and tried to view this in a different manner. The dimension we met in the media—we were all affected by the wave, that this could happen to Norwegians on holiday. Steiner raises this to a different level: when a great many, especially when there are children involved, travel [die] at the same time, in connection with a catastrophe for example, it is because there is an acute need for the qualities represented by these, on the other side. *Would you dare suggest that to somebody who had lost someone in the tsunami?* It depends on where they are in their development. I might do it if they showed an interest in finding meaning, if this could be a piece that fits into their understanding.

Gunnar further answers my questions as to whether such ideas could easily be abused, since there would somehow be an instrumental 'use' of premature death according to this view, and says he has no problem seeing the ethically challenging consequences of these ideas, claiming them to be no more than 'working hypotheses'. But the spirit world's conceivable 'craving' for new souls to arrive, is to some extent in accordance with those culturally familiar sayings regarding premature death as 'he was too good for this world' and 'the best are the ones to go first'. Interestingly, it is Gunnar himself who introduces this idea on a more collective level, by considering victims of catastrophe (the tsunami) as groups, instead of individual, untimely deaths. But when asked to consider this in relation to possible abuse, and to what extent he feels compelled to defend all aspects of the anthroposophical cosmology, he is reluctant and less enthusiastic: 'such implications are not very meaningful for me. . . but I will always be a wonderer.' At other times during the interviews we did, Gunnar discusses pain, suffering and crises in relation to the development of the individual, and holds that to practise spirituality is to take responsibility. From one incarnation to the next, the point is to develop 'great, great love for humanity, great tolerance'.

The explanatory power and limitations of reincarnation

The paradigmatic status of the idea of reincarnation should, as indicated in the last citation from Gunnar, be included if we are to understand the alternative spiritual ways of relating to suffering and death. The two final therapists to be quoted, Torbjørn and Joakim, relate to this issue in different ways that elucidate the many aspects of 'reincarnationism':

> *Do you think we return to life on earth?* Yes I do. And the issue of karma, that there is some kind of justice integrated into this system, I also believe this; that as ye sow, so shall ye reap. . .But how far one should push this, I do not know. If you face difficulties in life, it could be because your soul gave you challenges for the sake of growth. *But then one probably is surrounded by other souls with their various agendas—if you're a good soul, and other people's life projects influence yours, how then to analyse individual suffering in a meaningful way?* This is also my stance; the idea of creating your own reality, that you should blame yourself for whatever happens to you, this I find problematic and troubling. That you can blame yourself for quite a lot of what's happening, however, I consider clearly evident.

It is Torbjørn who connects the idea of reincarnation with the idea of an integrated rationality or justice based on the logic of karma.[4] How this logic is expressed, and how it is to be understood in relation to factual suffering for both individuals and groups, is problematic, however. Consequences of actions in the present are rather obvious, but crossing time and space, and considering everyone else's actions, it all becomes quite complicated, and we see Torbjørn closes his line of thought with a rather prosaic statement. The idea of reincarnation (and possibly variations of karma logic) is nevertheless seen as meaningful to Torbjørn and a variety of 17–44 per cent of people in the Western world,[5] and has thus become an integrated part of the culture.

4   As shown by Olav Hammer (2004: 456), there is not an inherent, logical connection between the doctrine of reincarnation and that of karma, but 'it is simply a fact of the history of religions that these concepts have become almost inseparable in the literature'.

5   The statistics vary considerably in this field. See Hammer 2004: 455 for a survey of statistics from the 1990s. The ESV (European Value Survey) of 2008 reveals that Eastern European countries like Latvia and Lithuania have the highest numbers of believers in reincarnation (41.9 and 37.4 %), with the Russian Federation quite close, with 33 %. Iceland has the highest percentage of the Nordic countries, with 36.2 %

Gilhus discusses the concept of reincarnation in 'Sjelevandring – et nytt nøkkelsymbol?' (Transmigration of souls: a new key symbol?, 1999). She points out that contrary to how the concept of reincarnation functions in India, where it provides a watertight explanation of suffering (Gilhus 1999: 44), in the Western sense this complex of ideas expresses the urge of late modern person's to 'be its own root' (Gilhus 1999: 56). The idea of the transmigration of souls deifies the self at the same time as it relativises the personality, and thereby it concerns 'the problem of the soul' as well as serving to redefine and relativise family relations and social hierarchies, reflected in the great, cosmic mirror made possible by the concept of reincarnation (Gilhus 1999: 52–3). When Gilhus holds that 'the cosmic value of family ties increases concurrently with the decrease of their intrinsic value' (1999: 53), it constitutes an interesting contrast to Courtney Bender (2007) and her material regarding beliefs about reincarnation. Here spiritual seekers find that their present, daily relations are deepened and strengthened as a result of a belief in multiple incarnations (Bender 2007: 609). Bender also claims that believers in reincarnation are intensely interested in their past lives, which is contrasted by my material, where all therapists believe in multiple lives, but where most of them, even regression therapists, call upon caution and sober-mindedness concerning what role past lives ought to play. In the view of the therapists, the concept of reincarnation serves as an axiomatic or ontological starting point, which can serve various therapeutic functions; but the concept still appears to be something into which one should not 'get lost'.

Gilhus delimits the ethically more outspoken aspects of reincarnationism to its Eastern context, whereas how it functions concerning the construction of Western identities and social relations within a cosmic, enchanted frame of meaning, is of greater interest to her. However, she touches upon the issue here:

> Ultimately, you create your own life. In some cases you might have done something wrong in a past life, and you'll feel the need to repent and stage a punishment in a later life. In other words, a 'transmigrator of the soul' controls the future (Gilhus 1999: 53).

The problem of suffering and evil hence also gets incorporated into Western versions of the concept of reincarnation, though maybe in a less definitive

believing in reincarnation. Erlendur Haraldsson (2006) found that the Icelandic percentage was 41, and Lithuania on top with 44 % (ESV-numbers from 1999).

way. However, to what extent and how, for example, Hindus employ the doctrine of karma in their encounters with suffering and evil, is also complex, as is shown by Jørg Arne Jørgensen in his article 'Karmiske veikart. Astrologi og horoskop i India (Karmic maps: astrology and horoscopes in India, 2006). In the case of Indian astrology, he shows how the doctrine of karma is modified by this and a range of competing, philosophical and magical-religious systems: 'Karma in its pure form, as a rigid, moral fatalism, is dismissed by astrological folk practices' (Jørgensen 2006: 13). Even though karma may function as a hegemonic model of explanation, the multiple folk practices contradict this as sole explanation. Torbjørn expresses ambivalence and doubt concerning the ontological status of reincarnationism, even though this was a fundamental principle for him to start with. Therapy in itself was problematised by several of the interviewed therapists as a somewhat competing, or contradictory, practice, related to their various views on sickness/illness and adversity, where your encounters with evil or bad things are seen as positive tools for development. This is concordant with the Indian astrologer functioning as a universal advisor within a karmically oriented paradigm. Therapy can, like reincarnationism, be seen as a pragmatic modification of a hegemonic conceptualisation, or it can be seen as a parallel system, characterised by other axiomatic principles than the 'karma-rationalist' principle; for example, relation oriented principles of mercy.

The shifting, doubtful, and polyphonic is also present in the reflections from the last therapist, Joakim, when he discusses the logic of reincarnation and the horror of suffering. Joakim had throughout the interviews shown himself to be one of the most prone to paint his points with a rather broad, cosmic brush, but in the following excerpts, we see that the loud and the humble gradually collide:

> Yes, there is suffering. God has a very guilty conscience, because the suffering is so abundant. It's close to not being worth it. . .The suffering of the world is tremendous, especially when it comes to children, who don't have mature minds and cannot distance themselves from the suffering. . .
> But in our portion of the universe we are given free will, and the suffering is some of the consequences of our choices and our lives. It is our task to resolve this suffering. . .*Is this an all-loving God?* Yes. *But how can He accept suffering if He is [also] omnipotent?* But God suffers with us. Life is a movie, God created the movie, God plays and watches the movie, everything is a cosmic drama where God plays all the roles, our destiny is being God, but we have forgotten this. It is our task to awaken and realise

this, that suffering will end as a result of this. This was the discovery of the Buddha. . .Suffering is a pedagogical tool: if you have fallen down from the roof a couple of times, you've learned to respect gravity. *Ok, but what about alcoholic parents, abuse of children, a life filled with suffering—you can hardly label these pedagogic points?* But it is, life is about opening your heart, and God is willing to use all possible means to achieve this. *But what if you* do have *an open heart, then?* What you should learn, it is like what Jesus experienced, he came to celebrate Easter, and they nailed him to a cross! How could he forgive these people?

We notice here the tension between the duty placed on us, by Joakim, to 'solve this suffering', and the concept of suffering as pedagogical points. But then Joakim becomes less and less confident in the following passage, which is interesting, both in relation to different alternative spiritual doctrines' usefulness and stringency, and as an example of the late modern alternative spiritual actor's free and sovereign status concerning how he or she holds to, and lets go of, spiritual views. But it is also, and maybe predominantly, an example of an interviewer making some choices that can (over)rule what kind of information she gets, and to what extent this is scholarly constructive and ethically appealing, is an open question:

A lot could be said about this, but the soul has an agenda; one cannot know why one incarnates the way one does, why you get the destiny you get. You can't know, it could be murderers who've been terrible bastards in their former lives. . .*This is concordant with Hindu belief; you deserve your destiny, karma legitimates the caste system—wouldn't this now be a Western, privileged understanding, assuming a lot of bad people incarnate in the conflict areas of the world?* I just want to say, when it comes to creation, God's affairs, we don't have to have an opinion on all of it. I don't know the reasons why we are born or get the fates we do. We should not judge. We shall not play God. There's a crazy amount of suffering, I have no logical explanation for it, it's not my job to justify it. I have no consistent view of life, I just have some opinions, and it's just hobby philosophy. *I don't mean to press you, but you're more 'into' this than others?* Yeah, yeah, but in the end we're just hobby theologians, what I tell you is just my personal view which is a result from me reading all these New Age books, listening to enlightened teachers. But it's not something that I present as a package that I try to sell to people.

We see that my objections concerning the understanding of incarnations as payment of karmic debt (and Joakim elaborates this point quite sharply and unambiguously, not included above), to a great extent puncture Joakim's story. We see also that just before mentioning 'murderers', he actually says we cannot know why we incarnate the way we do. The interview has changed from being Joakim's relatively free and humorous account and testing out of different stances, thoughts and ideas, to becoming a far less fresh display of how Joakim, as an informed *bricoleur*, focuses on the ways in which spirituality and belief are shaped and modelled in the intersection of several cultural and spiritual impulses. When I claim no intention of 'pressing' him in the interview situation, it is of course too late; I already have done so, by displaying a slightly quivering, politically correct forefinger, which causes him as an informant, to resign and close himself off. More positively, my suspicion that some of his most audacious statements weren't too deeply rooted in his spiritual conscience, are proven right and given the chance to be demonstrated: for Joakim suffering is a set of pedagogical tools, and incarnations of suffering a timely punishment for bad karma—simultaneously with his wish not to condemn, systematise, or justify suffering, not play God, and his felt urge to 'solve' suffering, as an ethical imperative.

'Karmic cynicism' or spiritual actors as multidimensional

Following the tragedy of the Norwegian acts of terror on July 22, 2011, a few religious or spiritual respondents tried to find 'higher meaning' in the terrorist's outrageous deeds. The right wing, anti-Muslim and misogynist terrorist Anders Behring Breivik's slaughter of innocent youths participating in the Norwegian Labour Party's summer camp at Utøya, and his bombing of the governmental quarters in Oslo, ended with a total of 77 victims. Spiritual reflections, post-terror, mentioning higher meaning and/or karma, led to harsh criticism in the general public, and the Norwegian Association for Holists, *Holistisk Forbund*, coined the term *karmakynisme*, karmic cynicism, as a warning against the far too easy and not very empathetically or ethically convincing manoeuvre of claiming karmic logic for this (and other) tragedies.

The Norwegian princess Märtha Louise and her spiritual business partner Elisabeth Nordeng posted, as founders of the so-called 'Angel School', Astarte Education, similar ideas as those criticised above, on the school's Facebook page after the catastrophe of March 2011 in Japan. As is well known, the earthquake and tsunami then caused tremendous losses in terms of human

life as well as material damage, and the Angel School's first message was an appeal to their followers, to 'send angels' to Japan. This part of their posting was in itself not any claim of karmic or any other logic behind the tragedy, even though their angel appeal was harshly ridiculed and criticised in the media as well as by non-followers of the school, who took to trolling and spamming their pages. However, the Angel School's updates in response to the Japanese situation, also urged people to see the 'hidden blessing' in the horrific happenings. Here, as with terror being seen as conveying higher meaning, the holistic theodicies discussed at the beginning of this paper, clash thoroughly with many people's ideas of decency and perhaps *timing*.

The question remains, though: is this the whole story? Are Western spiritual seekers self-centred, politically passive and/or ignorant people, indulging themselves by giving a spiritual, higher meaning to the misery of the world from protected, privileged vantage points? True as this might be for certain people, as a general description it's flawed. The description fails to reveal whether spiritual seekers actually *are* engaged in different, political, activist or other action-based groups, dealing, in a broad sense, with the misery of the world and the will to change it by other means than elevated states of consciousness. Though *motivation* often seems to be of vital interest when alternative spiritual actors discuss the difference between good and bad actions—where suffering, as we have seen, can be explained away as pain understood or dealt with in a wrong or bad manner, as karmic lessons, or lessons from your own Higher Self poorly handled and so forth—practical lessons of love and compassion are more central when alternative therapy is viewed as post-secular religious practice. The will to help by providing therapy, whether 'the diagnosis' made by the therapist tends to focus on radical solipsism or not, points to practicality and action. The fact that money is involved in this spiritual business, does not alter this. Most alternative therapists do not get wealthy by doing what they are doing, and even if they did, there would still be a possibility that they actually do some good, for some people—that is, provide help that is seen as useful in some respect or other. Moreover, statistics indicate that people engaged in alternative spiritual practices have higher rates of reported participation in political protest activities and solidarity campaigns (Höllinger 2006; Kalvig 2011: 236–54).

Nevertheless, this field of post-secular religious practices is and should be open to debate and criticism as to how one faces suffering and death, as well as how other human issues are dealt with. We must, however, try to see people as possibly both multi-religious and multi-dimensional actors, when sorting out where to place them, academically and ethically speaking.

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MARIA KAPSALI

Body–mind unity and the spiritual dimension of Modern Postural Yoga

Introduction

This article is concerned with the connection between body and mind that the practice of yoga is expected to develop and it aims specifically to examine the relationship between this body–mind connection and the spiritual dimension of yoga practice. The article particularly focuses on contemporary forms of yoga. Since these forms feature predominantly the practice of yoga postures or *asanas*, I will employ throughout the term Modern Postural Yoga (hereafter MPY), which was coined by historian Elizabeth De Michelis (2004). This article draws on a number of scholarly sources as well as my own involvement as a practitioner and teacher of Iyengar Yoga in London.

Body–mind spirituality in Modern Postural Yoga

According to De Michelis, yoga underwent such a radical refashioning from the mid-1880s onwards, that the scholar draws a clear distinction between pre-modern forms of the discipline and what she terms Modern Yoga. MPY is one aspect of Modern Yoga and, as the name suggests, it primarily features the practice of yoga poses. Within an MPY context the practice of yoga postures has acquired unprecedented attention and has reached a high degree of sophistication. More importantly, the meditational and spiritual aspects with which the discipline was originally identified are now regarded as a by-product of *asana* practice. Following a close examination of Iyengar Yoga, 'arguably the most influential school of Postural Yoga to date' (De Michelis 2004: 4), De Michelis draws attention to the founder's emphasis on presenting the practice of yoga poses as a form of meditational activity in and of itself, which can, furthermore, have a spiritual dimension. In *The Tree of Yoga*, Iyengar puts forward a developmental model, according to which 'the mastery of *asanas* and *pranayama* [breathing exercises] leads automatically towards concentration and meditation' (1988: 8, as quoted in De Michelis 2004: 242). Equally,

samadhi, the ultimate state of liberation that can be achieved through yoga, is considered by Iyengar to be an 'effect' of *asana* practice (1988: 8, as quoted in De Michelis 2004: 242).

It becomes clear therefore, that within an MPY context, yoga postures are not simply regarded as one component of the practice, but the very means by which spiritual development and personal growth can be achieved. Furthermore, the execution, performance, and teaching of these postures exhibit a high degree of 'orthoperformance'. In other words, MPY sessions do not deal with the teaching and/or explanation of philosophical, religious or metaphysical ideas, but with the practice of the poses and their anatomical details; the angle at which a knee should be bent, the direction in which a muscle should rotate, the number of foam pads on which one should sit in order to enable the optimal position of the spine. Furthermore, the teacher's/practitioner's ability to convincingly demonstrate and impart this kind of technical knowledge is often regarded as a proof of one's in-depth understanding of the overall practice, ethical integrity, and psychophysical integration. One's skeleto-muscular understanding of the poses constitutes, therefore, a form of physical capital with cultural as well as spiritual connotations.[1]

The interconnection between technical expertise in the poses, a meditative state of mind, and a potential for spiritual development not only underlies the promotion and practice of MPY, but in some cases has been taken for granted by scholars. For example, scholar of religion Paul Heelas refers to yoga and other psychophysical disciplines as 'body–mind spiritualities' and 'holistic spiritualities', which should be furthermore 'distinguished from spiritualities associated with a God of transcendent theism' (2008: 27). Heelas specifically claims that 'granted the importance of holism. . .spirituality ultimately *belongs to* – more accurately, *should be enabled to flow through* – the mind-body nexus' (Heelas 2008: 27, emphasis in original). Although Heelas does not draw any distinction among the various practices he places under the 'holistic spiritualities' umbrella, his position bears resemblance to Iyengar's formulation; engagement with the body, through yoga or any other psychophysical discipline, is seen as having cognitive, mental, and emotional implications, and potentially a spiritual character.[2]

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1   For a discussion of Pierre Bourdieau's notion of physical capital and its transformation into economic, cultural and/or social capital see Shilling 1991: 654.
2   The tendency to equate the practice of yoga with body–mind unity could also be seen as a residual characteristic of an orientalist approach. Drawing on the work of Edward Said, David Brown and Aspasia Leledaki assert that 'body–mind unity and

Nevertheless, there are other voices which sound more suspicious of such an equation. Joseph Alter, for instance, points out that 'the advocacy of yoga as an embodied philosophy in fact exhibits a degree of anxiety and ambivalence about the inherent unity of mind, body, spirit' (2008: 37). The issue is further complicated by the fact that we are dealing with words and notions which are slippery and could be understood and defined in a number of ways. What do the words 'spiritual', 'body', 'mind' actually mean? Do we understand body and mind from the perspective of one of the Western philosophical traditions, or through the lens of one of the schools of Indian thought? Do we approach the concept of the 'spiritual' in relation to a particular religion, whether Eastern or Western, or do we adopt a New Age perspective? Although these words are at the very centre of yoga practice, yoga exponents do very little to clarify them. In fact, this lack of clarity is a chief factor in yoga's popularity with and appeal to people of different ages, genders, ethnicities and religions. According to De Michelis, the architects of modern forms of yoga consciously distanced the discipline from any specific religious dogma and embraced or coined terms that could be interpreted in a number of ways by a number of people.[3] This strategy proved very successful with twentieth-century practitioners and indeed, the absence of a definitive spiritual or religious agenda is not perceived as a negative, but rather as a positive characteristic of the practice. Silvia Prescott, a senior Iyengar Yoga teacher, for example, argues that if the teacher gives '"spiritual teaching" people can delude themselves and almost hypnotize themselves into thinking they're having a spiritual experience. Whereas if [the teacher] leaves it undefined they'll find something real for themselves – they won't put it in terms somebody else has given them' (Maimaris 2006: 28). Prescott's opinion reveals two important notions that underlie the practice of MPY. First of all, the practice favours personal experience over dogmatic tenets, and second it demonstrates a belief in the person's ability to attain spirituality by herself, that is without any form of spiritual guidance and outside or independently of a particular group and environment. MPY, therefore, is vehemently presented as a form of spiritual practice, but spirituality is left undefined with equal fervour.

Keeping in mind the importance attached to the belief that the practice of yoga poses can cultivate the integration of body and mind which can then

self-reflexivity [are] assumed to be essentially embedded in the indigenous embodied practices and philosophies of the East' (2010: 129).

3   Perhaps the best example of hazy terms that feature in the lingua franca of contemporary yoga is 'self-realisation', 'the marvelous ambiguities' of which, as De Michelis states, 'allow it to become all things to all people' (2004: 223).

translate into or lead towards spiritual growth, this article aims to raise the following questions. Does MPY promote the integration of body and mind? How can such integration be framed and analysed? And (how) can such integration acquire a spiritual character? In an attempt to approach these questions, I will examine MPY from two different perspectives. I will first employ a phenomenological lens in order to offer an account of what goes on, what happens to the practitioner. I will then adopt a discursive perspective informed by cultural materialism in order to unpick some of the ideologies that underlie the pedagogy and practice of yoga postures. I will not examine yoga through the perspective of Indian metaphysical thought, although such an approach would have its merits. The reason for which such an approach will not be employed is that I consider MPY to be a modern phenomenon. Although yoga, and indeed MPY may have been influenced by Indian or Hindu notions about the body, the mind, and spiritual transcendence, yoga is primarily practised today within capitalist, western(ised), (post)modern cultural and social networks. As such, even if Indian metaphysical thought underlies MPY, the practice, dissemination as well as the social functions of yoga are determined by notions of health and fitness, rather than religious expression, and operate within the economic landscape of late capitalism.[4] For this reason, I will examine the body–mind question through distinctively Western disciplines.

In a nutshell, phenomenology has foregrounded the role of the body in the production of meaning, as well as the importance of the body as a locus of experience; our embodiment is not some kind of acoutrement to an omnipotent mind; it is the absolute prerequisite for being in and interacting with the world. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty has argued for the 'lived body', the body that is present and involved in the constitution of meaning, one's sense of self and identity. As the social scientists Simon J. Williams and Gillian Bendelow argue, phenomenology, and particularly Merleau-Ponty's work, comprises an alternative to the Cartesian body–mind dualism that has underpinned much of Western thought and 'provides us with the philosophical foundation for a truly non-dualist ontology of the body' (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 51). As such, phenomenology can offer an appropriate framework for examining the relationship between body and mind which the practice of MPY seeks to cultivate.

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4   It is quite significant that Sport England, the government agency for sports in the UK, not only identifies yoga as a sport activity, but places it under 'Exercise and Fitness' (Sportengland, official website, http://www.sportengland.org/.../idoc.ashx (accessed on 16 October 2011).

On the other hand, cultural materialism can offer a more discursive perspective and thus shed light on the ideologies that underpin the practice of MPY. Cultural materialism could be described as a refined version of Marxism and its application in cultural studies was developed by the literary scholar Raymond Williams (1921–92). Theatre scholar Simon Murray explains that

> . . .the paradigm of cultural materialism insists that. . .any art form is *of* the world and not simply *in* it. Thus, a crucial dimension to understanding and explaining any artistic practice is to place it, to see it, to hear it and to "unpack" it in such a way as to reveal social and cultural imprints on its form and content. (Murray & Keefe 2007: 27, emphasis in original.)

Although cultural materialism has been predominantly employed in scholarship on art and theatre, it can comprise an important tool in an attempt to foreground the socio-political ideologies that underpin the ways in which MPY endeavours to train body and mind.

Finally, it should be noted that my decision to approach yoga through the aforementioned perspectives has been informed by similar distinctions I have encountered in the literature on the body. For example, the philosopher Elizabeth Grosz argues that schools of philosophy and approaches towards the subject and the body could be divided into two categories: 'the inside out' category which, according to Grosz, 'focuses on the way in which the subject's corporeal exterior is psychically represented and lived by the subject' (Grosz 1994: xii), and the 'the outside in' approach which 'emphasizes. . .the ways in which the social inscriptions of the body produce the effects of depth' (1994: xiii). As such, Grosz indicates that 'psychoanalysis and phenomenology focus on the body as it is experienced, rendered meaningful, enmeshed in systems of significations', whereas 'Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, Lingis and others. . . focus on the body as a social object, as a text to be marked, traced, written upon by various regimes of institutional (discursive and nondiscursive) power. . .' (Grosz 1994: 116). Based on the aforementioned distinctions, therefore, I will examine MPY as a psychophysical experience on the one hand and as a mode of social inscription on the other. However, I should also indicate that an examination of MPY through these lenses will lead to contradictory positions, which however do not exclude one another, but rather co-exist and weave the very texture of the practice.

Yoga as psychophysical experience

The few accounts that examine yoga as an experience are firmly rooted in a phenomenological framework and draw from the work of eminent phenomenologists. I will first concentrate on an article by Klas Nevrin, which examines MPY practices in relation to the practitioner's 'lived experience' (2008: 123). Nevrin particularly suggests that the practice of MPY allows the practitioner to focus on the body, since the practice of yoga poses does not carry an outwards oriented intention; the execution of a movement aims at the execution of this particular movement and nothing more. In this manner, one is able to become more aware of physical as well as habitual patterns and also to develop a 'heightened attention to feeling movement' (Nevrin 2008: 125). Such an engagement, Nevrin supports 'will typically alter the practitioner's sense of self and body' and he further contends that 'these changes' might be experienced by novices as 'highly positive' (Nevrin 2008: 125). An alteration in the mode of one's attention has also an emotional dimension, although, as Nevrin argues, emotion is never addressed in an MPY context (Nevrin 2008: 128). Nevertheless, Nevrin identifies 'in bodily actions. . .structures of experience that invite for [*sic*] affective and imaginative elaboration in certain directions' (Nevrin 2008: 129). Furthermore, the manner in which MPY practices direct attention and pay attention to the body, can be for Nevrin 'existentially empower[ing]', since they can 'counteract detached and inflexible modes of experiencing' (Nevrin 2008: 130). Nevrin's account points at important dimensions of the practice of yoga. First of all, Nevrin seems to suggest that yoga allows the phenomenologist's 'absent body' to become present.[5] By directing attention to the body, the body is no longer the silent and quiet 'from' that enables one's engagement in and with the world. The body is rather thematised and thus physical and kinaesthetic awareness is foregrounded. Second, such awareness is inextricably connected to affective, mental and behavioural aspects of the individual and Nevrin explicitly mentions the possibility of empowerment. A better understanding of what Nevrin means by empowerment can be gained by looking at the concept of appropriation.

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5   The concept of the 'absent body' was developed by phenomenologist and medical practitioner Drew Leder (1990). According to Leder, the body is the 'from', the starting point of our engagement with the world, and as a result our enmeshment in the world renders the body obsolete. In normal quotidian activity, therefore, the body recedes in our awareness, precisely because our attention is directed *from* the body *to* something else.

The phenomenologist Eliot Deutsch regards the body as an 'achievement concept' and suggests that 'persons have bodies to the degree to which they appropriate the physical conditions of their individuality and become integrated…psychophysical beings' (1993: 5). Body-appropriation, therefore, comprises 'the bringing of the physical conditions of one's individual being into the matrix of one's personal identity and self-image' (Deutsch 1993: 5). Deutsch understands body appropriation in a developmental sense and he specifically cites the physical growth and changes that mark childhood. In this respect, body appropriation is not seen as a final product, but a constant process. In view of Deutsch's argument, one could support the idea that yoga is one such technique that can enable the individual to gain a better understanding and/or more heightened experience of her physicality. Furthermore, the heightened and developed physical awareness can result in emotional and mental insight. Prescott characteristically points out that 'in the process [of learning to understand how the body works] you learn quite a lot about how the mind works' (Maimaris 2006: 29).

According to a phenomenological perspective, therefore, the body–mind unity that yoga is expected to achieve is understood in terms of the practitioner's mental and emotional landscape. In phenomenological terms, the practice of yoga confirms and accentuates an approach towards the body as the 'locus of experience'. It thus is understood as inextricably connected to the practitioner's proprioceptive, cognitive, emotional and behavioural attitudes. As such, according to philosopher Yasuo Yuasa, body–mind unity can be regarded as an 'achievement', a 'state actualized by exemplary individuals' (Yuasa 1987: 1) and not simply as a constant and universal connection which either is or is not there. The integration of body and mind is therefore a *possibility* that can be rendered present through training. Through cultivation, Yuasa argues, the body may lose its heaviness, overcome its inertness, and cease to object to the mind (1987: 69). The mind, on the other hand, may overcome the tendency of being a subject opposed to objects, it may give up ego-consciousness and in Yuasa's words 'enter a state of self-less *samadhi* or what may be called a self without self' (Yuasa 1987: 69). Based on such an understanding of body and mind, spirituality could be viewed as the very realisation of this radical experience of their unity. Spirit is no longer regarded as separate and superior to the flesh, but a continuation, an entailment of psychophysical integration. Spirituality is, therefore, a state in which the barriers between object and subject are lifted and limited individual consciousness is transcended.

Yoga as a social practice

Whereas a phenomenological exploration of yoga seems to affirm the claims that its practice can unify body and mind and indeed lead to spiritual attainment, an examination of the discipline through the lens of cultural materialism paints a very different picture. According to such an approach, yoga is viewed not only as a practice that takes place in a particular time and place, but rather as *a result* of such time and place. Such a perspective would reveal that certain principles that underlie the practice and pedagogy of yoga postures are inextricably connected to notions that were developed and popularised from the eighteenth century onwards. An upright posture, an aligned skeleton, and an economical sense of movement underpin the teaching of most MPY regimes and in some cases these traits are being upheld as ideals, which the practitioner tries to emulate. These principles appear to be sensible prerequisites for a healthy and balanced body, and indeed according to Yuasa, certain Japanese forms of spiritual cultivation regard the attainment of a correct physical position as an essential premise for spiritual development (1984: 100). However, when these principles are viewed from a historical perspective and in relation to Western culture, it becomes clear that they became prominent at a particular point in time and have in fact both social and political connotations.

In an article that traces the 'upward training of the body' from the Middle Ages to the emergence of court societies, Georges Vigarello points out that the cultivation of upright posture—by means that have historically varied—has been connected to the acquisition or maintenance of social ranking. As a result, from the Middle Ages onwards, the body becomes 'heavily laden with demonstrative value', since 'one's breeding is evident in one's physical training' (Vigarello 1989: 156). In a similar vein, Joseph Roach argues that accepted modes of behaviour, manners and comportment have always been part of wider ideological strategies that aim to impose a clear distinction between social classes as well as promote the interests of the upper ones. Roach points out the way eighteenth- and nineteenth-century techniques of training, such as 'military formations, conduct books, even handwriting exercises' aimed at the 'internalization of social discipline' and the maintenance of the political, social and economic status quo (Roach 1989: 159). Similarly, with regard to late capitalist societies, Bryan Turner observes that the body has become an 'indicator of cultural capital', whereas the maintenance or production of youthfulness, fitness and beauty has been met by a significant degree of personal and financial investment (Turner 1996: 3). The emphasis placed on the

body in contemporary culture is thus related to what sociologists term 'the self project', 'within which individuals express their own personal emotional needs through constructing their own bodies' (Turner 1996: 5). The body, therefore, is seen as 'a changeable form of existence which can be shaped and which is malleable to individual needs and desires' (Turner 1996: 5).

In view of the aforementioned currents and developments, one could situate the popularity of yoga, and indeed the widespread practice of MPY, within this wider nexus whereby the body is moulded, regulated and governed according to, and in order to promote, specific values and aims. In modern configurations yoga has acquired an explicit health and fitness orientation, whereas practices of yoga today fall under the sport and leisure domain. At the same time, yoga has been cast as a form of physical/spiritual/holistic therapy, advocated both by mainstream doctors as well as practitioners of alternative medicine. In an article that examines the disciplinary nature of alternative therapies, the cultural theorist Ruth Barcan employs Michel Foucault's argument and claims that 'the vigilance of external bodies is supplemented to a greater or lesser degree by *self-*monitoring, *self-*"management", *self-*surveillance' (Barcan 2008: 15, emphasis in original). Alternative therapies, and among these Barcan explicitly includes yoga, can thus be seen as manifestations of internalised forms of self-government. Contrary to popular beliefs, therefore, it could be argued that the practice of MPY, while supposedly ridding the body of the tensions and toxins of urban environments, at the same time renders the body productive, efficient and docile. According to this view, yoga not only fails to liberate the practitioner, but subjects one further to the disciplinary power of social and political mechanisms. De Michelis's observation that yoga is practised 'in total autonomy from institutional and societal control' (2004: 211) acquires an ironic twist, since practice of yoga comprises a distinct form of self-regulation and body management and as such it can be construed as a practice that supports hegemonic structures. The practice of MPY could therefore be seen as one more example in a long series of techniques which aim to regulate the body, so that discipline is internalised and the social status quo is maintained.

The disciplinary and regulatory function that can be attributed to MPY practices can be further identified in the way the *asanas* are being taught. The importance of orthoperformance as well as attention to skeletal alignment is potentially the way in which the practice calms the mind and fosters a meditative state. On the other hand, it could be argued that these pedagogical principles, apart from cultivating an upright posture which, as we have seen, is fraught with political and social implications, also lead to the objectifica-

tion of the body. During a yoga class, the body is subject to a process of assessment, measurement and analysis according to 'scientific principles' and 'anatomical rules'. It is placed under the objectifying gaze of the teacher, who instructs, incites and corrects the body through verbal instruction, tactile adjustment, and physical demonstration. The practitioner's body is thus constantly compared to the ideal shape of the *asanas*, as the latter are exhibited by the teacher, photographs of the creator of a specific approach, or the student who performs the pose 'correctly'. Such a process turns the individual lived body, the *soma* of the practitioner, into a material object which strives to achieve predetermined shapes.

The aforementioned pedagogical approach becomes further evident in the language often employed in MPY contexts. As the practice of postures has become more sophisticated, the verbal instructions that accompany the teaching of the postures feature a distinct vocabulary, which is drawn from anatomy and physiology and tends to become more detailed and intrinsic as the student progresses. Body parts are broken down to minute detail, muscles are precisely named and bodily movements are described in an analytical fashion. In this manner, MPY draws extensively on a Western scientific paradigm, which is underpinned by body–mind dualism and views the body as a machine that can be regulated by the mind.[6] At the base of MPY pedagogy we thus find the following paradox: while the practice of the *asanas* is expected to unite body and mind, their teaching is often characterised by a mechanistic and instrumentalist approach, which views the body as some*thing* malleable that can be changed and subordinated, if sufficient effort and control is exerted. It could be argued therefore that not only the social context, but also the pedagogy that underlies MPY practices have at the centre a body that resembles Descartes' 'corpse' rather than Merleau-Ponty's 'lived body'. As a result, although MPY placed the body at the centre of its praxis, it is still burdened by pedagogical, scientific and ideological models that institute a clear distinction between body and mind, whereby the body is the instrument of action and the mind the site of the intellect, control and decision-making.

6   Brown and Leledaki bring attention to the medicalisation of MPY. In order for MPY to be validated as an alternative form of therapy for a number of ailments, which are nonetheless determined and classified according to Western medicine, its practices have been assessed according to Western biomedical methods. However, 'the process of validation through Western science often means (as an unintended consequence) the application of a paradigm underpinned by dualistic notions of an essential relationship between the mind-body' (Brown & Leledaki 2010: 137).

An examination of yoga through cultural materialism brings to the foreground, therefore, that the body–mind unity which MPY aims or claims to engender is subject to a number of factors, which might prohibit such an endeavour. This, of course, does not discredit the understanding of individual teachers and practitioners who may experience the integration of body and mind in the manner, for example, that a phenomenological analysis frames such a possibility. However, what a cultural materialist perspective makes clear is that MPY cannot be viewed or indeed practised independently of certain socio-economic contexts and completely free of pedagogical paradigms that view the body as a mere instrument. From this point of view, MPY acquires a disciplinary character, which also forecloses the very possibility of spiritual development. In fact, one could further argue that the promise of spiritual attainment is nothing more than an excuse for the disciplinary power of the training. Instead of asking whether *asanas* have a spiritual dimension that redeems them from being mere gymnastics, one might as well ask what is the social function of such premise. Why is MPY presented as a form of spiritual pursuit? Why do the practitioners need to invest the practice with a spiritual dimension? Could spirituality serve as an excuse for the propagation of a practice that keeps Western populations physically and mentally healthy, productive, docile?

Conclusion

The two approaches employed in this paper have foregrounded different aspects of MPY. As I have already mentioned, my feeling is that these aspects, albeit contradictory with each other, are both contained within the ideology and practice of the discipline. It would also seem to me that, although both these approaches foreground important aspects of the practice, they do not encompass it in its totality. The phenomenological approach renders yoga ahistorical and ostensibly concentrates on the individual and her experience. The cultural materialist viewpoint cannot account for the ways in which yoga can act as a technique for empowerment and spiritual cultivation. More importantly, both currents seem to exist as possibilities within the same class, even within the same body. The practice of a single *asana* can bring body and mind closer and thus open possibilities for mental, emotional and spiritual development. The very same practice may develop an instrumentalist attitude towards the body, and thus cause a further dislocation between body, mind and spirit. As a result, the claim that MPY unites body and mind and is a

form of spiritual practice needs to remain provisional and contingent. For this reason, it is important to look at specific instances of yoga practice/tuition and pay attention to the pedagogical tools and principles employed. More importantly, a theoretical framework needs to be developed that could take into account both the various ideologies within/according to which yoga currently operates, as well as the personal psychophysical experiences that practitioners may have. Finally, the number of discourses, psychophysical possibilities, and metaphysical expectations that operate not only within the space of MPY practice, but in a number of similar disciplines, point towards a need to reconfigure these terms that MPY loves to employ but hates to define. What are body, mind and spirit and can the peculiar blend of MPY serve as a basis to redefine these terms?

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CHRISTIANE KÖNIGSTEDT

Religio-spiritual strategies of self-help and empowerment in everyday life

Selected cases of spirituality in Germany

Introduction

The discussion of 'post-secularity' is in the first place an academic one, concerning a paradigm shift away from the widely accepted assumption that 'secularisation' is still a central feature of contemporary times. Since 9/11, religion has been receiving renewed and widespread public and scientific attention, while one area of research has rarely been touched on within the debate: so-called 'alternative', individualised forms of religion, usually not only regarded as being the concern of the single, private person, and combining more or less freely chosen individual beliefs and practices, but also as not a very fruitful object to look at when it comes to assumptions about broader shifts in the relationship between religion and society nowadays.

I will, to the contrary, argue below that these forms of religion not only may be substantially relevant within the 'post-secularity' paradigm in terms of belief structures and ways in which the individual deals with believing (see Bochinger 1994), but, similarly to the findings of Hubert Knoblauch (2009), also in terms of visibility on the level of semantics, for which reason it is worthwhile to pay them some attention.

Within the wider context of contemporary spiritual practice or esotericism, individuals can be observed (not only in Germany but also elsewhere), who combine different kinds of alternative healing practices in order to gain or maintain physical and mental health, well-being, success and autonomy. These practices were said to take place only within the very private sphere, partly because those beliefs do not change the everyday lifestyles of individuals significantly, at least in comparison with the much more formative traditional religions[1]. These practices are often connected to discernibly spiritual or religious, often inconsistent combinations of beliefs that contain a 'multiple

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1   Expression taken from Wood 2006.

salvation logic' which is used by the actors themselves to explain why they act in certain ways. At the same time, key features of 'secular rationality' are a central aspect as well; for example, the level of semantics, which here is 'the secular', is a category actively and deliberately, though implicitly applied, positively defined (for example, as scientific) and constantly placed in relation to the categories of 'spiritual' and 'religious'. These also are transformed, but always remain structurally recognisable within the differently reported world-views, especially if one considers instrumental rationality as something widely associated with the 'secular' in contrast with the 'religious' or 'spiritual'.

This paper aims to systematically show, firstly, the different versions of salvation logic and reasoning of action within individual world-views, and secondly it focuses on examples of the semantics used in reports of individuals' own world-views. Thirdly, against this backdrop, the term 'post-secular', understood in this way, as opposed to its original meaning, will be discussed in order to point out former limits and some new possibilities when this term is used as a description of current forms of religion.

A re-emerging 'magical garden'?

Within the discussions about the term 'post-secular', my approach is based on the 'return of the repressed' thesis. It assumes that modern forms of religious belief are re-emerging forms of religion that have always been there, but were suppressed by Christian dominance (Gorski 2005: 180).

Philip Gorski compares the contemporary 'magical garden' with the religious pluralism of ancient Rome from which viewpoint diverse beliefs exist simultaneously, and in themselves also refer to concepts of immanence and transcendence such as are found in Thomas Luckmann's[2] (cf. Figure) scheme of 'multiple transcendences'. The latter means that diverse beliefs refer to different ranges of transcendence in contrast to the ideally homogeneously presumed otherworldly transcendence of the former Christian vision (Gorski 2005: 184). I work with these assumptions in the sense that I recognise the possibility (*sic*) of a similar situation in the historical past and I use the concept of 'multiple transcendence' with a dominance of inner-worldliness as a description of the religious landscape today.

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2   For further reading see, e.g., Luckmann 2002: 139–54.

Luckmann's concept of transcendence and Max Weber's 'Rational Actor'

Gorski proceeds in his article from the description of the contemporary and Roman religious landscapes to the question for the Weberian 'Rational Actor' within the modern situation: Weber, in his essay 'Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism' (1988: 17–206), said that it was in the belief that a divine, other-worldly salvation and individual predestination would manifest in worldly, that is to say, economic, success that individuals adopted a way of living which led to early capitalism. Weber draws his conclusions basically from the inherent logic of salvation regarding social organisation.

But how, if at all, Gorski asks, is Weber's claim concerning the connection of salvation belief and human action and life-conduct from the Protestant ethic valid for today's mostly inner-worldly oriented beliefs, situated as they are within individualised, alternative forms of religiosity? And what consequences might the extreme diversity of 'New Age' beliefs, which are only very weakly supported by visible institutions, but held by individuals who live within and are dominantly bound to the logic of secular institutions, have for research which is inspired by Max Weber (cf. Gorski 2005: 183)?

Approaching this from the direction of theories of action, it has to be acknowledged that it is not possible precisely to derive one's original motivation from one's own reports and reasoning, as the believer (as do people generally) tends to reason also with regard to the situations in which he or she gives those reports and may not be fully aware of all the factors that lead directly or indirectly to his/her own actions. Within Luckmann's work, which partly uses the Durkheimian approach, this has not been the focus of interest, while Max Weber compared social structures only when they had already become historical (in that the sum of certain actions had already become manifest) and found their connection with the salvation logic of the 'Protestant Ethic'. Thus, the analysis of interview material in this essay merely displays acting as religiously reasoned by the actor from a social constructionist perspective.

This is valuable for the study of religious practices for at least two reasons. Firstly, we gain insights into contemporary religious/spiritual practices actually through explanations as to how they work. This close connection of subjective description, explanation and practice becomes apparent within the longer interviews: though the persons interviewed often said 'I do it, because it works', they then reported further to me, how they explain to others and (admittedly) also to themselves often in detail and consistently, why a single practice actually does so. To me this indicates that it is only to a certain degree

acceptable[3] to commit to practices which might seem irrational or pointless, so that practice and explanation (belief) can be seen from this perspective as being closely connected.

Secondly, against the backlash of institutionally dominant secular world-views, this approach allows us to describe what kind(s) of religious rationalities are constructed by agents in the post-secular situation as described by Philip Gorski—no matter how formative single beliefs may become in practice and whether a certain action is really primarily grounded in those beliefs.

As we will see, the Weberian term 'salvation' is still useful here and plays a central role in the analysis. Its significance varies across the contemporary religious scene and may have different meanings or connotations for the same person.

The problem(s) of categorising 'belief' and phenomenological approaches

After some refinements have been made according to the empirical findings, the religious scenery as described by Gorski could be sketched out as follows:
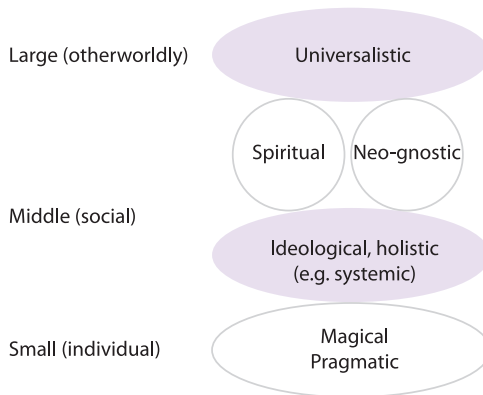
Varieties of transcendence

According to Luckmann's account, all levels of transcendence are assumed to provide meaning for social entities (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1994), which may be humanity as a whole or the individual, by identifying these entities in relation to a greater, or higher, meaningful context. This may mean, in a

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3   This may be seen as an alternative focus to Detlef Pollack's argument that modernity would go together with a generally high tolerance for inconsistencies (Pollack 2009: 303). I rather argue, that these inconsistencies are precisely partly dealt with in ways shown below.

religious context, being created by an ideal god, or stemming from a higher energy or truth; or belief in the powers wielded by a magician, or in energies one connects with in order to be healed on the individual level. At the middle or social level, progress within the social world is usually associated with the belief concerned.

The systematisation of beliefs is based on Luckmann and on rather old-fashioned theological terminology, simply because this was probably the most differentiated terminology available and would therefore better approach the 'multiple transcendence' suggested by Gorski.

Though the basic structure has been refined by means of empiricism, the systematisation is to be understood as a merely theoretical construct; the Weberian *Idealtypen* (ideal type), and it is used as an analytical tool that provides a structure for the material. But those categories are to be found only as variations and mixtures within empiricism, thus the terms do not provide categories to designate any 'real' religion or belief.

Differentiation between religious/spiritual and secular semantics

Within the analysis, in order to be able to sever parts of the multiple religious rationality from secular instrumental rationality, I try to differentiate between beliefs that are, within religious studies, 'traditionally' recognised as being similar to classical categories such as 'magical', 'spiritual-ideological' (also: holistic or systemic), otherworldly, transcendent and (neo-)Gnostic in terms of their logic of salvation. They are themselves, concerning their semantics, here severed from world-views that would, regarding their semantics, generally be described as 'secular', or at least not apparently religious, spiritual or magical from the classical point of view. I do so in contrast to the Luckmannian approach. This way, it is also possible to avoid Luckmann's too broad definition of religion and to differentiate between world-views in Western countries, which can be counted as dominant ('secular') and alternative[4] (here 'religious' and 'spiritual') on the institutional level. Furthermore, this differentiation was necessary to designate that which is specifically 'new'

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4   Hubert Knoblauch uses the expression 'religious semantics' to identify individual religiosity and to separate it from what he considers to be 'non-religiosity', but in a much broader sense than I do here. In Knoblauch's book *Populäre Religion* (2009) it is still too much based on a free interpretation concerning the difficult question, what decides what is 'religious' and what is not. This is why I have decided to orientate my understanding of religion on conventions about what is observed mainly within religious studies. This is not a perfect solution, but it certainly leads to more comprehensible results.

in the contemporary religious situation, and which will be discussed in more depth below.

The distinction made in contrast to Luckmann is to be understood in the sense of the 'ideal-typical' as well. In the second part of the analysis, I will give some examples for this differentiation.

Methods and samples

In the following I will present parts of selected case studies in the form of semi-standardised interviews made at esoteric fairs in Germany.[5]

The selection of subjects at the level of the field of study was made according to at least three aspects: 1) the subject's range activity and role in the field, specifically, subjects were selected on the basis of being interested in and occupied with more than one practice for, 2), more than two years, 3) without being a professional. I chose according to these three aspects in order to make sure that the interest in the field on the part of the subject is more or less a serious one and also to include only people who would probably have only a minimal economic interest and not so much of a salesman *habitus*. The last point is important in order to improve the chances of investigating not just advertising strategies, but actually the things people believe in seriously, as economic purpose and belief can, though need not necessarily be, interwoven. Furthermore, I also tried to cover a wide socio-economic demographic, although I did not follow this attempt too systematically.

In another respect, it was important to cover a wide range of types of world-view according to the theoretical framework explained above, in short: pragmatic, ideological and universal types and their combinations, as well as Gnostic, spiritual or 'alternative theories'.

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5   The standardisation was accomplished with a modified and extended version of the Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark's 'Five dimensions of religiosity' model in combination with the 'structural model of religiosity' by Ulrich Oevermann (1996: 29–40) in order to exemplify some kinds of salvation logics in the contemporary situation.

Multiple salvation logics and self-empowerment

To show what is understood by 'salvation' and how different interpretations of the term may be held together by a single individual, I chose three persons that cover all three ranges of transcendence with a different emphasis. The investigation was broader, but for the purpose of describing understandings of salvation, it will be sufficient to shed light (including literal quotes) on six aspects:

1. The individual's beliefs and practices;
2. the meaning he/she sees in life, which is usually split across and subsidiary to
3. the aims they see as being important to achieve (Weber's *Heilsziel*) and
4. the ways/practices by which these are believed to be achieved (*Heilsweg*).

And within the esoteric/spiritual range,

5. the reasons why they started to be interested in esoteric practices or spirituality; and
6. the benefits they expect to gain are also of central importance.

Three examples[6]

P1's (male, around 40 years old, self-employed engineer) world-view is relatively complex and combines all ranges of transcendence: he comes from a Protestant background, claims to be a non-believer and views many features of Christianity quite critically, though he admits to praying to God every now and then. He imagines God to be an energy which he uses himself when applying Reiki on others.[7] It also has an otherworldly character, as the trans-

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6   The interview material was collected by myself in March–April 2008 during the so-called *Esoterik-Messen* (esoteric fairs) which are in Berlin and Lübeck, Germany. This paper is based mainly on these interviews. Those interviews that provided the quotes for the text here, are signified as P1 (Person 1), P2, P3 and P4. The material is originally in German and the translation has been done by myself. The original material can be found as an appendix of my MA thesis, which is in my possession and can be consulted by contacting me.

7   P1:'I also believe that—quotation marks—God exists. A so-called "divine energy", that practically contains All in One, so to say.' C: 'Is that a personal God?' P1: 'No. That is practically something that includes everything. Everything one can imagine.'

formation of the universe is imagined in a very abstract way ('the unfolding rose') and as lying in the future, which is reminiscent of some key topics in classical Gnosticism.[8] He believes that every soul has a duty to perfect itself via self-chosen experiences and such souls, developing simultaneously, will lead to a perfect universe consisting of pure light-energy. He further stresses his belief in 'the law of attraction' concerning human community: this law would implement itself more and more according to the development of the human soul. The (parallel) effort in concentrating on and following that law in the beginning (i.e. now) would become unnecessary in the future with the further development of the universe. In that later state, no laws at all would be needed in human society.

This world-view can, due to its abstract ideals and social transcendence, be categorised as partly universalistic, or even Gnostic, and holistic. Into the latter category, I also include belief in God as an energy that may be transmitted by human beings and can lead to what he understands as 'healing', because it manifests, in his words, the strong connection he believes exists between humans and the universe.

> P1: Yes, I dim my perception of the outer environment a bit, and search practically for a ray of light above. One to God, one to my heart and once to the earth, so that I am connected to them. I mean, connected to the earth and to the divine energy.

The 'law of attraction' also has a very strong pragmatic, technically magical notion: according to him, this implies that if a person improves him/herself, he/she can get anything he/she desires, while being strongly emotionally excited; for example a car or, occasionally, some parking space or a lost key, or contact with certain people:

> P1: Well, they say of the things one wishes for very strongly, that when one imagines how it will be after one has achieved them; when mind and emotion work closely together, that those things will come to be.

Pragmatic/magical elements also play a major role when he addresses his wishes to the universe. This would need conscious concentration and the de-

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8   P1: 'That is abandoning the Christian god, belief in a transcendent truth behind this god, the human being that takes part in the divine energy and the individual salvation process, which triggers the transformation of the universe.'

termination to strengthen himself or solve concrete, worldly problems. When he began, he had not had any crucial experience, but rather felt his interest in experimenting with light and energy work developing slowly. Through this, he was hoping to gain a richer life with more love and energy in it. Since then, his life has been emotionally enriched, and his range of perception has also been broadened. As a result, he also feels he has become a much more interesting person, much more optimistic and courageous in decisions concerning his life, because he feels he has the strength to get things right if something turns out not to work. Now he has a much better job, as well as the car he had always wanted. The serving of his personal purposes and aims can, to some extent also be dedicated for the practical application of healing and helping others. It is something that makes him a specialist, since he himself is the locus where the special power is to be located. Hence he becomes important for others and he explicitly perceives this as raising his social attractiveness. The former at first serves his worldly needs and supports his personal growth, which makes up a huge part of what he designates as the primary meaning of life—personal perfection.

'Salvation' for P1 seems hence to have a threefold meaning: firstly, the transformation of his very own situation and his personal features and skills, which is closely connected, secondly, to an improvement of society and thirdly, the transformation of the universe. The practices he uses, such as concentration, meditation, imagination, are not something unique to his beliefs, but used chiefly for pragmatic purposes. He becomes, in his view, someone special who can deal with divine energies, as well as be more courageous and able to cope with his own life (healed and empowered), which means personal salvation and is, at the same time, a condition for the development and salvation of everything else.

P2 (female; in her late 20s, a self-financing student, pregnant at the time the interview was made) I chose this person as an example of a seeming lack of otherworldly transcendence and her beliefs rather fit the categories holistic and pragmatic. She says she does not believe in God as a concept at all, but found the stories from the Bible that she had been told her during her upbringing quite salutary at the time. Today she, like P1, practises energy work which she regards as necessary means for taking care of her own mental health. Additionally, she meditates regularly, which basically includes any practice of conscious relaxation and focussing on herself, and she also has made use of a list other therapies such as massage, acupuncture, homeopathy and others. For her, physical problems are usually connected to psychological stress or social problems and the body and the psyche are seen as closely connected entities.

> P3: By energy work I only mean. . .that sometimes your body gives signals one should take seriously, because body and psyche are connected very closely to each other. I mean, somehow everything is connected. And I believe, that many people who are chronically ill often have a psychological or emotional problem which they cannot cope with, or which they ignore.

Only personal subjectivity is sacred, while she believes everything else is connected via a collective unconscious and a special energy. This, to some extent, seems to be accessible, as she mentions on another occasion that she feels able to connect energetically to close friends (and sometimes to strangers), which brings warmth to her life that she says otherwise would be missing. Energetically, everything in the world desires to get into energetic balance with its environment, so, the consequences of a person's actions should be expected to return to him or her. She says she uses astrology a lot, as an alternative system of knowledge which can explain her daily impressions and perceptions (that other types of knowledge cannot explain reasonably for her) and she also uses Tarot as a means to reflect more systematically on the events in her life. She had started to work with the former when she was only 13 years old and received a book on astrology as a present. At that time she describes herself as being extremely sensitive and easily irritated by other people's behaviour, and astrology explained to her the strong differences she felt between herself and others. It continues to help her to understand what is going on, especially between people and people and herself every day.

> P2: . . .I already see, when we are in Aries, I see that more conflicts are likely to happen, because that's how it is mostly, very often, then I just have to discipline myself a bit more. . .I once worked in a pub, and the folks—I noticed how they regularly freaked out on nights of the full moon, getting completely drunk, staying out longer, ranting much more. . .

She got to know Tarot later and says it was a kind of meditation, helping her to make decisions and working against the confusion in her mind:

> P2: . . .Tarot. . .that is, as I said, more for an emergency, when I am a little in a crisis, that I get out to calm me down: when I doubt, then those are taken out [those are used].

All the practices she uses primarily seem to serve her mental and physical health and her well-being, from the point of view that she has always more or less perceived her being in the world as problematic. She also says she sees no meaning beyond mere biological reproduction, as the human consciousness disappears when the body dies, and personal growth is for the sake of personal confidence and one's immediate environment. It is about 'making the best of it'. Therefore, to her, astrology and Tarot are means of coping with the resulting confusion for her that by now have become, like energy work and other therapies, her first means of choice for coping with her (mental) experience in everyday life. She actually goes so far as to accept some difficulties in communicating with other people (including her husband) that don't deploy or accept the concepts and explanations for situations that she makes use of.

Concerning the concept of salvation, we find here a strongly pessimistic attitude towards the world and its living conditions within, the topic of balancing energy to achieve a comfortable environment and several strategies of 'healing' to keep herself in balance, that is to say to cope with more or less individual problems in her surroundings, and so are alternative knowledge systems (astrology used). Those, as well as Tarot, serve as a basis for interpretation in making decisions about which way she is going to act in certain situations. Hence, there is no salvation as such, but far more a concern with coping with and resolving the problems of her being on the individual and social level.

P3 (female, approximately 45 years old, works as a theriapist) mainly holds a 'systemic' world-view which predominantly stresses the interconnectedness of everything, so that everything a person does will have consequences for him/her in reverse, as well as the importance of an equality of chances and of confidence in the life of a person as well as having an ecological consciousness.[9]

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9   P3: 'Yes. So the imagination is, that we, humans—as does everything else within nature as well – move in systems. I say that within nature we know systems, as for example that "hares eat grass". Those hares are then likewise eaten by foxes or other animals, and they themselves have other enemies, by whom they are eaten. Those chains are part of an overall system, and as soon as one part drops out of it, it has an impact on the whole system. When it happens that the natural enemies of a species disappear, this species will expand without limit. This has the reverse effect on their food source—if we take those rabbits, for example. We know about this problem from Australia, where rabbits have no natural enemies. There it really was a problem, because the rabbits dug so many tunnels in the ground and ate the food of other animals that needed it. These are now in danger of disappearing completely, or something like that. This idea is like a mobile, where, if a part of a system changes,

Accordingly, it seems necessary for everyone to act responsibly within his/her immediate environment. Her own confidence is very important to her, and for that reason she also meditates every now and then. What she believes from the spiritual range is rather preserved for herself:

> P3: Yes, I try. . .That is something, I deal with by myself. So, I simply believe. . .yes, that there are energies, we cannot estimate. Which are higher and bigger. And carry more meaning. Yes [giggling]. . .something divine. And. . .I don't know, but the Christian Church by now has gone so far that it also says that God happens between people. So more in that direction.

'Systemic therapies' which focus on solving the individuals' problems in connection to their domestic environment are now a more or less recognised form of therapy in Germany. Unlike older forms of psychological therapy which come from traditions that include a strong notion of authority (psychoanalysis would be a good example), these are not concerned with spotting the individuals' failures. In terms of the proposed categories, her world-view is predominantly holistic and lacks any kind of otherworldly transcendence, while the need for improving the world as it is now is emphasised. She decided to become a therapist later in life due to her own experiences during her childhood (which took place in the mid-1970s in Germany), when she had experienced the consequences of problems within her family that remained unspoken about, but could have been solved, in her opinion. Also, she mentions that her environment was not open to her problems then and she wants to help others with their problems, having solved her own. Her main aim is to achieve confidence in life, which can be achieved by acting rightly and responsibly (according to systemic assumptions). This also would have a positive impact on the world as a whole and on herself at the same time. Identifying the therapies she practices as her profession also defines her social status.

On the one hand, salvation here basically involves keeping the world and nature in a good condition for one's descendants and on the other hand, to raise the current quality of life for oneself. Again, 'healing' is a central topic, first as self-help, then as practised professionally on others.

> it has impact on all the other parts. This is, basically, transferred to human views via systemic therapies, so to say, on human groups. On the family, working groups, or on nations, or the world.'

First conclusion: a structural dominance of belief in practices

The first central result of the investigation is, that Philip Gorski's thesis about the existence of multiple transcendence within individualised religiosity in modernity could be empirically proven and exemplified as valid. Though this systematisation can only provide a relatively rough description of the real diversity of contemporary world-views within the field of non-institutionalised spirituality and esotericism.

In terms of the Weberian concept of salvation, a huge part of post-secular religious practices of this kind are not referring to great transcendent, ideal principles, which exist in sharp contrast to the world as it is now. On the contrary, they mostly refer to several inner-worldly ideas on the individual or social level, that do not have to be connected to each other in a consistent manner, nor do they provide an overall meaning for human life.

It is far more concerned with social change and improving one's immediate environment, in terms of 'making it more loving', 'warm' and/or more 'fair-minded'. Often the aim 'to make the world a more spiritual place' is phrased, which includes notions of sensitivity, emotionality and the wish for a human community which one can 'feel'. This is one side of the inner-worldly orientation of contemporary religion (another example would be the enhanced political participation of religious groups, including the smaller ones), on the one hand, and reveals the importance of research on community construction in this field. On the other hand—and this is of more interest to me—here one can see the individual in relation to issues of self-transcendence that mostly manifests as self-help or individual empowerment.

A key issue here is that within the beliefs of all these persons as well as others I cannot present due to a lack of space and time, we find pragmatic elements serving the purpose of healing, strengthening, improving life quality and facilitating interpretations which help with making decisions and creating the possibility for individuals to act in a world that is no longer perfectly understood. As is apparent from the material presented above, all people are, to different degrees of urgency, aiming at improving their quality of life within a secular environment and therefore apply alternative therapies, and, so to say, 'magical' techniques:[10] P2 expresses a quite urgent need for alternative

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10   The classical religion–magic dichotomy shall be abandoned here, following Marcel
        Mauss (1989: 58), as ritual performance can be both magical and religious, depend-
        ing on the ritual context (cf. pp. 52–8). In this case of modern, individualised reli-
        gion, I will instead deal with a 'religio–magical continuum' and base my understand-
        ing on this. Here, magic is always practised as part of a world-view, be it religious
        or non-religious, and the contextual conditions mentioned by Mauss, that turn rites

coping strategies for several occasions, which are different forms of alternative healing or different systems of knowledge that provide a working frame of interpretation for her everyday life. P1 believes in his ability to connect to 'divine energy' that can even enable him to consciously influence things that happen around him. He re-binds that to the belief in some universal law and states that everyone has the potential to do this, but still perceives himself as to some extent a special person in having developed the practice. All say that they knew they were right as soon as the application of certain practices worked out,[11] so pragmatism seems to be significantly dominant over abstract idealism.

From the perspective presented here, Weber's 'Rational Actor' has become an 'Irrational Actor' who does not understand the world as it is (nor is he able to interpret it coherently) and moves; who faces many different authorities, meanings and opinions about what is 'right' and is working on the exhausting project of dealing with uncertainties and the apparent absence of a reliable truth for the individual person. The pragmatic elements within world-views serve as healing strategies and strategies also of magical empowerment. At the same time, they may be beliefs, but they are basically beliefs in which a practice serves the desired purpose—belief in salvation as an abstract principle has become to some extent a belief in the means, in terms of Max Weber's *Zweckrationalität* or—as often used in contexts beyond religion—'instrumental rationality', which is considered to be the dominant type in contemporary everyday life.

Gorski's as well as Luckmann's 'multiple transcendence' may be seen as significant for one type of modern, individualised religious world-view within the range of non-institutionalised spirituality.

into magical rites do not have the same meaning in the Western world today. Those may be practised privately, but are not secret or even forbidden (cf. Mauss 1989: 58).

11   Cf. Corrywright (2003) on 'New Age' and the relationship between religious/spiritual experience and doctrine: 'By "prior" I mean chronologically prior in the sense that a spiritual experience of the world leads to a search for doctrines and beliefs that support this experiential understanding' (p. 8).

Religious and secular semantics, reasoning and social belonging (or non-belonging)

The relevance of semantics applied

The analysis of constructed religious rationality shows that salvation logic within the 'new religious scenery'[12] in Germany is multiple, with a dominance of instrumental rationality with the aim of self-empowerment in terms of improving one's life-conditions in several respects. Crucial for the discussion of post-secular religious practices is, on the one hand, this dominance of small transcendences and self-referential reasoning in religious behaviour, and on the other the hand the parallel occurrence of different types of salvation logic in one individual world-view. Gorski assumes that this is much the same situation as pertained within the Roman Empire. Whether this is the case or not is difficult to judge, as the systematisation he proposes is quite schematic and rough, and it is meant to make historical comparisons possible.

Surely the scope of beliefs in terms of content is different today, as there is different material from different religious traditions available and as individualised forms of specialism within the field have evolved which reinterpret or create the meaning of content. This takes place to some extent also on the level of relatively widespread publications (written by 'New-Age theorists' or 'pre-thinkers'), but mainly on a personal level to create an individual world-view, often drawing on the books of the former. Individual consumers of the material can engage with it in the same way. But beyond the question of validity, this statement by Gorski affords an answer also in terms of some examples at the level of semantics, in order to show what is actually different in the contemporary situation.

Examples from the material

After already having made an attempt to differentiate 'ideal-typically' between the terms 'religious' and 'secular' above, I get into trouble (as expected and according to my decision to let quasi official agreements within religious studies decide what is 'religious' in a classical sense, on the empirical level) in terms of how to categorise, for example, alternative pseudo-scientific theories here, as they contain spiritual and religious elements, but may at the same time tend to have atheistic notions and/or reject traditional religions such as Christianity and/or claim to be scientific themselves. Additionally, they also belong, as they are usually not officially recognised as scientific, technically in

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12   Term from Bochinger 1994.

the realm of speculation and belief and in other respects belong neither to the category 'religious' as described above, nor to the category 'secular'as it is understood as the dominant kind of recognized knowledge. Another difficulty lies in the fact that in practice, in Germany, some of those alternative theories concerning healing among others have even entered university departments, and therapies applying them are in fact more and more recognised (in terms of acceptance from health insurance companies), but this development is still criticised by many.[13] Therefore they may themselves be regarded as something in between, precisely, those elements that can be most easily accepted by the majority. One might say, they are *the* indicators of a blurring between secular and religious contents. In terms of Max Weber or Niklas Luhmann, they can also be designated as signs of cultural 'de-differentiation' within a (quite) limited area, or, from the perspective of cultural studies in general, as an impact which alternative practices have on mainstream culture.

The material displays at least three relevant areas: firstly, what I just said about the use of scientific and holistic vocabularies, as well as beliefs about an interconnectedness of science and spirituality; secondly, a constant dealing with and relating to both realms consciously, and thirdly, self-locating in secular and religious/spiritual social environments (basically networks). For each area at least one example will be given here. The interviews are the same, or taken from the same series as above.

Example(s) 1: spirituality, science and medicine

> C: How can I picture that? So you say, the earth consists of energy fibres?
> P1: Yes, so somebody has once more proven scientifically that matter itself contains mostly a vacuum. So, the distance between an electron and an atom is so huge, that actually an atom, on the whole, consists of nothing. And it is, for this reason, the same with everything we see around us. Most of it is nothing. Though we see it because something holds it together.
> C: Is it known what that is?
> P1: Well, for that reason it is energy. We are again at this point.

P1 uses a terminology that stems from physics, such as 'electrons' and 'atoms', and speaks of (divine) energy to describe his world-view at the same time, presenting a very consistent picture of the universe.

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13   http://www.zeit.de/zeit-wissen/2011/04/Dossier-Esoterik-Esoterisierung (accessed on 4 June 2011).

C: Do you think there is some kind of higher reality?

P2: Er, now we are as human beings more dense, in a form, as we have a form, yes we are more dense, as well our molecules, so to say, if it is water . . .or, we are pressed into a form. The other, this supernatural reality, that moves freely around, if those are spirit, I think one can say matter. That does not mean that everything is materialised, but that within us a lot of this moves (already), that influences all of us somehow. Yes, this is possible, that's why there is nuclear radiation or—whatever. Well this thing is the same, it influences one somehow. And that there is in any case a connection, that is underestimated by humankind. And that humans—oh Christ! I sound so ecologically concerned now—destroy the planet, I mean we kill ourselves when we destroy our environment.

P2 argues in a similar manner when describing that which lies in between 'matter' (physics) as energy or possibly as spirit, which is similar to nuclear radiation, being everywhere, influencing things, probably mostly people.

P3: Mhm. . .You know the issue of networking?. . .There is a wisdom, or a saying often applied in this context. If you know six people in the whole world, you know everyone. Because via these six people and their connections to other people one would be connected to any person in the world. I myself cannot test that, and also I don't want to do so. In fact, I don't mind. . .you could also use other sayings, like: one always meets twice, or so. . .I simply believe this makes sense, to treat oneself and life well and responsibly, because everything you do comes back to to you in the end. And this is a perfectly egotistical view, if I do it therefore. I treat my environment well, I can do that for pretty egotistical reasons. Because I treat myself well at the same time.

P3 refers to social networks as a modern term, but states at the same time that she cannot, and does not want to test whether certain statements might be explained by that concept. She says she likes the idea feels that there is some truth in it.

Example(s) 2: explicitly dealing with and relating to both realms consciously

P1: Spirituality means dealing with things you can't grasp [understand] completely, but which have, from my observation, a great deal of influence on life, because there are many things you also feel intuitively. . .

C: Do you believe science and spirituality contradict each other? Or. . .

> P1: No, I believe that science will continue to develop towards holism.
> C: So spirituality and science go together?. . .
> P1: Those borders only exist within a limited timespan. That means, until now, science cannot imagine certain things. But they will become explicable because of development. See, in the fifteenth century nobody could imagine that the earth was a sphere and could stand upside down. Well, now it is explicable.

P1 explains at some point explicitly that for him, spirituality and science are a unity. Also, his strong belief in science and the human ability to understand the universe becomes apparent; although he believes that it lies in the future and can only be imagined at the moment. I interpret his words further in the sense that spirituality has the task of sensing and imagining something while science has the task of explaining it. Imagination is certainly important when scientific research takes place on a scale that does not allow direct observation or laboratory tests. Quantum physics is an example concerned with that problem, discussed within the 'New Age' context widely and made popular by Fritjof Capra in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[14]

Example(s) 3: social environment (negative reactions)

> P2: Well, it is of course not what the rational world wants to hear from you, I mean 'you are Capricorn/ascendent: Aquarius'—no one gives a f***. Even if I try to make my own world more understandable with this for myself. . .with. . .this system of symbols. But whenever I have been trying to tell others, it has mostly been rejected. There is no explanatory power in that.

> P2: And actually, those are things other people regard as 'esoteric'. . .my husband, if he gets really angry when we talk, he comes up with something like 'Don't start with the moon, now!'. . .

> P4[15]: . . .well, since I have noticed that others think of this as superstition I take myself back a bit, in addressing others actively and directly. Many say: this is dangerous, but when you only got to know that recently, you wanted to heal the whole world and so on.

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14   See e.g. Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (1975), which is available now in more than 20 languages and more than 40 editions.
15   P4 is male, about 50 years old, self-employed driver.

> C: Hmhm. . .
>
> P4: Right? Er, so recently I've stayed more calm with that. I know people from the internet, with whom I can talk about it and exchange energetically.

These last examples point at problems some people face in their social environment: be it that they do not feel understood because of using different semantics, or face negative reactions in the course of their practice. The second person (three) accordingly treats his beliefs in special communities and networks (only); three has friends or networks that share her beliefs but she also tries to get her semantics through to people who don't share them. The other interviewees seem to be better adapted to their environment, or at least did not mention reactions or processes. But almost all of them said that they have some kind of special network/community/circle of friends, one very prevalent way of dealing with the difficulty of not being understood.

The brief passages chosen here were only examples of the areas of practical mixing between the secular and religious/spiritual within the descriptions of certain topics, while this could be shown already in other sources, especially books that describe and discuss the core theories on which many ideas the individual believers follow are based.

Second conclusion: relating religion and spirituality with the secular

At the level of semantics, which I only aim to exemplify briefly here, we find secular and religious expressions on the surface, as well as active reasoning from both areas and the conscious relating of both realms behind that. This might take place in theorising the world, or in social practice in terms of positioning oneself and others.

Semantics, as well as special topics, also appear within public discourse; thus the mixing and conscious relating of secular and religious issues has become more strongly visible. Talking about beliefs or using religious semantic language is no longer only done by collective religious actors (i.e. mostly within their respective groups), but becomes apparent also in the public interactions of diverse religious individuals and are more or less easily accessible for everyone (cf. Knoblauch 2009: 207–10; see also footnote 4).

Their visibility is not yet a political one, though among some of them might tend to support left-wing parties because of ecological concerns. The current potential for collective political action within this *milieu* has yet to be explored. 'Visibility' here amounts to a still somewhat diffuse presence on

the market[16] as well as acceptance by official institutions such as health insurance companies or even health departments of universities,[17] the presence and acceptance of spiritual semantics in public discourse,[18] their increasing use within open, face-to-face discussions and the legitimacy and necessity of their use to describe common emotional attitudes within the perception of one's environment.

The 'post-secular' in alternative, individualised religiosity

In the first conclusion, I aimed to show that the Weberian 'Rational Actor', as referred to by Philip Gorski, has nowadays in fact become a 'Multiple Rational Actor' who has to use different points of reference when reasoning about his/her own actions and explaining his/her world-view. But this ideal-typical figure has has also become something which I may call the 'Irrational Actor' according to the extent he/she is able to describe his/her reality consistently and in how far acting may be based on a consistent system of meaning. This is not given anymore in the contemporary situation within this non-institutionalised and individualised form of religion, where no single religion or world-view possesses an overall, formative power[19]. Today, we find individuals, who are 'thrown back' on themselves and into the effort of making sense out of their situation, and seemingly as a consequence, we find ideologies of self-improvement in connection to strategies of self-help remaining dominant. The individual person has to be not only master of his/her own world-view and life, but also wants to achieve special, supernatural skills in order to cope better with this necessity and even extend this role towards other people. Some varieties of that logic can easily be designated as 'magical', and the applicator of those practices a 'magician' in the classical sense. Within Thomas Luckmann's theoretical framework, this special role of the person takes him/herself via self-referential experiences into the transcendent realm, as specialist who also has a religious function that goes beyond their everyday life. Furthermore, if practices that aim at individual healing, well-being and personal development for the purpose of self-empowerment do include being active as an expert who is also able to carry out those special actions on/for

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16   Cf. Bochinger 1994: 30.

17   http://www.zeit.de/zeit-wissen/2011/04/Dossier-Esoterik-Esoterisierung (accessed on 20 June 2011).

18   Knoblauch 2009: 207–10.

19   Terminology following Wood 2006.

others, the double purpose of an increase of social capital and personal well-being is achieved.

As pointed out above, the structure of belief may not, according to Gorski, be historically new, as the former 'New Age' beliefs can be analysed by means of an application of traditional categories and their combinations, but it has to be kept in mind that those categories are quite rough and lack a comparison with the concrete topics dealt with. Also needing to be taken into account is the impossibility of direct and quantitative research for past times: historical comparative statements are therefore on the one hand inclined to be fated to stay vague and 'ideal-typical', while they may be helpful tools for the analysis on the other hand.

What can certainly be said to be new is the contemporary role and position of religion within Western society, as well as that religious engagement, the way of dealing with one's own beliefs constitutes a characteristic of special interest here.

The boundaries between the religious/spiritual and the secular are constantly related to each other, mostly with binary terms like 'me', 'we' and 'the others'; 'the majority', or 'the social world' becoming increasingly blurred, which would not be necessary if there had not been and would not be a dominance of other, secular world-views. Within the case-studies presented above, it becomes apparent what this means for individuals in their daily practice of thinking, reflecting and interaction: all individuals (have to) deal with their beliefs in broader categories that implicitly refer to each other, such as the 'religious', the 'spiritual' and the 'normal' ('secular'). Secularity is here a meta-category that is to be taken into account on the level of reasoning and communication as well as for a self-definition and self-positioning in different networks, even more and towards an increased number of other actors after the main churches have lost a great deal of their dominance (Gorski 2005: 161 ff.). Spiritual or religious knowledge and practices are approached and legitimised in a seemingly scientific manner and religious and secular semantics are all used to express one's beliefs.

At the same time individuals locate themselves as participants within religious and secular environments, networks or contexts, in which they actively participate. The differentiation between religious and secular is implicitly drawn within the expressions by the individuals interviewed themselves, that is to say, in how far they differ or accommodate the dominant views of their environment, though the term secular itself is rarely mentioned as such. Thus, and more importantly, in order to discuss the idea of 'post-secularity', the mixed religious and secular elements should be looked at more precisely, as

the uses of both terminologies may provide more insights of the relation of religiosity/spirituality and the secular at least within this field.

Furthermore, as also argued by Hubert Knoblauch (2009) and Christoph Bochinger (the latter especially for the 'New Age', 1995: 126–8), this process does not only take place in the very private sphere, where Luckmann located his 'Invisible Religion', but has become more visible and broadly acceptable. So the religious/secular boundaries have also become blurred on the cultural level, when spirituality becomes publicly expressed and up for discussion, mostly beyond the political level.

Therefore concerning the described practices of relating the religious and secular and the new mixing of secular knowledge and alternative beliefs, the term 'post-secular' is, from this perspective, an adequate and useful description as well for individualised and non-institutional forms of religion, with their constant relating of the religious/spiritual and the secular as a central characteristic and a central practice beyond political participation of religions in the Habermasian sense.

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MIKA LASSANDER & PEIK INGMAN

Exploring the social without a separate domain for religion

On actor-network theory and religion

> To understand the activity of subjects, their emotions, their passions, we must turn our attention to that which attaches and activates them— an obvious proposition but one normally overlooked. – Bruno Latour

Introduction

As Bruno Latour argues in his book *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005), the problem with much of contemporary sociology is that it has become too 'good' at what it does. Sociology has become too easy. One description of the problem is that many sociologists seem to think that what they should be doing is finding powerful umbrella concepts that can be used to represent or account for some widely occurring phenomenon. For example, a researcher finds that no established concept manages to capture their findings and so they coin another term as a kind of shorthand for what is described in detail in a report. Another sociologist is impressed with the concept and consequently *applies* it in his/her work, but to somewhat different circumstances. After a while, the concept gets used as an explanation for a wide range of seemingly similar phenomena and students begin asking their professors whether the concept might be suitable as a 'framework' for their study. What is most troubling about this development is that now, instead of the concept being used as a shorthand *reference* or allusion to the original account, it begins to be used as *an explanation*. It has subtly transformed from a shorthand marker to a 'social force' which sociologists invoke to explain given states of affairs, where to 'explain' entails invoking *as the very force 'making things happen'*. While initially, the concept may have referred to a complex interaction among a number of collaborating factors, this complexity has now been black-boxed into the concept which in effect substitutes and obscures that collaboration. As Latour puts it:

> What begins as a classical and fully respectable search for an explanation ends up replacing the *explanandum* with the *explanans*. While other sciences keep *adding* causes to phenomena, sociology might be the only one whose 'causes' risk having the strange effect of making the phenomena they are supposed to explain vanish altogether. (Latour 2005: 100.)

Actor-network theory (ANT) is about tracing the webs of associations between myriad actants whose collective actions produce what we call 'society'. Dismissing the notion of 'the social' as a kind of 'stuff', ANT insists that sociology should focus on the interactional processes—the circulation of 'the social' among human and non-human actants—collectively assembling emerging states of affairs. In order to achieve such a task, Latour insists that we need to set aside a number of widely held presuppositions. In order to be able to produce accounts which trace the assembling of the social, what is needed is the exact opposite of what Latour criticises sociology for: we need to *increase* the number of recognised actors/actants involved in this on-going assembling instead of decreasing it (which is what we do when we replace the actors/actants with more and more encompassing 'social forces'). Only by acknowledging the influence of everything that is involved in making a difference to states of affairs can we actually *account for* complexity without recourse to 'social explanations'. The move is thus in a totally different direction: we need to get better at describing in detail the movement of the social in complex associations (and in order to do that we need to acknowledge/recognise the associating actants), instead of 'explaining away' this complexity by replacing it with sociological concepts.

ANT is also referred to as a 'sociology of translation' or a 'sociology of association', which are in many ways better names than actor-network theory. ANT sounds technical and somewhat intimidating. One problem is that the 'network' part sounds as if mapping networks would be the main point. It is not. Deploying actants which form a network is needed in order to be able to start tracing how 'the social' circulates within these networks and hold them together. So, what is central is really tracing the associations/the movement of 'the social'; this tracing eventually *generates* a 'network'. Actants are provided with their unique agency not by macro structure, but by the network(s) which they performatively partake in generating. The point about 'network' should perhaps mainly be understood in terms of a counter-argument against the notion of 'context'. While this notion has been used—and rightly so—to emphasise that there are important distinctions to be made which are contextually contingent, to really take seriously this point entails abandoning the vague

use of 'context' as a container. When 'context' is referred to as a container its relevance is reduced to one relation only, that between 'thing' and 'context'. This amounts to saying that a thing is influenced by where it is and this is usually invoked in order to account for various differences in a commonsensical but impossibly non-specific way. A network perspecive on the other hand distinctively recognises the need to identify what the context is made of and how those multiple 'constituents' interact with whatever is perceived to be 'in' the context. When focusing on the agency of an isolatable 'agent', instead of situating it in a 'context' ('society'), we need to distinguish between the various actants which contextualise an actor's ability to act; we should *presume* that it is an actor in a network in need of tracing—insisting that what it is doing can only be understood by considering the various actants which are 'making it act' ('making' here signifying 'causing to act' or 'exerting an influence' without fully determining the action). For that, 'context' does not suffice. The context (as container) cannot account for how the actor is made to act. Instead it serves to strengthen the temptation to maintain a given boundary between a subjective 'inside' and an objective 'outside' (that is: context). Furthermore, tracing the 'network'—*describing the associations* that eventually generated an 'effect'—provides an account, which, in contrast to referring to 'social forces' or hinting at the significance of 'context', is a *contestable* account. 'Context' is thus interesting only when seen as myriad interactions serving to collectively *contextualise*. Nothing is 'in' the context as much as *part of* a process of collective contextualisation.

In ANT we are primarily interested in describing this complex action—the actions and interactions and the circulation of actants from site to site, mobilising other actants in collectively assembling society. Rather than looking at society as a 'something', we are looking at it as a 'doing', where the 'work' needed to generate and maintain as well as alter structure is in focus and where this work is not done solely by human beings. Thus, actants are not perceived in terms of substance, but in terms of 'action displacers'. Actants are 'things' which make a difference in a course of action. For our purposes in describing the circulation of the social, what things 'are' is of less importance than how they 'emerged', how they are enabled and how they are entangled. Contrary to much of the criticism levelled against ANT, we do not think that one is necessarily *reducing* objects to their relations in emphasising the significance of their relations for their ability to act. In terms of agency and action, the question of *what* acts (in the sense of its 'core' or 'essence'), it seems to us, can be allowed to remain out of reach and indefinable. As far as we can see, agreeing with Graham Harman when he says: 'The object is a dark

crystal veiled in a private vacuum: irreducible to its own pieces, and equally irreducible to its outward relations with other things' (2011: 47), does not automatically compel us to feel troubled (although we humbly grant that we may simply be failing to grasp the full significance of his critique). Whether or not we claim that Latour 'denies' or 'refutes' any hiding 'essence' beyond relations or claim that such an essence is conceptually out of reach, the point is that our focus is on tracing processes and describing complex action, not on 'substance' or representation.

As soon as we recognise that this collective 'work'—a word used here to emphasise the need to consider the vitality of actants—is full of tensions, negotiations, swerves, reactions and so forth, it becomes obvious that conceptual 'social forces' and references to 'context' do not suffice to account for very much. Instead, too often they become excuses for ignoring complexity: indeed, why do the arduous work of following the actors involved in collectively generating certain states of affairs if one can simply invoke a concept as explanation; if one can simply continue to re-establish one's supposed lack of naivety by constantly acknowledging that 'well, of course, in reality it is a bit more complicated'? There are many answers to such questions. Some of them have to do with the bureaucracy around research grants and criteria set for 'good research' (e.g. what does it mean to have contributed with something 'new'?) and some of them have to do with an over-eagerness to render 'phenomena' comparable too quickly.

The critique of 'micro' vs. 'macro'

Society emerges through a multitude of actants making each other do things. No single actant (be it human or non-human, 'material' or 'discursive') can singlehandedly determine action; all are enabled by their associations with other actants, thus rendering agency always only partially in the control of a single actant. This is the case on all 'levels'—which is why ANT insists on limiting the use of concepts like 'macro' and 'micro' and 'local' and 'global' to being *only* shorthand references and rhetorical allusions. In tracing associations, it makes no sense to focus only on 'local' *as opposed to* 'global' aspects or vice versa. Instead, some of the relevant associations come from far away and others are 'close by'. Similarly, in many cases some of the actants' influence stems from hundreds of years ago, while others might be considerably 'younger'. Remember that we are trying to understand some more or less specific states of affairs. Therefore, to really be open to finding something new

or surprising, we should not decide beforehand what kinds of actors to consider, or in what 'domain' they 'reside': instead, we need to be open to what the trace reveals. As Latour notes, 'If the analyst takes upon herself to decide in advance and *a priori* the scale in which all the actors are embedded, then most of the work they have to do to *establish* connections will simply vanish from view' (2005: 220). A part of this work is for instance about *localising* (making 'local') something distant/global. The point is not one of denying 'macro' influences by insisting that 'everything is micro'. Rather, the problem lies in the practice among social scientists of *jumping* to 'the macro' without a localising chain; once this problem is taken seriously, 'the macro' as a separate 'field' is rendered superfluous and distractive. Again: ANT does not want to delimit or presume to foresee what *kinds* of actants should be focused on, only to shift focus onto the productive associations. Contrary to misconceptions, one is not obliged to become blind ('neutral') in terms of choosing what to research. We can, after all, safely form some preliminary notion of what we want to study, without allowing that notion to dictate the actual process. ANT merely insists that unless we want to revert to social explanations and the safe (but predictably platitudinous) practices of checking compatibility with predefined frameworks and hypotheses, we need to compose descriptions in which the ability/agency of an actant to do something is accounted for by the influence of other actants. This is in stark contrast to a tendency to ignore actants which are deemed to be 'outside our expertise', thereby 'legitimising' the reverting again to explanations invoking the all-powerful 'ghost-actants' of the 'macro realm'. Crucially, focusing on the circulation of the social allows for us not to have to decide between 'social forces' (structure) and 'subjective intentions' (agency, psychology) as explanations for action. We will say more about this in the following two sections.

Why does a certain institution or group have certain characteristics? ANT looks at this in terms of 'how'. How did it become like that? What was involved? And then, crucially, no single actor could by itself achieve its present 'form' or figuration. Thus, the intentions of, say, Joseph Smith for the future of the LDS Church are not entirely irrelevant, but almost. Neither can we claim that he is the originator (*ex nihilo*). He may have 'started' something (what made him do it?), but as soon as he did, a swarm of actants intervened and displaced his intentions. Where did his intentions come from? Who feels comfortable claiming that they came from 'within'? What the LDS Church eventually 'became' is the result of a complex—and *traceable*—web of 'things' making each other do things. The point here is not only about the history of Mormonism. It is a point about action and group formation: that when tra-

cing specific developments it is always a question of considering the circulation of multiple actants and the slightly displacing effects they have on one another. 'Displacing' does not here entail displacing something 'original', but is more akin to the notion of every beginning being only 'a point of *departure*' from previous states of affairs towards an often unpredictable future. As Jane Bennett points out, 'agency is also bound up with the idea of a trajectory, a directionality or movement *away* from somewhere even if the toward which it moves is obscure or even absent' (2010: 32). No actant can act alone; its avenues of action are contingent upon other actants and this dependence on other actants 'displaces' its action (although it also enables it). Such an understanding of 'interference' entails that interference is never inherently 'good' or 'bad'. Instead, it means that 'alliances' make a difference to those allied: they 'displace' one another. As for contemporary states of affairs, the question is how stability is maintained. In other words, 'although groups seem to be already fully equipped, ANT sees none existing without a rather large retinue of group makers, group talkers, and group holders' (Latour 2005: 32). This involves practices of self-definition, often via negation. 'It is always by comparison with other competing ties that any tie is emphasised. So for every group to be defined, a list of *anti-groups* is set up as well. . .[A]ctors are always engaged in the business of mapping the "social context" in which they are placed, thus offering the analyst a full-blooded theory of what sort of sociology they should be treated with.' (Latour 2005: 32.)

Considering that whenever we want to achieve something, actants swarm to displace our direction (a 'direction' made possible only by having a point of departure from which to *depart*), it is really quite astonishing that stability ('social structure') is ever achieved. Yet it is. Rather than describing already stable groups or institutions—a feat which 'standard' sociology accomplishes rather well—ANT researchers are interested in studying processes of destabilisation (network breakdown) and stabilisation (network composition). Human intentions cannot explain it, nor can a self-perpetuating 'social structure'. But the description of the tensions, reactions and displacements between actants that gradually configure into constellations can. As Latour puts it:

> For sociologists of the social, the rule is order while decay, change, or creation are the exceptions. For the sociologists of associations, the rule is performance and what has to be explained, the troubling exceptions, are any type of stability over the long term and on a larger scale. It is as if, in the two schools, background and foreground were reversed. (Latour 2005: 35.)

From scale to scaling

What is interesting and which serves to clarify the specific relevance of ANT for the study of religion is that despite our criticism of the (over)use of explanatory concepts in sociology, we cannot ignore *the circulation* of these concepts. Having been introduced they now circulate as actants, mobilising other actants. So, even if they are failing as good explanations, they are making a difference and should not escape our attention. What Latour manages to illustrate is that social scientists have been busy standardising and categorising the world and although ANT is critical of this endeavour, *the nature* of the criticism is actually to treat sociologists as metaphysicians; to treat (or acknowledge) everyone as metaphysicians, while refraining from subjecting them to *our* meta-analysis. By not imposing our standards or supposedly 'finding' a match between 'theory' and 'expressions of it in practice', we can shift our attention to the *processes* of standardisation/stabilisation, the *use* of standards in performance, communication and interaction. As Latour puts it: 'Group delineation is not only one of the occupations of social scientists, but also the very constant task of the actors themselves. Actors do the sociology for the sociologists and sociologists learn from the actors what makes up their set of associations.' (Latour 2005: 32.) For instance, while it is not only contrived—leading to never-ending academic disputes about 'accurate' definitions—but also ethically problematic to study 'homosexuality' as a container-category ('what are homosexuals like?'), the processes of contestation, reactions to misrepresentation, victim versus perpetrator rhetoric, debates about 'inclusion' and 'exclusion', in short the processes of standardisation, are fascinating and productive. 'For scientific, political, and even moral reasons, it is crucial that enquirers do not in advance, and *in place* of the actors, define what sorts of building blocks the social world is made of' (Latour 2005: 41). Once we stop presuming 'identities' and 'categories' to be merely the outcome of some fixed 'structure' and instead begin identifying the controversies involved and what they produce, massive amounts of research are opened up. In much of such research, concepts coined by social scientists play a remarkable role, not unlike that of concepts coined by religious innovators. They churn out standards *against* which and *in reference to* which actors identify themselves and scales with which to evaluate and differentiate themselves and others.

> It is no use saying that those categories are arbitrary, conventional, fuzzy, or, on the contrary, too sharply bounded or too unrealistic. They do solve practically the problem of extending some standard everywhere locally

> through the circulation of some traceable document – even though the
> metaphor of a document might dim somewhat. (Latour 2005: 230.)

While we can and often should contest categories, getting rid of categories is not the solution. The solution is to shift our position in regard to categories. The solution is to pay attention to the categorising and localising activities of those we study (and to trace the circulation of some of those categories to sociology departments, others to the rhetoric of a politician or a mullah, etc.). A crucial argument in ANT is thus that it is only when *we* stop categorising that we can become sensitive to and provide room for the fascinating processes of categorisation among those we try to understand. It is easy to see how relevant this is for the study of religiosity. Rather than arguing among scholars about which category is the 'right' one to use, it is far more interesting to consider how categories enable individuals and groups *to act* by positioning themselves in relation to others (via categorisation) and in terms of eliciting responses from those categorised by them. The trap we need to carefully avoid is making the claim that some categories are 'socially constructed' while others are real, thereby becoming sidetracked from describing the interplay among multiple and often competing productions of standards, of 'value meters', of 'downloadable individualisers/subjectivators'. Social explanations are thus relocated into the traceable 'making and dissemination of standards' (Latour 2005: 240), along with religious ones. From an ANT perspective it is not interesting to ask whether or not a certain proposition is true. What is interesting is what difference it makes—how it mobilises other actants. This point is crucially important for the study of religious practices (as inextricably entangled with non-religious ones). We should not distinguish between 'fact' and 'fiction', but focus instead on how both facts and fictions circulate and therefore participate in structuring processes.

So the point is not a humanist argument about being outraged at 'pigeon-holing', but rather a point about how a focus on attachments reveals that it is not a question of whether or not we are 'attached' ('enslaved') or 'detached' ('liberated') but of whether the 'ties that bind us' serve to provide us with subjectivity or if they 'subjectify us':

> It is not the case that some powerful people unfairly 'pigeon-hole' other
> people whose 'ineffable interiority' is thus ignored and mutilated; rather,
> the circulation of quasi-standards allow anonymous and isolated agen-
> cies to slowly become, layer after layer, *comparable* and *commensur-*
> *able*—which is surely a large part of what we mean by being human. This

common measurement depends, of course, on the *quality* of what is transferred. The question is not to fight against categories but rather to ask: 'Is the category subjecting or *subjectifying* you?' (Latour 2005: 230.)

The strings, linkages, plug-ins, 'individualisers', 'subjectivators', 'competence-providers', and all other actants that circulate in us (as actor-networks) are, in short, enabling as well as constricting. An 'individualiser' can also transform from being primarily enabling to becoming primarily constricting. Being 'attached' is thus necessary for action—indeed for survival—and the actual challenge of 'liberation' is to liberate ourselves (as individuals as well as scholars) from the notion of mastery; the view of causality in which one thing can fully determine another. In networks, an actant is made to act by others, but they do not *determine* that action, rather, they elicit an (often surprising and unpredictable) response, or they displace the previous action of another actant. Thus,

> . . .freedom becomes the right not to be deprived of ties that render existence possible, ties emptied of all ideals of determination, of a false theology of creation ex nihilo. If it is correct that we must replace the ancient opposition between the attached and the detached with the substitution of good and bad attachments, this replacement would leave us only feeling stifled if it were not supplemented and completed by a second idea, i.e. the deliverance from mastery altogether: at all points of the network of attachments, the node is that of a make-make, not of a make nor of a made. That at least is a different project of emancipation, which is as vigorous as the former but much more credible because it obliges *us not to confuse living without control with living without attachments.* (Latour 2010: 59.)

We do not need to make value judgments about religious beliefs in accounting for the difference they make. Angels, religious principles and slogans, concepts like 'Islamophobia', crosses and icons make people do things and should therefore be recognised as *bona fide* actants *insofar as they are influential* in a given tracing. That is, if we for instance interview someone and they state that they went to church last Sunday 'to feel the Holy Spirit', we should not posit the 'belief in the Holy Spirit' *inside* the person who is interviewed. Instead, we should recognise that what made the person go to church was the Holy Spirit. The question is *how?* What provided the Holy Spirit with that ability? Another question is: 'what path—through which mediators—did the Holy Spirit take in eventually coming to make the person go to church

and how did its agency change along the way?' Endeavouring to answer such questions without reverting to a social explanation potentially leads to a 'good description' in the form of information about the circulation of the social. If someone tells us that they are made to feel queasy by the presence of a cross on their classroom wall, we should ask: *how* was the cross able to make this person feel queasy? If someone says that they refrain from criticising religious groups because they are afraid of being called 'religiophobic', then, again: how was this concept able to stifle them? What were the actants swarming towards it, making it stifle someone? Or, to use Karen Barad's (2007) vocabulary: what collection of 'things' made up the material-discursive apparatus in which the agency of the cross emerged? What pseudo-agents 'came together' to form an assemblage in which 'agential cuts' within the assemblage provided seemingly independent actants with a more or less specific agency? A central point in ANT is to treat actants as mediators instead of intermediaries. While an intermediary is something that faithfully transports something without modifying it, mediators transform what goes 'through' them; they influence it so that it is 'translated' as it travels through mediators. In some cases this is obvious: depending on the messenger, the message is different (mobilises differently) even if it were stated in the same way verbatim. In order to be able to trace the circulation of religious principles, angels, deities and religious 'objects' and how they translate as they travel, as well as serve as conduits or vectors for other mediators to travel, we need to resist the temptation to keep them 'inside' so-called 'believers'. Only then can we account for what difference religious beliefs make. Whether or not we want to embrace the notion that religion has 'returned' in somewhat novel forms, as some understand the concept of 'post-secularity', the relevance of religion in the lives of the non-religious or differently religious cannot be adequately accounted for as long as we presume that only 'believers' deal with religious entities (in their 'inner world'). The circulation of non-human religious actants in more and more surprising situations testifies to this need to acknowledge them as co-habitants, alongside facts, attitudes, our neighbour's incessant and outrageously loud piano playing, and so forth. They are all actants making us do things, contextualising our agency.

Is religion good or bad?

As mentioned, ANT can be understood as an effort (or many efforts) to avoid the problems with 'context'. 'Context' is seen as a cop-out that allows us to

neglect tracing the links, attachments and highly varied circulating entities, which facilitate our ever-changing agency. The seemingly never-ending debate about agency vs. structure, macro and micro, has to a large extent been about the uneasiness we feel at rendering individuals as the effects or 'puppets' of 'social structure', while feeling similarly uneasy—not to mention naive—when talking about 'individual freedom'. Latour addresses this problem throughout the book and in previous (in Law & Hassard 1999) and later (Latour 2010) works, insisting that it is because we have failed to sufficiently acknowledge that 'ties' are both enabling as well as constricting and because we have presumed that an incentive to act comes *either* from 'outside' *or* from an 'inside', or some strange division of labour (part 'inside', part 'outside') that this problem persists:

> The gravest consequence of the notion of context was that it forced us to stick to double-entry accounting so that whatever came from the outside was *deducted* from the total sum of action allotted to the agents 'inside'. With that type of balance sheet, the more threads you added in order to *make you act* from the outside, the *less* you *yourself* acted: the conclusion of this accounting procedure was inescapable. And if you wished, for some moral or political reason, to save the actor's intention, initiative, and creativity, the only way left was to increase the total sum of action coming from the inside by *cutting some of the threads*, thus denying the role of what is now seen as so many 'bondages', 'external constraints', 'limits to freedom', etc. Either you were a free subject or you lived in abject subjection. (Latour 2005: 215.)

If we instead acknowledge that 'you need to subscribe to a lot of subjectifiers to become a subject and you need to download a lot of individualizers to become an individual' (Latour 2005: 216), we can approach religious practices as both 'competence-providing' as well as delimiting without needing to stress either over and above the other. In other words, if we

> make every single entity populating the former inside come from the outside not as a negative constraint 'limiting subjectivity', but as a positive *offer* of subjectivation. . .the former actor, person, individual – whatever its name – takes the same star-shaped aspect we have observed earlier. . . . It is *made to be* an individual/subject or it is *made to be* a generic non-entity by a swarm of other agencies. (Latour 2005: 213.)

211

The point is that once you 'subscribe' to a given 'competence provider' (e.g. learn [download] academic language use in order to participate in academic discourses, or learn to associate 'religiously' with others of your congregation thereby 'becoming' an academic or religious) the actants in the network, in providing you with this competence also make you do things. Even if we were to insist that 'entering' is one's own incentive (as if nothing 'beyond us' compelled us), what one enters is a network that 'opens up' only by making one 'do' things (participate, resist, swerve etc.). But that is true of almost any prolonged 'identity-providing' endeavour (we dream of having a family, career, dog, etc. only to find that when we have it, we are entangled in a web which makes us do things that surprise us). 'In doing away *both* with ungraspable subjectivity and with intractable structure, it might be possible to finally place at the forefront the flood of *other* more subtle conduits that allow us *to become* and *to gain* some interiority' (Latour 2005: 214). Subscribing makes you entangled, but crucially, freedom does not mean 'unattached'.

> . . .to possess is also being possessed; to be attached is to hold and to be held. Possession and all its synonyms are thus good words for a reworked meaning of what a 'social puppet' could be. The strings are still there, but they transport autonomy or enslavement depending on *how* they are held. . . .when we speak of actor we should always add the large network of attachments making it act. As to emancipation, it does not mean 'freed from bonds' but *well*-attached. (Latour 2005: 217–18.)

Critical sociology

At a recent conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions, in Budapest, Kocku von Stuckrad ended his keynote address by expressing concerns over the misrepresentation of religion by politicians and journalists. He suggested that scholars need to get more engaged in correcting these misrepresentations and oversimplified portrayals. W. F. Sullivan (2005) has expressed concerns about the entanglements between law and religious freedom, by highlighting the difficulties in determining what exactly should be protected by 'the freedom of religion' and who (politicians? judges?) should have the authority in determining that. As soon as we question the logic of using some supposedly reliable measure of 'orthodoxy' as a point of departure, the issues appear *inescapably* (and predictably) controversial. Latour devotes the last chapter in *Reassembling the Social* to considering the political

relevance of ANT. He does this in part by distancing ANT from what he calls 'critical sociology'. He notes that in this 'school', social ties are emphasised, but in a way that is highly problematic:

> I have given [the] label [critical sociology] to what happens when you not only limit yourself to the calibrated social repertoire and leave aside the objects, as the other schools are often tempted to do, but when you claim in addition that those objects are *made of* social ties. This trend is rendered all the more worrying once the indignant reactions of the actors themselves are taken not as a sign of the danger of such a reduction, but as the best proof that this is the only scientific way to proceed. If the objects of study are made of social ties, namely what earlier social scientists have taken to be part of the official repertoire, and if you cut off the only source of falsification, that is, the objections of those that have been 'explained', then it's hard to see the compatibility with ANT. Whatever its claims to science and objectivity, critical sociology cannot be sociology – in the new sense that I proposesince it has no way to retool itself to follow through on the non-social elements. When faced with new situations and new objects, it risks simply repeating that they are woven out of the same tiny repertoire of already recognized forces: power, domination, exploitation, legitimization, fetishization, reification. . . .The problem of critical sociology is that it can never fail to be right. (Latour 2005: 248–9.)

While it is important that we choose to study matters of concern, our engagement in debates concerning religion should not be about elevating ourselves to the level of experts who alone can correctly determine what religion *really* is. The political relevance of ANT lies instead in providing accounts which render the entanglements of religious actants with others of concern more accessible. Accounting for complexity by describing it, instead of merely alluding to it, highlights the 'small steps' necessary for the composition and maintenance of powerful structures. What would then make a scientific point of view more credible than that of an uninformed politician or journalist is an explicit focus on mapping controversies, that is, delineating the multiple (and often conflicting) matters of concern in terms of what they are about and how all parties in controversies position themselves in relation to one another. Such perspectives would need to deliberately distance themselves from all attempts at identifying, say, 'enemies' of (modernist) 'progress'. The benefits of such endeavours in terms of positive change and political relevance are evident, while leaving the assessment of necessary 'corrections' to the actors

whom the accounts concern, or to activist endeavours outside our academic pursuits.

> If what is to be assembled is not first opened up, de-fragmented, and inspected, it cannot be reassembled again. It does not require enormous skill or political acumen to realize that if you have to fight against a force that is invisible, untraceable, ubiquitous, and total, you will be powerless and roundly defeated. It's only if forces are made of smaller ties, whose resistance can be tested one by one, that you might have a chance to modify a given state of affairs. (Latour 2005: 250.)

Politicians provide descriptions, journalists provide descriptions and critical sociologists provide descriptions: each of them dramatising their descriptions by condemning some things and cherishing others. What is striking is that there is usually an identifiable ideological agenda. What is the ideological or political agenda of ANT? To provide (con)testable, traceable and interactional descriptions without additional, superimposed explanations referring to non-testable 'forces', thereby opening up the processes so that, if need be, they can be altered (instead of merely bemoaned). The point is not that the existence of 'hegemonies' or oppression is disputed or not taken seriously. The point is that invoking 'oppressive mechanisms' and 'domination' as explanation foregoes the work of describing the multitude of productive (or producing) controversies involved. Invoking them unduly mystifies problems (by insisting on a force that is far too large and impossibly abstract to combat), while detailed descriptions provide multiple points of intervention.

> If there is no way to inspect and decompose the content of social forces, if they remain unexplained or overpowering, then there is not much that can be done. To insist that behind all the various issues there exists the overarching presence of the same system, the same empire, the same totality, has always struck me as an extreme case of masochism, a perverted way to look for a sure defeat while enjoying the bittersweet feeling of superior political correctness. (Latour 2005: 252.)

While we have thus tried to argue with Latour that referring to 'social forces' as explanation entails introducing 'ghost-actants'—actants which are part of the description only because the researcher has *inserted* them there—thereby rendering descriptions messy (mixing up traceable interactions with non-traceable ones), the question becomes: OK, but what then should we focus

on? There has to be some differentiation between more significant and less significant locales for research. While someone might agree that the social is what circulates, he/she might easily add: 'So what? We can't research everything! We have to delimit our research somehow. Doesn't it matter what we study as long as we refrain from explaining with predefined frameworks?' The answer is that yes, there are 'locales' which appear to be more significant than others for understanding the distribution and circulation of actants which are of specific concern due to their entanglement with religion. The point is that by resisting the temptation to presume that we already know where those are we can become open to finding that their distribution follows surprising paths and that they are especially dense in often surprising nexuses. In a similar vein as Donna Haraway's emphasis on 'situated knowledges' (1988), Latour encourages researchers to find those locales where perspectives and templates for practices are generated and in which they make most sense.

Centres of calculation and oligoptica

Latour speaks of three moves that are necessary for the exploration of how and by whom, or what, significant connections are made and sustained. The first move underlines the importance of particular geographic locations (2005: 173–90) and aims at identifying the principal structuring and ordering sites. These are locations that are by some various means densely connected to a number of other locations, and through which a significant number of actants travel. Through the connections the locations offer focused but narrow views of the connected whole. Their function localises the global through the action of the actor-networks, or, actants that are connected to other, remote, actants. Latour describes these places as centres of calculations (1987: 215–57) and later *oligoptica,* contrasting them with Foucault's *panopticon* (2005: 181). They are not places from where one can observe everything, like a *panopticon*. Rather, they are places that see a little, but, because of the focused interest and participations of the connecting actor-networks, what they see, they see well. As long as the actor-networks maintain the connection through continued activity, the connections are stable, and through these narrow connections these sites not only connect with other sites, but also structure the connected whole by way of translating it. The translations that are performed in these sites are innovations, based on anticipation—a form of calculation—of the reactions of other actants to the materials circulated through the site.

Latour's second move 'transforms every site into a provisional endpoint of some other sites distributed in time and space; each site becomes the result of the action at a distance of some other agency' (2005: 219). These distant agencies influence the translations and the purpose of this move is to track the practices by which they hold that influence. Agency, then, is an ability to initiate and/or influence the calculations occurring in the centres of calculation. However, as John Law points out, this agency is tangled in a dense material-semiotic network, from which a detachment of individual actants is impossible (2004: 68). Because of this entanglement, agency is an effect of the action of multiple heterogeneous networks. Further, what is seen as subjectivity is in the same way a result of translations performed by such networks, or, to quote Latour, 'subjectivity is not a property of the human soul but of the gathering itself' (Latour 2005: 218). What the ANT model emphasises is that translation is a contingent and localised process—the anticipations are made there and then—and because of this the product of translation is variable and stable only insofar as all the parameters affecting the translation remain the same (which may not in fact be entirely possible).

Finally, even though translation implies transformation it also implies equivalence and representation of something remote by something local. Hence, translation also generates structure and order by generating devices, agents, institutions, or organisations (Law 1992). The third move recreates or reconstructs the kinds of orders and structures the translations aim at establishing. Because the processes of translation tend to create spatial ordering, the final ANT move produces a map of these orders, including the locations of the sites where the ordering takes place and the topography of the conduits through which these locales are connected with each other. The ANT strategy proposes abandoning container metaphors when exploring the social world, positing that the laws of the social do not gather, encompass or cover; they circulate, format, standardise, and coordinate (Latour 2005: 246). So, in the reconstruction of the orderings the aim is not reconstruction, but instead the depiction of mobility, the conduits, and the points of translation.

Conclusion

In post-secular societies—after secularisation—it may increasingly be the case that the connecting and structuring of religious matter is done outside designated religious sites and without appointed religious experts. The centres of calculation have changed and so the connections between these are differ-

ent. The former ways of translation and ordering are transforming into new ones. By exiting the designated sites religious matter has found new freedom with the new associations and inventions in the processes of translation. Less control leads to more heterogeneous agencies and facilitates the mobility of religious materials. This less controlled mobility of religious actants can also produce an apparent increase of religious matter, but this does not necessarily mean the return of religion. In any case, this increased plurality combined with increased mobility calls for perspectives which can *recognise* novelty, and not just in comparison with previous states of affairs. ANT does not provide easy solutions, but assists us by clarifying what it is that we need to avoid so that we can proceed with regained confidence, even after poststructuralist critique.

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MARIA LEPPÄKARI

Contesting spiritual dimensions of health

Salutogenic approaches to post-secular quests for quality of life[1]

Introduction

This article dwells on three key concepts: *spirituality* (religion, meaning making)*, health* (being well, wellness) and the *contemporary post-secular individual search for significance*. Within a classic salutogenic and health promotional frame of reference, dimensions of health are usually referred to in terms of the physical, mental, social and spiritual. Following development of the classical approaches, cultural, ecological and existential subcategories have been added to the concepts in order to clarify the contents. Scholars in the field of health promotion argue that these dimensions of health and well-being are, in a general way, closely interrelated (Lindström & Eriksson 2006, 2010). This article explores the ways in which spirituality and well-being interact. It is influenced by the author's previous research in religious studies and current experiences of health promotion work. This article is divided into five sections: salutogenesis and health promotion; quality of life and spirituality; previous research on religion and health; indifference and fundamentalism, and some final remarks.

Quests for obtaining a good quality of life and strivings towards meaningfulness in everyday life could perhaps be considered to be a reflection of a contemporary and perhaps, a rediscovered, popularity of meaning-searching and spirituality in Finnish society. My aim here is to clarify some perspectives on the spiritual dimensions of health, as it is understood to be the fourth dimension of health within salutogenic settings and how this in turn stands in relation to the phenomenon we call religion. This article is an invitation to join me in my academic adventure. It is an attempt to make use of health

promotional definitions, and simultaneously shed light on aspects of contemporary spirituality; that is, to study the way spirituality is perceived in expression and practice; the ways people refer to spirituality when they talk about and refer to 'meaning' or 'significance' in life. Since this project is at its port of embarkation, this article dwells purely on theoretical aspects, and no empirical studies are yet being included.

Contemporary life management is affected by stressful environments, unlimited awareness, constant inputs and tiredness that very often contributes to an increased sense of emptiness and lost meaning. The responses to societal stress factors are, naturally, managed by individuals in several different ways. Some individuals choose to downshift at work, some seek help in pharmacies or healthier food, some practice body-shaping, while others engage in environmental and political activities and still others search for guidance and significance from life coaches and management gurus. Yet, some tend to turn towards traditional religiosity, or towards alternatives to it such as alternative religious movements and spiritual trends, mindfulness or yoga. Some, perhaps, feel better when simply redecorating their house and garden according to the principles of *feng shui*.

Here theoretical bridges are constructed in order to broaden an interdisciplinary understanding of the subject of the relationship between health, well-being, quality of life and religion, an old and well-known symbiosis of religion and health. Challenges here are met by emphasising the *salutogenic* understanding of some of the processes taking place when people in their own life contexts create meaning while 'making sense of a sense of coherence'.

The search for physical and mental well-being is but one example of how health and spirituality may interact. In this article I attempt to outline some theoretical parameters for rediscovering the fourth dimension of health, as defined by Aaron Antonovsky in light of Kenneth Pargament's understanding of religion, and Antoon Geels's perspectives on contemporary spirituality. Health, or well-being refers here particularly to how people today construct significance and how they define a good quality being achieved in their personal lives. It is worth noting that when I refer to 'quality of life' it is not simply a matter of glamour, monetary success and happiness; rather it is to be understood as a concept which describes the efforts made by individuals in their searches for personal significance, enabling themselves to see the bright sides of life, even when dwelling in an ostensibly miserable life condition and sickness. And that is the key to *salutogenesis*.

Salutogenesis and health promotion

Salutogenesis was the first model systematically to explore health in terms of development towards the health end of the health continuum, also known as the unhealth continuum (Antonovsky 1979, 1987). *Salus* comes from the Latin word 'health', and *genesis* from the Greek for 'origin', meaning nothing more than the *origin of health*. Conceptually, salutogenesis is defined as 'the process of movement toward the health end of a health-ease/disease continuum' (Antonovsky 1993, quoted in Lindström & Eriksson 2010: 18). This theoretical model, focusing on resources for health and processes for health promotion, later came to be connected with global health promotion work. The revolutionary idea was presented in Aaron Antonovsky's book entitled the *Mystery of Health*, where he turned his medical research on pathogenic diseases upside down, and started emphasising strength in wellness.

Aaron Antonovsky was an American-Israeli medical sociologist especially interested in stress and coping theory in the 1960s. When looking at some of the outcomes of his statistical data on epidemiological research into the female menopause in the 1970s, he posed the question: 'What creates health?' The origin of Antonovsky's ideas on salutogenesis derived from interviews he conducted with Israeli women who had experienced the concentration camps of the Second World War, and who in spite of their harsh life experiences managed to stay healthy.

To get a grasp of salutogenic perspectives, one needs to look back in history and understand the context of modern public health. Health promotion has its roots in the period right after the Second World War, at the time of the foundation of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights. The World Health Organization (WHO) was assigned a mission to defend human rights, from the perspective of health. Perhaps the most well known definition of health is included in the WHO (World Health Organization) constitution, and still valid: 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity' (Lindström 1994: 8). This original WHO definition of health is embedded in its own time and place, hence reflecting the outcomes of the post-World War II era and has since, of course, been developed. Nowadays the definitions of health also take into account more complex social and cultural perspectives. But the quote above is still the official definition being used.

Between the years 1948 and 1977 the WHO moved from a healthcare and health system approach towards a contextual population approach, which marked a huge shift in perspective. The first moves towards health promotion

were to be seen in the WHO global strategy *'Health for All' by the year 2000* (WHO 1981; Lindström & Eriksson 2010: 26; and for more recent development, see Vader 2006: 457).

The WHO vision to reduce inequity and foster sustainability with the aid of interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches not only aimed towards 'adding years to life', but also 'adding life to years' with humans being 'active participating subjects in our own lives', according to the WHO Ottawa Charter (1986). This was a set of principles and values that inspired the global *health promotion movement*. The main objective of the overall process of health, according to the health promotion movement is to enable humans to live an active and productive life in terms of the Ottawa Charter.

Hence, good health came to be seen as a process through which people can learn to develop health through the control of health determinants, thereby giving all humans an equal opportunity to live an active and productive life. Grand-scale community approaches and health policies in order to achieve *a healthy society* became central to the WHO's global work while simultaneously striving for equity for all humans.

In the 1980s Antonovsky set out forming his new theoretical framework for health, known as *salutogenesis* and within this framework lies its key concept, known as a 'sense of coherence', simply shortened as SOC. Later on he constructed an instrument to measure the phenomenon; the 'orientation to life questionnaire'. Here I will, however, due to limited scope, not go into the details of that. It can shortly be stated that Antonovsky's legacy to health promotion is not only limited to empirical questionnaires; as Antonovsky himself points out, using the SOC scale is not the same as being guided by the SOC vision (Kickbush 1996: 6). According to Bengt Lindström and Monica Eriksson, the SOC theory emphasises the fact that humans have the capacity to cope with and even to improve their health through their own choices, depending on the way they interpret and view their lives.

> Antonovsky introduced his salutogenic theory of a 'sense of coherence' as a global orientation to view the world, claiming that the way people view their lives has a positive influence on their health. A sense of coherence explains why people in stressful situations stay well and even are able to improve their health. (Lindström & Eriksson 2006: 238.)

The central key concept of the salutogenic theory then is this 'sense of coherence' (SOC), defined according to Antonovsky (1987: 19) in the following way:

> . . .a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a perva-
> sive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli
> from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are
> structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to
> one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands
> are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement. (Antonovsky 1987:
> 19; cf. Lindström & Eriksson 2006: 241.)

Usually the salutogenic theory is referred to in a slightly more compact way.
It is sub-categorised into three themes (or dimensions) in life: a) *comprehen-
sibility*, b) *manageability,* and c) *meaningfulness*. Within these dimensions
humans manage to view their lives as coherent, comprehensible, manageable
and meaningful. A person's health assets enable him or her to achieve inner
personal reassurance, trust and the confidence to identify one's own resources
within oneself and in one's immediate environment. We could call it a cap-
ability of emotional recycling of health determinants, to be able to reuse one's
own abilities and assets, and to create new ones as life goes on. Especially,
meaningfulness, the third dimension of SOC, includes a perspective that can
be called a life orientation; *a meaningful way of life*. Though SOC has mostly
been used as an evidence-based measurement instrument, it has become a
philosophy. It stands for a salutogenic way of thinking, a way of being, and it
involves a dimension of action (at least to some degree).

Another important concept within the salutogenic framework is the 'gen-
eralised resistance resources' (GRRs), which provide the prerequisites for the
development of SOC. These resources are found within people as resources
bound to person and capacity, but also in both immediate and more removed
environments, with both material and non-material qualities. According to
measurement, at least four of the GRRs have to be at one's disposal in order
to facilitate the development of a strong SOC. These would be for example,
meaningful activities, existential thoughts, contact with one's inner feelings
and social relations. The key issue of connectedness here is not only to have
these abilities at one's disposal but to actually make use of them. (Antonovsky
1979, 1987; cf. Lindstöm & Eriksson 2010: 20 and 2006: 241).

As mentioned earlier, in the WHO constitution a new declaration of
health was introduced: 'health is not only the absence of disease and infirm-
ity but a state of complete well-being in a physical, mental and social mean-
ing' (United Nations Department of Public Information, 1948 in Lindström
& Eriksson 2006: 239). A shift of focus from a strict medical orientation on
health towards the subjective well-being of the population resulted in a holis-

tic perspective on health, thus including *physical, mental* and *social* perspectives. Idealistically, it did so much in concordance with the general optimism during that time period. In 1987 a fourth dimension was introduced; *spiritual* well-being (Lindström & Eriksson 2006: 239; cf. Vader 2006: 457), perfect in its timing, and in accordance with Antonovsky's original set of the four dimensions of health.

Research on health promotion (HP) can be essayed from several academic angles. According to Lindström and Eriksson (2010: 28) these might include a philosophical point of view; a biomedical or a pathogenic approach, focusing on the elimination of risks associated with diseases, or when given a salutogenic perspective, health promotion can be studied and achieved through specific processes that become outcomes when focusing on the resources for health as suggested within the salutogenic framework. Antonovsky perhaps did not originally intend SOC as a philosophical reference. Nowadays, however, in the practical interpretations and implementations of HP, where Antonovsky's theoretical research frames are being applied as a reference, the salutogenic setting has become an operational platform for Scandinavian Health Promotion (HP) work.

Health promotion is to be understood then as a continuous or ongoing long-term process throughout life, with a focus on the resources for health (i.e. assets or health determinants) enabling humans to gain control and make use of their resources in order to improve (empower) their well-being, to enable them to live an active and productive life. And when all this is placed within the *salutogenic context* it sums up what is meant by the aspiration to 'enjoy a good quality of life' (cf. Lindström & Eriksson 2010: 28–9; Lindström 1994: 11). At a first glance HP may give the reader an impression of utopian expectations for some futuristic perfect world, but when taken into praxis it can actually—with small efforts—generate well-being on a social communal level, and on an individual level.

The relationship between spirituality and health promotion is complicated. Jean-Paul Vader, for example, has noticed the absence of the *spiritual dimension* in the public discourse of HP in Europe, and writes that

> . . .with the exception of end-of-life interventions, this dimension [spiritual] is almost totally absent from discussions of public health and health promotion in Europe, whether it be in the discourse of public health professionals or policy-makers (Vader 2006: 457; cf. Melder 2011: 18).
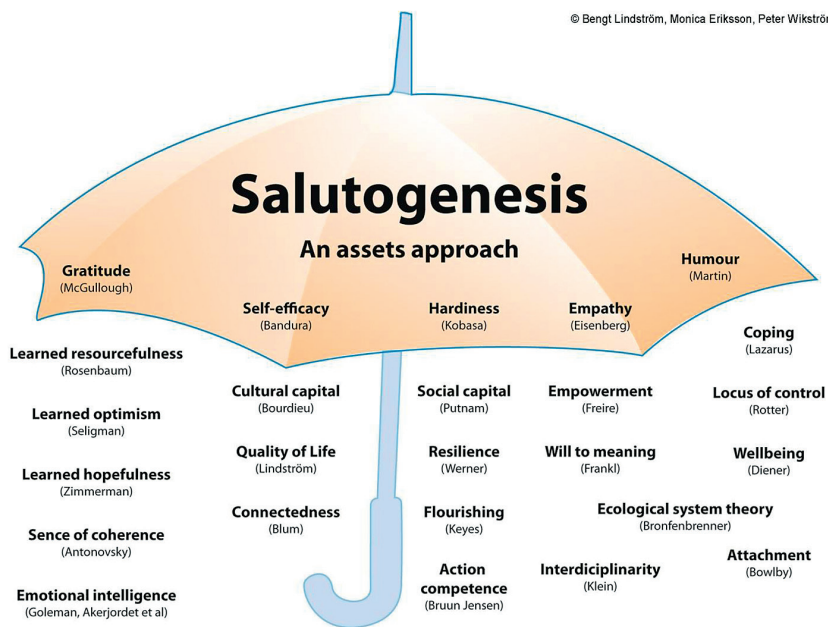
Figure 1. This image shows different theoretical models for achieving salutogenic perspectives (Lindström & Eriksson 2010: 55).

When SOC is being contextualised and reformulated, for example, into social working environments, team-building efforts and specific work tasks at community levels, it plays a significant role in relation to strict motivational factors. Therefore, from my own working experiences of HP in community fostering projects I find that perhaps the theory of salutogenesis still in a way falls within some thin shred of mystery. Perhaps its 'mystery' lies in its success in creating a bridge between humanistic and more philosophical values and the world of evidence focused medical and health paradigms. The question still remains, what is meant by spirituality within health promotion?

To summarise, *salutogenesis* represents a globally orientated view of the world, and it claims that the way people view their lives has a positive influence on their health. Aaron Antonovsky's theory of a *sense of coherence* (SOC) represents comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. It is an explanation as to why people in stressful situations can manage to stay well and even be able to improve their health, and they do so because they feel that they live a meaningful life. *Health promotion* is a process that enables people to increase control over, and to improve their health. It thereby enables people

to live an active and productive life, with well-being and quality of life as their ultimate goals.

Quality of life and spirituality

People seek to fill what is perceived as emptiness in life with more content. Rephrased, people are searching for quality in their lives. 'Quality of life' (QoL) then, is understood to be the implicit outcome of the health process itself. And quality, as such, is always related to a value judgment. The concept, *quality of life* (QoL) is generally associated with positive values such as happiness, success, wealth, health and satisfaction. It signifies a characteristic, that of an exquisite standard (Lindström 1994: 19). Whether we speak of a capacity that can be perceived through collective or individual senses of values, or simply progress of welfare or wealth, it all adds up within the central values of our lives. *Life*, according to Bengt Lindström, as we perceive it through our five senses, is defined as the period of time between birth and death. In its most reduced form, life is only the passage between these two end points. A minimum of life would then provide only survival (Lindström 1994: 20). Everything that is added to survival might then be considered as a bonus in life.

Scholars are trained in critical thinking and just love to analyse things into their constituent parts, re-construct them and ultimately construct defini-
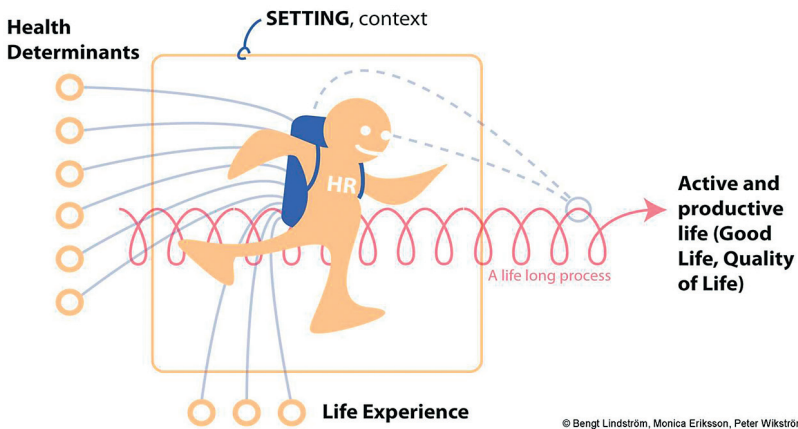

Figure 2. An illustration of how quality of life is the outcome of the health process (Lindström & Eriksson 2010: 27).

tions. We need to do this in order to create our own working tools when analysing what we see and what we think is happening around us. A traditional way of looking at things is to systematise things, and for that we need to create the categories in which to place information. The same applies with religion. The word 'religion' originated from the Latin word *religio* and it is much debated whether it originally meant reverence towards the gods or *re-ligare;* to reconnect, or some ancient monastic order. It naturally depends on who you ask; Cicero, St Augustine or Lactantius.

Social scientists tend to avoid dealing with substantial parts of religion (Hood 2003: 242–3), while psychologists of religion tend to be more interested in the question 'what makes religion tick?' Kenneth Pargament, a psychologist of religion among many others, has chosen to define religion as 'a process, a search for significance in ways related to the sacred' (Pargament 1997a: 32). What makes this complicated is that both the categories 'religion' and 'sacred' fall into problematic ontological discourses. Pargament's argument goes, on one hand, as follows:

> The religious world wraps its *search for significance* in higher powers: deities; ultimacy; and the beliefs, experiences, rituals and institutions associated [by humans] with these transcendent forces. People are called religious when the sacred is part of their deepest values and when the sacred is involved in the way they build, maintain and change these values. (Pargament 1996: 216, my italics; cf. Leppäkari 2006: 15.)

Or to put it more simply: 'significance includes life's ultimate concerns—death, tragedy, inequity' (Pargament 1997: 31). We may consider the term 'religion' to be complicated and complex as it gathers people and provides meaning for individuals, groups, and nations. Throughout the ages, culture intertwined with religion has shaped our ways of thought and still continues to do so. 'Religion' does not fit into a simple scheme; it gives even the scholar the impression that it is like an organism sometimes living its own life within a group or person. Naturally, we find organised systems of thought and practices within religion, but religious life does not always fit into our predesigned schemes and norms. Religion is subject to change. We can witness how 'worldviews' and 'spiritualities' tend towards something which is considered to be existential thinking.

How should we then define 'spirituality' in the present context? Does spirituality matter, and if it matters, what is it good for? Being successful, happy and healthy in our society are typically characterised as the standards for

quality of life. Perhaps it is descriptive of a utopian dream of success. The sum of a happy and meaningful life is always individual. Very often it equals the values that we attribute to the fruits that we have collected during a lifetime. These values are naturally personal and embedded in our historical contexts; families, upbringings, education and so forth. But they are also personal narratives of success in life, work and emotional efforts, property, family, a sense of happiness and contentment, ease, and so forth. If life's fruits do not appeal to us, we consequently feel unhappy, unsuccessful and perhaps lack the energy to deal with our feelings of inadequacy. The individual experience of inadequacy may, as we know from various studies, during hard times lead to sorrow. In situations such as this we humans long for significance, a sense of happiness, a situation where we may be confident and at ease.

The various means by which people confront dis-ease (the word does not necessary mean sickness, but includes discontentment) in life is, as previously pointed out, individual and context-bound. Yet, simultaneously there are of course various options to choose from in handling such situations: medications, therapies, existential meaning seeking, turning towards institutionalised or new religions, simply by changing lifestyle, cognitive behaviour, or priorities in life, just to mention a few possibilities. They all offer ways of resolving the situation at hand for humans seeking ease and meaning to life.

In his critical analysis of contemporary society Antoon Geels (2007) describes how postmodern pluralism has contributed to a sense of 'existential uncertainty', something that many of our contemporaries seem to suffer from. We humans have, according to Geels, more or less lost our ability to make and ask meaning-creating questions. This in turn, has led to a deficiency of meaning-creating symbols and is accompanied by enclosed norm superficiality.

Some reflections on previous research into religion and health

Religion and spirituality are multifaceted, overlapping constructs whose specific definitions remain a subject of debate. However, there is some agreement about the general outlines and boundaries of these terms (Palante & Sherman 2001: 7). Both religiousness and spirituality can be seen as reflecting 'the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviours that arise from a search for the sacred' (cf. Palante & Sherman 2001: 7–8). Perhaps some people would prefer to use the word 'transcendence' here instead.

Among the innumerable challenges of studying religion and health, one of the most fundamental problems concerns definitions. Religiousness and

spirituality are, according to Thomas G. Palante and Allen C. Sherman, complex, multidimensional constructs. 'Despite more than a century of research and theoretical work devoted to religion, there is no simple single or widely accepted definition' (Palante & Sherman 2001: 5).

Palante and Sherman use the word 'spirituality' to refer to personal concerns with the transcendent—with something sacred, ultimate, or beyond superficial appearance. Spirituality, then, may or may not be embedded in a formal, established religious tradition. 'Religious', 'religiousness', 'religious orientation' and 'religious involvement' are concepts being used synonymously to refer to both the personal and social (including institutional) aspects of engagement with an established faith tradition. Relative to these broad terms, Palante and Sherman use 'religious' or 'spiritual coping' more specifically to designate particular effort when, for example, managing the demands of a specific challenging situation (e.g. a diagnosis of heart disease, coronary artery bypass surgery; Palante & Sherman 2001: 8).

Concerning the future challenges of research on faith and health, Palante and Sherman do actually point towards the potential of salutogenic approaches, arguing that traditional 'pathogenic' approaches to research on religion and health, which emphasise risk reduction, should be complemented by a salutogenic perspective. The interface between religion, spirituality, and health is an extraordinarily rich area for academic investigation. For many, a concern with the sacred or transcendent goes to the heart of what it means to be human. Health professionals also indicate that research results show that a spiritual or religious life may have implications for mental and physical well-being. To explore the meanings, magnitudes and mechanisms for these connections is still a major challenge.

While pointing towards the potentials of salutogenic approaches, Palante and Sherman underline Jeffrey S. Levin's argument in his article 'How religion influences morbidity and mortality and health: Reflections on natural history, salutogenesis, and host resistance':

> . . .that traditional 'pathogenic' approaches to research on religion and health, which emphasizs risk reduction, should be complemented by a 'salutogenic' perspective, which focuses on health promotion and wellness. The factors involved in promoting health and wellness are not necessarily the same as those involved in reducing risk (e.g., Antonovsky 1987; Benyamini Idler, Leventhal & Leventhal 2000). (Palante & Sherman 2001: 393.)

Jeffrey S. Levin's call for greater sensitivity to the salutary effects of faith is consistent with the growing emphasis on 'positive psychology' (e.g. optimism, wisdom, creativity) that is emerging in other fields of research (Palante & Sherman 2001: 393).

It does not come as a surprise that most academics do not feel comfortable using the word 'spiritual health'. Speaking of 'spiritual health' does not fit in well. There are, however, several studies that indicate the relevance of an existential meaning-creating dimension, but there is no space for going into detail here. John-Paul Vader, for example, writes in the *European Journal of Public Health* that belief in and a commitment to the transcendental and the metaphysical (due to their intimate connection to the very sense and purpose of existence) is probably the most powerful motivator of human behaviour and behaviour change known today (Vader 2006: 457). This intimacy with the transcendent may come with positive and constructive benefits, but it may also have negative and destructive qualities with unsettling consequences (Leppäkari 2008: 106–12). David Greenberg and Eliezer Witztum, for example, in their book *Sanity & Sanctity: Mental Health Work Among the Ultra-Orthodox in Jerusalem* (2001) have highlighted the role of psychiatric care and mental illness when understanding and dealing with religious points of view.

And yet further John-Paul Vader manages to formulate what for many is felt as an uncomfortable challenge, while simultaneously pointing out the risk of depriving empowering assets:

> By ignoring the spiritual dimension of health, for whatever reason, we may be depriving ourselves of the leverage we need to help empower individuals and populations to achieve improved physical, social, and mental health. Indeed, unless and until we do seriously address the question – however difficult or uncomfortable it may be – substantial and sustainable improvements in physical, social, and mental health, and reductions in the health gradient within and between societies, may well continue to elude us. (Vader 2006: 457; cf. Melder 2011: 18.)

In the Scandinavian context during the last decade the existential dimension in healthcare has gained importance. Two of the most recent contributions to the topic are, first, the doctoral dissertation by Cecilia Melder, who has studied how the existential dimension of health, understood as the ability to create and maintain a functional meaning-makins system, affects the person's self-related health and quality of life (Melder 2011). Her study showd a posi-

tive outcome (see Melder, in this volume). Health dimensions are, according to Melder, referred to as the physical, mental, social, ecological and existential (Melder 2011). The second example is Maria Liljas Stålhandske's study of women's existential experiences within Swedish abortion care (Stålhandske *et al*. 2011: 1–7). Based on her research, Stålhandske makes a call for including existential dimensions in the healthcare sector. She has indicated that the existential dimension bears significant relation to health assets and is connected to an individual's meaning-searching processes and well-being.

To summarise, *spirituality* then can refer to personal concerns with the transcendent—with something 'sacred', ultimate or beyond superficial appearance. It may, or it may not be embedded in a formal, established religious tradition (cf. Palante & Sherman 2001: 8). Yet at the same time it points towards matters that are closely connected with humans' search for meaning—which we have always done—in order to achieve a sense of meaningfulness in life. For this there is no need for 'religiosity', in terms of the words' connotations of a transcendent agency, or forces of ultimate concerns.

Somewhere in-between indifference and fundamentalism

In my previous research within the field of religious studies I have traced and accounted for the dissemination, reinvention and mutation of religious ideas and representations (Leppäkari 2006, 2008), with particular focus on popular, present-day fundamentalism, which might be rephrased more exactly as non-holistic and exclusive interpretations of religious settings (and agencies) with a specific interest in Jerusalem as an apocalyptic-millenarian symbol. The outcome of my research outlines that things are not simply created in a vacuum. Images of a religious individual playing an active part in apocalyptic settings are constructed through a network of engagement and dialogue with others.

The myth of the apocalypse contributes to a holistic image of the world where the individual end-of-time adherent is convinced that she or he has an active role and plays an important part in the working out of the world's destiny and mankind's redemption. Those who are not embedded in religious dualism do perhaps live in a fragmented world. At least, when viewed by an 'insider' of a religious uncompromising fundamentalist community, most 'others' may seem to lack a common value system of meaning (cf. Geels 2007). A decline in commonly held cultural values, if seen as a decline in the value monopoly, would open up markets and opportunities for new values. In 2011,

when writing this, there is a market, including both supply and demand, for products meant to cure peoples' sense of meaninglessness and emptiness. It is here that we get into specific questions related to spirituality and well-being.

Indifference has an antithesis, and it is called fundamentalism. Fundamentalism, which is popularly in the news media attributed with naive and simplistic values, can also be described as a meaningful system that makes it possible for individuals and groups to endure, to feel able to create meaning, significance, and a sense of belonging in a world that is perceived as hostile. Existence between these two extreme poles between indifference and fundamentalism marks the gray zone of reality, the world that we currently live in.

A fundamentalist literalist stance usually creates order in a chaotic environment. But it may also cause anxiety. It is not uncommon that the thought of going astray from what is perceived as the 'right religious track' becomes unbearable and a situation loaded with fear. Dystopias and religious images of the end of the world can raise existential fear. Representations of the end-times, destruction of the world and eternal condemnation can unleash emotionally charged both intra- and interpersonal conflicts that give rise to anxiety (Leppäkari 2008: 109). Therefore, with religious fundamentalism, as with religion in general, there are at least two perspectives to take into consideration—empowering functions and anxiety factors. Furthermore, as religion can be understood as having an emancipatory power, it also has its limits (Dillon 2010: 153).

When the market for products that generate meaning and significance is strong, there is also a lot to pick and choose between. Alternatives exist, and many of these alternatives have come to be seen somewhat as substitutes for traditional, institutionalised religiosity. There is an open market and a need for spirituality. If you got it, there are several others ready and waiting to get it too. Nowadays it is housebroken (*rumsrent*) to talk about 'spirituality' in existential contexts, without feeling it to be an obligation or necessary to associate the word predominantly with a Christian—specifically Protestant—presetting. Scholars of religion and theologians have, I would dare to argue, come over the word's connotations to its Christian heritage that most of the older generation of scholars in religious and cultural studies very much objected to. The concept of *spirituality* can then be used in order to describe an attitude of individuals who express a sense of longing, striving for an inner sense of peace. Spirituality stands for a holistic life orientation within the life-long learning process of fabricating one's own significances.

With all this spiritual stuff in mind we need also to take a closer look at the word 'secular', originating from the Latin word *saeculum* meaning a cen-

tury or age. Hypothetically, therefore, people who are in the *saeculum*, can be seen as being embedded in ordinary time as in opposition to a religious time (Taylor 2007: 54–5). When the word 'secular' is being used as it commonly is in opposition or antithesis to religion, it is in order to make a clear standpoint more or less saying: 'this is not connected to (institutionalised) religious practices or systems of belies'. This is a discussion that is embedded in a macro-social discussion of the Western religious landscape, which currently is the subject of much debate (cf. Habermas 2008, Dillon 2010) and referring to an increasing public visibility of religion and religious actors while being central to the recently developed concept of the 'post-secular'. Scholars argue that the concept itself remains in need of further clarification. To keep things simple here, 'post-secular' is an academic construction, which from my perspective simply describes the way I am here referring to world-views in between the above-mentioned two poles of the extremes marking the grey area somewhere between indifference and fundamentalism.

The present-day relationship between religion and consumer culture can, according to Moberg and Granholm, be seen as contributing to an increased general visibility of religion throughout Western social and cultural life in general. Their critical remarks on scholarly talk and theorising about the 'post-secular' as 'discourses critical of earlier hegemonic secularist discourses that present religion as a negative social force' (Moberg & Granholm 2012) definitely adds some fuel to further study of that specific topic.

Contesting spirituality in post-secular settings

What has been referred to here as spiritual health is, in other words, attached to lifelong learning processes and humans' search for significance, well-being, and quality of life. This is nothing new; it is something people have done through the ages. My critique of the 'secularity and post-secularity discourse' is simple: 'religion' did not disappear anywhere. It has been alive and kicking from its earliest days. Perhaps religion in its institutionalised forms in a postmodern secular European context has faced some criticism while its members take note of 'exhaustion' and search for significances in some alternative ways. But that does not really concern a scholar of religion, and it is not, I would dare to argue, any very upsetting news for the Scandinavian Lutheran or Orthodox clergy either. As Michele Dillon describes it, religion is not just about rational ideas; it also entails embodied experiences and emotions which need to be recognized as highly contested within and beyond

religious interpretive communities by recognizing the fluidity between religious and secular identities, worldviews and motivations (Dillon 2010: 153). An integration of religiously derived arguments and insights into the 'secular' public sphere is possible if we focus on 'alleviating the pathologies of our era' (Dillon 2010: 153).

There are quite numerous ways of looking at spirituality. I feel tempted, at least for my own use of the word, to distinguish between two ways of describing spirituality. The first 'type' could be called *spirituality as a religious experience*—that is to say the way it has become described in traditional western and/or *institutionalized forms of religion*. The second description would offer a perspective on *spirituality as an individual expression of an inner sense of significance and peace*. The latter is attached to what I have here tried to outline with the aid of salutogenic perspectives.

Spirituality needs not to be characterised as a 'religious experience' in the traditional (perhaps I would benefit from using the word 'popular' or 'secular' here) use of the word, but rather represents the perspective of an attitude towards how our contemporaries express their longing for an inner peace, spiced with a clear meaning creating function and motivation in their lives. Contentment in the moment and longing for inner peace can also be seen as the outcome of an exploration of one's inner feelings, attitudes, and the norms to be accounted for when searching for meaning and motives for actions. Contemporary spirituality should not be understood as a form of self-centred individuality. It is, rather, to be understood as an *attitude* towards, or an expression to which the individual reflects his or her self-image in the mirror that we call life.

Life is certainly unpredictable. As uncertainties and changes cross our life paths, seen from the salutogenic perspective, remaining in good spirits when facing all these challenges and illnesses that life comes with, the important thing is to be able to maintain making use of one's abilities and finding direction in life (Lindström & Eriksson 2010: 12). This means to be able to deal with chaos and uncertainty, whether it is perceived to be taking place on an individual, communal, or on a global scale.

When people talk about a search for personal significance that goes beyond our immediate senses (spiritual), and when a sense of stability appears (well-being) in what is felt to be a moment of chaos, when identified and felt as something worthwhile achieving (health), perhaps, then we come close to what could be meant by the 'spiritual dimension of health'. But due to our cultural heritage, even though use of the word 'spirituality' has become more and more widely accepted within the field of religious studies, I still would

perhaps prefer to replace the word 'spiritual health' with the more modern and to the general public more appealing 'existential health' simply because the word's positive connotation and accessibility in post-secular settings. The word 'spiritual' has, though, a more fashionable edge to it.

This perspective is new, at least for me, while being used to focus on end-of-the-world speculations, apocalyptic violence, death and strong dualistic prejudices. One way to shed new light on an old subject is simply to turn one's perspectives upside down: that is, not to focus on crisis and death, but rather to place one's academic focus on the positive side of life, and point out the positive health effects and assets that are created in the processes where our contemporary fellow humans search for significance. In such a way we can open up perspectives and find new ways to integrate existential dimensions as part of meaning-creating processes in both theory and in practical health promotion work. That is, if you are not fully prepared or convinced yet—to use the words 'spiritual health'.

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CECILIA MELDER

The epidemiology of lost meaning

A study in the psychology of religion and existential public health

Introduction

I would like to present the studies I carried out and results I gained as I completed my doctoral thesis on existential health, which is entitled 'The epidemiology of lost meaning: a study in the psychology of religion and existential public health in a Swedish context' (*Vilsenhetens epidemiologi. En religionspsykologisk studie i existentiell folkhälsa,* Melder 2011). I will also give a brief presentation of the interventions for people with psychiatric diseases that we conducted in Spring 2011.

The existential dimension of spirituality has proven to be of great importance over the last two decades when it comes to studies of self-rated health and quality of life. We see the positive effects it has on blood pressure, depression and life expectancy for chemotherapy and HIV patients, to mention just a few examples (DeMarinis 2008, Moreira-Almeida & Koenig 2006, O'Connell & Skevington 2010, Sawatzky *et al.* 2005). In the public health sector, it is interesting to note that this existential/spiritual dimension had already been present in the early years when the term public health first came into the Swedish language. In the year 1926 public health was defined as 'a people's physical and spiritual health' (*Svenska akademien* 1926: 1070). During the intervening years of major medical and scientific technical improvements in the field, the existential/spiritual perspective had been put aside, but now once again this dimension has come into focus (Vader 2006, Rutz 2006).

The World Health Organization (WHO) began its 'Health for All' strategy in 1977. At its conferences in Ottawa in 1986 and Sundsvall in 1991 attention was given to the need for supportive environments, including a spiritual dimension, as a key aspect of the third public health revolution (WHO 1986, 1991). One of the main factors in the work of creating an effective means of including the existential/spiritual dimension in the overall perspective on health has been to develop theories and methods that can be used for research

studies and therapeutic interventions which are aimed at developing an understanding of the conditions of existential/spiritual public health, and the potential for existential/spiritual epidemiology.

Professors Kathryn O'Connell and Suzann Skevington from the WHO Centre for the Study of Quality of Life at the University of Bath write, 'Although spirituality has been seen as irrelevant, or difficult to measure, a growing body of peer reviewed articles point to a positive and important relationship between spiritual beliefs and other domains of quality of life in health' (O'Connell & Skevington 2007: 77). Also, Professor Harold Koenig, Director of the Centre for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke University, North Carolina makes the following observations in an interview for the *Journal of Religion and Health*:

> We need to design better studies. There is already a lot of evidence accumulating that religion is somehow related to personal and public health, but we're still left with a number of questions about how and why it works (if it indeed does positively affect health). We need more studies, better-designed studies, and we need more research funding in this area so we can conduct these studies. (Aten & Schenck 2007: 187.)

In *The Lancet* Professor Wolfgang Rutz describes the current public health status in Europe in this way, 'During this period of European transition, societal stress and loss of social cohesion and spiritual values directly affect patterns of morbidity and mortality' (Rutz 2004: 1652). Professor Jean-Paul Vader claims that we need to address the spiritual dimension. In his editorial for the *European Journal of Public Health* 2006 Vader writes:

> By ignoring the spiritual dimension of health, for whatever reason, we may be depriving ourselves of the leverage we need to help empower individuals and populations to achieve improved physical, social, and mental health. Indeed, unless and until we do seriously address the question—however difficult and uncomfortable it may be—substantial and sustainable improvements in physical, social, and mental health, and reductions in the health gradient within and between societies, may well continue to elude us. (Vader 2006: 467.)

It is against this background that it is of importance to study the existential/spiritual dimension in relation to self-rated health and life quality in Sweden. Sweden is known as a country with a highly developed privatisation of the

meaning-making arena related to spirituality, religion, and personal beliefs. Sweden is a country with a very high number of members in the Church of Sweden and with many turning to the Church for their of children's baptisms, for marriage, and for funerals. Yet at the same time many of these people do not believe that the Church's theology can be of use in creating meaning in their everyday lives. In many studies, for example the World Values Survey (WVS), Sweden stands out (Inglehart & Baker 2000, Pettersson 2006). With that in mind when we examine public health reports from Sweden, we see that there is a very healthy population in terms of infant mortality, smoking, rates of exercise, and longevity, but at the same time we have studies indicating that a high percentage of people report that they do not feel well. These results are partly from groups that do not normally fall into the health-risk category. We can see this profile in groups of young men and especially women with mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. The statistics for these groups increasingly connect overweight and stress as well as an increase in the levels of pain being experienced (SKL: 2009). Rutz writes that:

> If we look at the described community syndrome consisting of depression and aggression, addiction and violence, self-destruction and suicide, cardio and cerebrovascular diseases, accidents, risk-taking lifestyles, anomy and 'moral insanity', we can see how this is related to the factors we know today as the most important determinants of mental health, namely existential cohesion and ethical values, social interaction and capacity, helplessness and control, identity and dignity. (Rutz 2006: 99.)

The context of the secular situation is the way in which I prefer to talk about existential dimensions of health, rather than religious or spiritual dimensions. Existentialism is a wider concept that includes the religious and spiritual dimensions. It could also include a profane meaning-making system (excluding a supernatural power)—for example a political or philosophical perspective. This is my background, and in one way we could talk about a secular situation from which we could draw outlines for post-secular practice in relation to health-promoting dimensions. Not as a reconstruction, but rather as a construction of something new in developing definitions, methods and models for developing existential public health.

This thesis is based on three theoretical perspectives: 1) health related to an existential dimension as developed by the WHO and especially its 'Health for All' programme, 2) public health from the perspective of the psychology of religion, and 3) object-relations theory as presented by Donald Winnicott,

claiming that personal development is fundamental to the entire life cycle, and that religious and cultural activities could play a role in that development. It is an explorative study of the psychology of religion, through the perspective of existential public health, on an ethnic Swedish adult population's existential needs. I used a mixed-methods design, including semi-structured interviews ($N = 5$), and surveys: 1) on meaning-making ($N = 61$), and 2) a Swedish pilot translation of WHOQOL-SRPB (self-rated health and quality of life including spirituality, religiousness and personal beliefs), ($N = 21$).

Central research question
How does the existential dimension of health, understood as a person's ability to create and maintain functional meaning-making systems, affect the person's self-rated health and quality of life?

Sub-questions
- What factors affect the existential dimension of health, self-rated health and self-rated quality of life?
- How do these factors interact with each other?
- Which of these factors have a supportive and which have a debilitating effect on the possibility of creating and maintaining the existential dimensions of health?
- Can these supportive and debilitating factors contribute to an existential public health intervention that can increase self-rated health and self-rated quality of life?

The study has been conducted in conjunction with a pilot programme, 'VVV', which has been investigating adult development in the parish of Vällingby, a suburb of Stockholm in Sweden. The programme was organised by the Church of Sweden. The purpose of the programme has been to create a locally-based programme for men and women of working ages, offering them the opportunity to develop a functional life-view of themselves and their environment, with the opportunity for developing their existential/spiritual dimension, in a programme which is based on a number of different life issues. These issues have included, but were not limited to; health and stress, life and work, and intimate relationships. The programme has included five different elements every semester. It has started with a lecture on the life issues to be covered for the season, followed by four different activities, in which each participant can choose to take part. These activities have included a day in silence for rest and recreation; a weekend with creative activities; a group for

existential/spiritual discussion with a focus on everyday life; and, a seminar about life issues viewed from the perspective of the Holy Bible and its context. All the activities have been focussed on the chosen life issues. The programme has given each participant the opportunity to take part in as many of the activities that they have wished. Over the first five semesters of this pilot project, when the material for this study was collected, participants had taken part in one the programme's activities a total of 756 times cumulatively, representing 246 individuals who had participated in the range of activities available.

Theory

The working theories and basic perspectives in this thesis are drawn from three areas: 1) health research with attention to the existential dimension, 2) public health from the perspective of the psychology of religion, and 3) object-relations theory.

Health with an existential dimension
Over the last couple of decades there has been an increasing interest in the existential/spiritual dimension in relation to self-rated health. A variety of definitions and methods have been used in these studies, for example, a consideraton of the impact that participation in religious activities has on the health dimension; faith content and its impact on health; and, a third perspective, which I use here, the function of the existential/spiritual dimension's impact on health. The WHO has, from the beginning, pointed to the importance of a holistic perspective on health (WHO 2006: 1). In the work of 'Health for All ' strategy the WHO developed the concept of a supportive environment which includes a variety of aspects, including the spiritual dimension, to increase health and life quality, 'Thus action to create supportive environments has many dimensions: physical, social, spiritual, economic and political. Each of these dimensions is inextricably linked to the others in a dynamic interaction.' (WHO 1991.) The WHO has also presented models for developing public health programmes for increasing the supportiveness of environments. The supportive environments action model (SESAME), which is presented in the publication of the proceedings from the third international WHO conference held at Sundsvall in 1991 and can be used for planning and evaluating programmes, is one of them (Haglund 1996: 98). Along with other sources of inspiration from the third international WHO conference within the 'Health For All' programme, SESAME has been used in this study for a presentation

of the VVV programme and as a way of identifying important aspects to be developed in designing further existential health interventions.

WHO has developed a trans-cultural field-test instrument for measuring the function of the existential/spiritual dimension related to health and life quality: the WHOQOL-SRPB survey. This was a survey which originally included 100 items, relating to physical, mental, social and environmental health, carried out in 2002. It was supplemented, after a pilot study in 18 different countries and cultures around the world, with 32 items relating to the existential dimension (WHO 2002). Some scientists have criticised this instrument for measuring mental health instead of the religious/spiritual dimension. Others have pointed to the importance of developing a trans-cultural instrument, which could work in different religious cultures and environments. The instrument focuses on a person's health and life quality during the time period of the last two weeks and measures their spiritual, religious, and personal beliefs (SRPB) through eight different aspects: spiritual connection, meaning and purpose in life, the experience of awe and wonder, wholeness and integration, spiritual strength, inner peace, hope and optimism, and faith. In the worldwide pilot study which took in 5,087 persons, a significant relationship was found between the SRPB items and the overall self-rated health items, and also between the SRPB items and each of the different aspects of health. The greatest significance was found in the relation to the mental health dimension and the social health dimension. In a study of personal medical statistics, significance was found between self-rated health and the existential/ spiritual dimension (WHOQOL-SRPB Group 2006: 1486). O'Connell and Skevington who conducted the WHOQOL-SRPB pilot study in the United Kingdom have also analysed the results in relation to belief characteristics including the strength of personal beliefs, practice, and religion. They found that, 'The importance ratings showed that all SRPB facets were important or very important to QoL overall, despite expected variations between beliefs groups' (O'Connell & Skevington 2010: 744). They have also reviewed and evaluated seven quality-of-life assessments. They found that apart from the WHOQOL-100, none of these instruments was designed for cross-cultural use in contexts where religion and spirituality may be particularly salient to health and well-being (O'Connell & Skevington 2007: 77, 85). Their conclusion is that WHOQOL-SRPB 'represents a new assessment frontier for investigations of positive health' (O'Connell & Skevington 2010: 744).

Public health from the perspective of the psychology of religion

In the field of the psychology of religion there is a long history of investigating perspectives related to health at individual, group, and community levels. There are many researchers today who define the time we are living in as being postmodern. It is not completely clear as to what the concept relates to and what it stands for (Ekedahl & Wiedel 2004: 9; Stålhandske 2005: 91). To some extent it can be related to the concept of secularism, which is also a complex phenomenon. However, the concept of postmodernism does include, for some researchers, two trends that to some extent work in opposing directions. One trend is that people tend to be more and more interested in aspects concerning the spiritual dimension of life, and another trend is that people tend to be less involved in traditional ways of expressing their religiosity, as, for example is evidenced in a decreasing participation in local church services (Pettersson 2006). These trends have been observed both in Sweden and internationally and have been reported in results from the World Values Survey (WVS) (Inglehart & Baker 2000, Pettersson 2006).

A postmodern situation, which presents the individual with too many choices, can lead to mental dysfunction if a person is unable to make a choice, unable to make meaning, affecting their ability to make life decisions (DeMarinis 2003: 29). Professor Valerie DeMarinis has shown that this could lead to chaos due to the loss of cultural and existential tools that could assist persons or groups in their meaning-making processes and, depending upon the extent of this phenomenon in a given cultural context, can constitute a threat to society: 'It is time for an alarm to sound that signals the start of an epidemiological warning: that of existential epidemiology' (DeMarinis 2006: 236). She has developed a cultural analysis model, an adaptation of Arthur Kleinman's model of the dimensions of culture, and has used it for analysing the existential health dimension in Sweden. The existential dimension is one among the physical, psychological, social and ecological dimensions, but also plays a special role for understanding perceptions of health in the way it interacts with the other dimensions (DeMarinis 2003: 44 f.).

Through a second model DeMarinis has, inspired by David Wulff's categories for the psychology of religion, constructed a world-view typology model for how different approaches to meaning-making systems can be understood, including both literal and symbolic world-view constructions of systems, with or without a foundation in transcendent belief (DeMarinis 2004: 163 f.). In the Swedish context she found it necessary to add two additional categories to the original model. One new category includes a mix of different systems for meaning making; for example being a Christian and

also attending Wicca ceremonies; and a second category for people lacking the capacity for constructing meaning, thus indicating a dysfunctional world-view function (DeMarinis 2008: 66).

Object-relations theory

My understanding of how the existential dimension is developed and maintained as a resource for health and life quality is related to one of the early psychoanalysts, Donald W. Winnicott. Winnicott focuses on a health perspective that includes both the psychological and somatic aspects of a person's growth. He emphasises the importance of play and its contribution to health and development. A child's play transforms in adulthood into forms of cultural and religious expression (Winnicott 1997: 77, 91). Human growth is an ongoing process for Winnicott, which starts at birth, if not earlier, and continues until death. Physical and psychological developments are two parts of the same process of development and are not separate entities (Winnicott 1991: 19, 33 f., 65 ff.). Life is complicated and the big issue is to handle the fact that the outer world and the inner world, with its fantasies, dreams, and wishes, will not be in harmony and that this will lead to problems and disappointments (Winnicott 1998: 132). The child's ability to play is crucial to the ability to develop and negotiate between these worlds. The negotiation between the inner, personal, psychological side and the outer, shared side takes place in a third area, a potential space for negotiation, the transitional space.

This transitional space is created through the relation a baby has to the person that has primary parenting responsibilities for the baby, called the mothering function. Through that person the baby creates the illusion that he/she is the same unit as the parenting function. The baby thinks he/she controls the world. The development of this illusion is based on a feeling so strong that it can be introjected into the small child's world. (Winnicott 1997: 36.) For Winnicott introjection—incorporating an attribute from the outer world and making it one's own—is an important process in creating the potential space in which play can contribute to processing the outer and inner worlds so that good-enough-health and growth can develop (Winnicott 1991: 156 f.). For the adult person different activities can work in promoting the transitional space; it could be religion, culture, and all kinds of different activities that have the same standards and safety frames that play has, as long as its purpose is to integrate inner and outer realities (Winnicott 1998: 148).

Method

Sample

A mixed-methods design, including two quantitative surveys and a qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interview, has been used for this study. The 87 people that took part in the study were selected out of the entire VVV group. The group itself was not a group of marginalized persons and they could, from an overall perspective, be seen as representatives of a group of ethnic Swedish people of working age, from one of the older suburbs of Stockholm. Most of the participants had some type of secondary education and some also tertiary education. Most of the participants in VVV—about 80 per cent— were women and so also in the sample for this study.

The 61 people that answered the VVV instrument were people that attended the lecture that began the semester and which a focussed on the theme of 'A Place of Respite'. A total of 89 people were asked to participate in the VVV survey and 61 returned the questionnaire. In the WHOQOL-SRPB Field-Test Instrument, 21 people were asked to participate in the survey and they all answered the questionnaire. This group consisted of all the participants of a weekend activity where creative activities such as painting, arts and crafts lectures, and discussions were included. The purpose of these activities was to help participants to develop a functional life view. Five people were strategically selected for the interviews. The strategic selection criteria were that they represented different spiritual/existential approaches to the VVV activity; they had different life situations and religious backgrounds; and they were representative of the age and gender of the overall VVV population.

Survey instrument and data analysis

The VVV surveys were designed for doing an inventory of demographic factors, factors about meaning-making in life and meaning-making rituals. The WHOQOL-SRPB was a Swedish translation of WHO's international instrument (presented above). The semi-structured interview was partially based on a drawing that the person did at the beginning of the interview with the instruction to: 'paint a lifeline/life journey'. The person then told her/his life story using the drawing and follow-up questions for clarification were posed. An interview area guideline was used for the rest of the interview. At three selection points in the life journey, retrospectively from childhood, 'three years ago', and at the time of the interview, the person marked on a scale provided if he/she included a higher (transcendent) dimension in the life journey, if it was a literal or symbolic interpretation, and if it was important or not for functioning in daily life.

In the analysis of the results from WHOQOL-SRPB the whole group was divided into smaller groups: three groups were formed out of the health and quality of life items, and three groups out of the SRPB items. The analyses were then conducted for these sub-groups. The data from the WHOQOL-SRPB and VVV instruments were analysed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS, Inc. Chicago, IL, USA, Version 12.0), for quantitative data-analysis.

The interviews were analysed first according to the themes derived from the physical, mental, social, environmental, and existential health dimensions. Further analysis of the existential dimension was done through DeMarinis's six categories of meaning-making systems. In the next step I categorised the interviews out of the eight existential dimensions from WHOQOL-SRPB as dimensions of spirituality, religiousness, and personal belief, with attention to the function and meeting of existential needs. The interviews were analysed by means of the OpenCode 3.4 data-analysis programme (Umeå University 2010), a system developed for coding grounded theory-based data, but which worked well even for this form of more theory-driven qualitative data.

Results

The VVV survey

In the VVV survey 71 per cent of participants were between the ages of 36 and 55, and 81 per cent were women. A total of 74 per cent were working or studying and 12 per cent were on sick leave. Concerning the existential dimension, 72 per cent believed that spirituality was important or very important. There was a great variety of strategies employed in making meaning in their lives. A slight majority, 51 per cent, included a higher dimension, 33 per cent excluded it and 11 per cent didn't know. When people responded to what they use as a grounding system for their meaning-making, they combined a lot of different systems. Almost half, 47 per cent, responded that they used a Christian basis, but excluded any idea of a higher power, 62 per cent included a higher power, using a combination of different systems to make meaning in their lives. Only 19 per cent reported a single-tradition way of making meaning: these either had a non-spiritual/non-religious ground and didn't count on any higher power; or they counted on a higher power and had a spiritual/religious ground. The rest, 81 per cent, made their own combinations from a number of different meaning-making systems that sometimes were in direct contradiction with each other. Many of the responding persons

—70 per cent—created some kind of meaning-making activity on their own and 61 per cent did so in conjunction with others. Among the answers to the open-ended question about private-based activities, the four most frequent activities included meditation, prayer, conversations with friends, and being in nature. Among the examples of group-based activities, the four most frequent answers included meditation, worship, conversations with friends, and VVV-activities.

The WHOQOL-SRPB Field-Test Instrument

The Swedish pilot translation of the WHOQOL-SRPB Field-Test Instrument was completed by 21 people. The age range was 31–73, the median age being 43. Out of those who responded, 20 were female. The results showed no statistically significant relationship between 'How do you feel?'[1] and 'Are you currently ill?' But when focusing on the health items 'How do you feel?' and 'How satisfied are you with your health?', the results showed a significant relation to the existential health dimension ($p = .001$)[2]. The results also showed a significance between the overall ratings of physical, mental, social, and environmental health and the existential health dimension ($p = .008$). In relation to the different dimensions, the results showed that there is significance between the overall existential health dimension, and mental health ($p = .008$), and social health ($p = .046$). There seems also to be a tendency towards a link to environmental health, but it is not statistically significant ($p = .051$). The results do not reveal any major significance when the SRPB dimensions are divided into the different components, the eight clusters, of the existential dimension. A significant relation was found only between a few of the eight different aspects of the existential, SRPB, dimensions when analysed in relation to the two overall items about health: 'How do you feel?' and 'How satisfied are you with your health?' 'How do you feel?' had a significant relation to 'spiritual connection' ($p = .037$) and 'inner peace' ($p = .029$). When that question was combined with 'How satisfied are you with your health?' there was a significant correlation to 'inner peace' ($p = .023$) and to 'hope and optimism' ($p = .046$). The SRPB dimensions as a whole showed significance in relation to how people feel and the function of the existential dimension for handling and interpreting difficulties. The respondents' answers to two of the four original SRPB items in the WHOQOL-100, the ones that included health—'To

1   The original question, G1.5, 'How is your health?' is in the Swedish context translated as 'how do you feel?'
2   All correlations presented here are positive.

what extent do your personal beliefs give you the strength to face difficulties?' and 'To what extent do your personal beliefs help you to understand difficulties in life?'— had in combination a significant correlation to the item 'How do you feel?' (p = .008).

The interviews

The results showed that all five of the interviewees had experienced times of good and poor health, and good and poor life quality. All of them had also experienced changes in their meaning-making systems, related to intensity, form, and importance, in close connection with self-perceived health and life quality. In the coding of the interview material, nearly no statement related to health was unrelated to an existential dimension of life, regardless of whether it was physical, mental, social or environmental. Of a total of 430 statements in the interviews, only 12 that related to physical, mental, social and environmental health dimensions did not relate to an existential dimension, compared to 418 statements related to any of those health dimensions that had existential relevance. In addition to these, there were 593 statements related to the existential dimension with explicit connection to an autonomous existential health dimension, or related to an existential meaning-making dimension at a more intellectual level.

Analysis of the interviews revealed that to be sick is not the same as feeling unwell and the other way around. There is a continuum between being sick and being healthy, and another between feeling well and feeling unwell. One of the most important results was that the existential dimension needs to be divided into three different aspects as noted below:

1) *Physical, mental, social and environmental health dimensions of existential significance and the autonomous existential dimension.* Almost all statements in the interviews concerning any of the health dimensions show that there is an existential significance—418 statements, compared with 12 that did not show this. Different health dimensions have existential relevance as construed by the person in relation to her/himself, her/his surroundings, and/or in relation to a transcendent or immanent force, for example, 'Also when I had blisters the last time I ate penicillin, and it truly felt generally chaotic' and 'I've suppressed a lot as I have no energy whatsoever to deal with it.'

There are also 160 statements that appear to make the case that the existential health dimension in itself could constitute an autonomic health dimension of importance for self-rated health. This health dimension can be separated out and can function independently from the other health dimensions, for example when the person experiences a serious threat to her/his life.

2) *The health dimension of existential significance related to existential needs.* In relation to the large number of statements in this study where informants talked about their physical, mental, social, and environmental health aspects as having existential relevance there was relatively little connection to or in common with the eight categories in WHO's perspective for spirituality, religiousness, and personal beliefs in the WHOQOL-SRPB Field-Test Instrument. On 545 occasions, during the interviews, information was coded as 'health dimensions with existential significance' and of those 139 were related to existential needs. The strongest connection was found in the mental health dimension relation to existential need and more specifically to the need for 'inner peace' (SR 6) and 'hope and optimism' (SR7). For example, 'I do not really know where my life is going and it is a bit turbulent and rocky' and, 'I'm longing for someone. . .and was feeling a bit disorientated.'

The second strongest connection to existential need was in relation to the social health dimension, which was related to the need for 'meaning and purpose in life' (SP2). For example, 'to be part of a community is to find meaning in life'. In relation to the physical health dimension with existential relevance there was the need for 'wholeness and integration' (SR4), with a focus on 'body, mind and soul' and 'feeling, thought and action' for example, 'I realised that if I continue like this, it is going to be a serious thing, it will be placed in the body and in the soul.' And also the need for 'hope and optimism' (SP7) was conveyed, as in this memory from childhood: ' "God please help me so I don't have cramps", I remember that I added this at the end [of the evening prayer].' Not many statements connected the environmental health dimension with any existential needs. Of a total number of eight statements, six related this dimension to the need for 'experiences of awe and wonder' (SP3), for example; 'perhaps there is some force, I can feel some sort of religious feeling when I go out into the wilderness'. In the autonomic existential health dimension there are also statements that connect this dimension to existential needs, but not to the extent that might be expected. Only 56 of 160 statements related to the autonomic existential health dimension are linked to existential needs and once again the most common needs are those for 'inner peace' (SR 6) and 'hope and optimism' (SR7), for example; 'still I think I have a core of myself that is worth preserving', and 'to move forward so I have to take it easy, but it is still slippery'.

3) *The meaning-making, existential dimension of health, related to the existential needs in relation to the other health dimensions.* The third aspect of the existential health dimension in this population concerns the infrequency of a conscious level of reflection where the informants combined their own health

situation with the feeling of spiritual, religious and/or personal need, which also had some kind of interpretation on an intellectual level in terms of religion, philosophy or other ideology. This aspect is quite rare in my material. Some of the informants related to this kind of interpretation when they talked about experiences of physical illness in childhood, and some about experiences of a strong need for security and inner peace associated with psychological vulnerability. Besides these experiences, most of the meaning-making is more related to an intellectual level without being conscious about the existing existential needs. The interviews showed that in times of life changes there often is a lack of a functioning existential, meaning-making health dimension that could interact between the new situation with its existential relevance, the feelings related to existential needs, and the existential interpretation.

When there is a discrepancy between these dimensions, the informants often seek new forms of existential interpretation when the old one is not enough to deal with the needs associated with the new situation. For all of the interviewees there had been experiences of a mixing of meaning-making systems, and also experiences of a lack of a functional meaning-making system, in terms of DeMarinis's typology. One reason why the potential introjection between existential needs and existential interpretation is only partly working as a functional existential meaning-making health dimension could be that cultural differences exist between the Swedish context and the WHO's definition and approach to understanding spiritual health, as found in the items in the WHOQOL-SRPB Field-Test Instrument.

However, this can only partly explain why the sense of existential need is not more pronounced when the informants relate to situations in life relevant to their existential situation. Nor does it explain why the existential interpretation is not interacting with the emotional experience of the situation to a greater extent. This pilot study naturally has its limitations, not least due to its small size, as well as other methodological issues. Its results cannot be generalised, nor is this the aim of such a study. However, the results offer a way of thinking about these issues and their challenges within the Swedish cultural context.
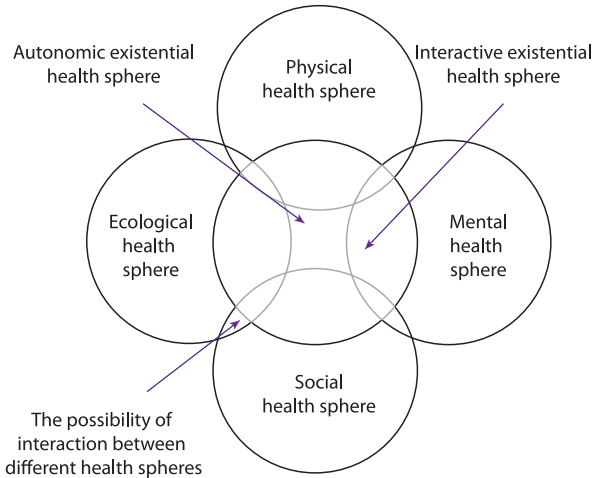
Figure 1. The different spheres of health

Analysis

As an answer to the research question, I found that there is a relation between self-rated health and a person's existential dimension in life. The relation is strong and complex. This relation finds support in the WHO's health perspective and in DeMarinis's health dimensions, and it is linked to Winnicott's understanding about the function of potential space. I found that the various health spheres in the form of physical, mental, social, ecological, and existential health are closely interlinked (see Figure 1). The existential health sphere plays a key role, both in its interaction with the other spheres of health, and through its capacity to function as an autonomous sphere of health. Almost no experience of the other health spheres is unaffected by the existential dimension.

Furthermore, I found in the material that there is a clear difference in the emotional and intellectual connections to the meaning-making processes. This has prompted me to identify as a separate sphere (see Figure 2) existential meaning-making systems which have an emotional connection to the existential needs of each individual and an existential interpretation linked to a religious, philosophical and/or ideological reflection. A higher degree of introjection between these dimensions, of an internal/autistic sphere related to the existential needs and wishes and an external/realistic sphere consisting of the existential interpretation, could provide an existential meaning-making
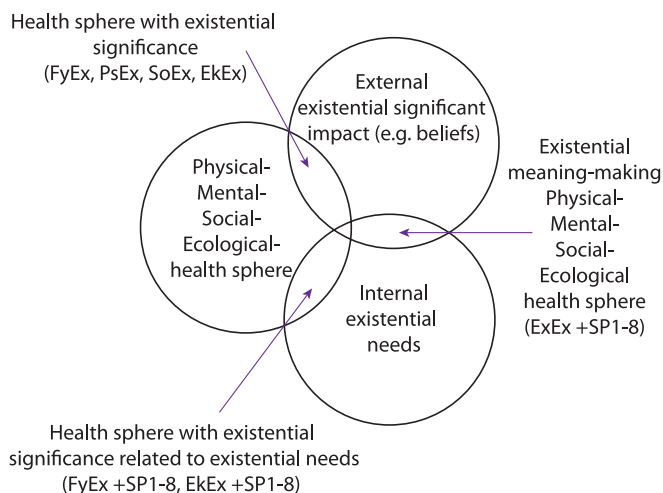
251

Figure 2. Meaning-making processes related to health spheres and existential needs

health sphere that could work as a resource in a person's life and experienced health. That introjection process is possible to reinforce by interventions based on creating supportive environments.

An existential health model

To go further in scientific studies exploring the existential dimension of health, to analyse the impact of this health dimension, and in the end to use the knowledge as a resource in public health work, we need to develop theories, models, and methods. To contribute to the development, I wish to present a model based on the theoretical conclusions of the study and how the model can contribute to knowledge to develop an existential health intervention.

The model is based on the six spheres and a potential existential health sphere (see Figure 3). The interrelationship between the different spheres is dependent upon varying degrees of integration. Well-integrated spheres give a higher level of self-rated health. The model consists of

- Four spheres of health: the physical, mental, social and ecological;
- An internal sphere related to existential needs;
- An external sphere, consisting of the individual's existential interpretation related to factors outside the inner world, factors relating to a religious, philosophical and/or ideological reflection; and,
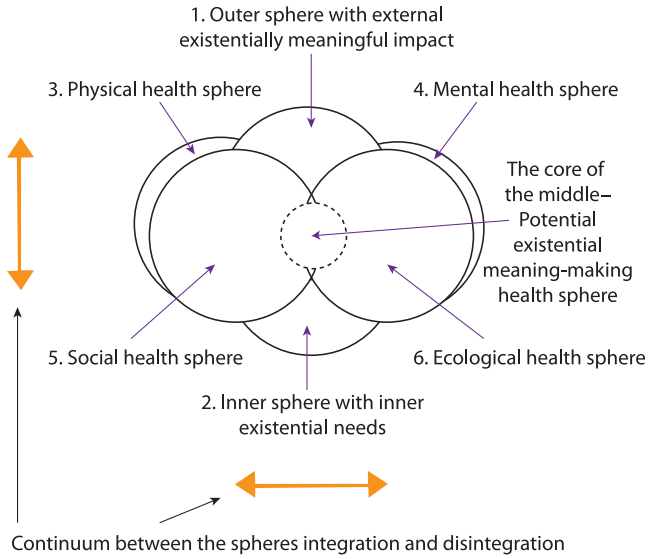
1. Outer sphere with external
existentially meaningful impact

3. Physical health sphere

4. Mental health sphere

The core of
the middle–
Potential
existential
meaning-making
health sphere

5. Social health sphere

6. Ecological health sphere

2. Inner sphere with inner
existential needs

Continuum between the spheres integration and disintegration

Figure 3. The existential health model

- A potential existential health sphere, which is the sum of the existential meaning-making processes, which is based on the degree of introjection between the internal sphere and the outer sphere.

This gives rise to a model in which all the various health spheres are included with their mutual relationships, and the existential health developed out of a potential dimension created by the introjection between the external, subjectively perceived world and the inner world. In this potential dimension the functionality of the individual's existential meaning-making structure forms the basis for healthy development and life quality.

The study has generated two hypotheses:

1. Perceived health and life quality are based on the five spheres of health: the physical, mental, social, ecological, and existential. All spheres of health may interact and influence each other, and;
2. The existential health sphere, which in itself is the result of the introjection between the existential interpretations and internal existential needs, and has an essential position.

Post-secular practice: an existential public health intervention

During the spring of 2011 we conducted a seven-week programme with the aim of developing an existential health intervention. We met a small group of ten people on long-term sick leave due to psychiatric diseases twice a week for three hours each time. Before and after the intervention, these people and a control group, which was matched in terms of age and gender from the same centre, complemented the Swedish pilot translation of the WHOQOL-SRPB survey. The intervention was based on the eight perspectives of the WHO's SRPB dimensions. We had two half days focusing on each of the perspectives: hope, meaning, personal beliefs, wonder and so on. One session was spent on each of the perspectives of spiritual connection and strength; hence the total of seven weeks instead of eight. The sessions were structured in a similar manner around six components. Each session started with an introduction, usually with music and some event or ritual and a poem saying something about the existential perspective of the day. For example, the first time we met, the theme was hope. The participants came into a dark room where only a small candle was burning. Some peaceful music was played and a short poem was read, saying that a person should never believe that he/she is so lonely, poor or sad that they will never have a friend, never have something to give or never smile again, because the sun will rise when the night is over. Each person had a candle at his/her side, which was then lit, and everyone went up to a large table with black and white photographs on it. They put their candles on the table and selected three different photographs: one for hope, one for hopelessness and one for themselves. After the introduction came the four main sections: one part with intellectual inputs from different religious, philosophical, political systems or outer structures, for example from modern psychosocial findings. After that, we held discussions, which were often inspired by the SRPB perspectives in the survey; for example, 'how often do you feel awe?' or 'what makes you feel wonder, for example in art or nature?' Every session included a creative component. For example, when dealing with the theme of awe, we discussed being in awe of nature and I was given input from creation myths from different religious systems. Then the participants painted a large painting together—using spoons, to reduce performance anxiety. The participants took turns every five minutes and began painting where someone else had just stopped. The next time we met we continued to discuss awe. During this session, every person made a small frame and cut out a small piece from the large painting, which became their own picture of creation.

Every session had a final component of relaxation. For example, this could involve trying a breathing technique, or meditation. During the intervention,

the participants added things to their own rosary, such as a pearl to represent harmony, a symbol they created themselves to represent their personal beliefs, a seashell to represent awe, and so on. We did this to develop the method, to create an existential public health intervention and to test the WHOQOL-SRPB survey in a 'before and after' study.

The aim of this intervention was to develop the foundation for an evidence-based intervention that could increase existential health and thereby increase self-rated health. It turned out that the participants belonged to different religions. Some of them were active in their personal beliefs, but most of them were not. The group included members from various Christian churches, but also from the Jewish community, The International Society for Krishna Consciousness and from The Swedish Humanist Association.

Final insight

Although the study is very limited, a preliminary analysis shows that the intervention had a positive impact on the participants in the intervention group, in contrast to the control group. The control group did attend other activities like singing, guitar playing, cooking and so on. In the intervention group, eight people completed the survey before and after the intervention and attended more than half the sessions. Of these eight people, six reported a higher level of existential health and a higher overall level of self-rated health. In the control group, which consisted of ten people, only one reported a higher level of existential health and two reported a higher overall level of self-rated health. In the intervention, one person scored lower on the existential and self-rated health scales after the intervention, while in the control group nearly half scored lower when they completed survey for the second time (after eight weeks).

The next step, and my wish, would be to study this intervention on a wider scale in order to design an evidence-based, existential health intervention. This could be a complement to other forms of therapy and rehabilitation, both in the form of more specialised rehabilitation such as for people undergoing probation, suicide prevention, physical and mental rehabilitation programs, and also as a means of ill-health prevention.

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LISBETH MIKAELSSON

Pilgrimage as post-secular therapy

Introduction

Pilgrimage is supposed to have several healthy aspects, some of them quite obvious, such as walking in the fresh air, or taking time out from a stressful job. Pilgrimage as post-secular therapy is a more intriguing matter. In the first place the question arises as to how we should conceive the term 'post-secular'. In *The Secular Age* (2007) Charles Taylor, a main propagator of the concept, summarises his understanding of the post-secular age we are about to enter as 'a time in which the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularization will be more and more challenged' (Taylor 2007: 534). The symposium invitation is following up this conception when it defines the post-secular society as a society with a renewed openness to spiritual issues coupled with a critical attitude. 'Post-secular religious practices' are here delimited by being located in such a society. 'The spiritual' is another key concept in this context. Charles Taylor as well as a host of other scholars describe the post-secular situation as being marked by a major shift from organized, normative religion to subjective, experiential spirituality.[1] The present resurgence of a spirituality-oriented pilgrimage in Europe demonstrates the relevance of this contention, as Ruth Illman has pointed out (Illman 2010). So far the modern pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain is the main example of this type. As Illman mentions, the concept of spirituality has generally been dissociated from traditional religions, but she adds that there is no necessary opposition between spirituality and traditional religious institutions (Illman 2010: 235). It could even be maintained that the role of traditional religion as a source of and support for subjective spirituality appears as an important field of study today. The Santiago example demonstrates that the Catholic Church, far from opposing the pilgrimage, instead cooperates in its fulfilment. This is linked to the type of pilgrim role that has developed on the Camino, which

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1   The concept of spirituality is discussed by a number of scholars, see for instance Geels 2009, Heelas 2008, Heelas & Whitehead 2005, Partridge 2004, Sutcliffe 2003, Sutcliffe & Bowman 2000, Ward & Hoelzl 2008.

opens up a space for religion and spirituality beyond theological control and church exclusivism. Pilgrims themselves have defined and discussed this role, but it should not be overlooked that the role has also been prepared by secular authorities and organisations, as well as by the Catholic Church in Spain. The role can be adopted by believing and sceptical Christians of all persuasions, as well as New Age seekers, atheists, and even people belonging to other religions than Christianity.

In this article I will describe the institutionalized pilgrim role in more detail, then turn to the therapeutic discourse which is so prominent in the Galicean pilgrimage. Both the role and the discourse can be related to the concept of post-secularity, demonstrating that complex cultural fields such as religion and therapy, become intertwined in new ways through modern pilgrimage. My aim is also to show that churches cooperating in this type of pilgrimage are adapting to the post-secular age, finding a new sort of *raison d'être* in a multi-religious, international world. Here I will refer to the Church of Norway and its role in Norwegian pilgrimage. The latter is modelled upon the Santiago example.

The Camino

A special feature of the Santiago pilgrimage is the deep significance attached to the road itself, generally called the Camino. *El camino* is a Spanish term for 'the way'. The popularity of the Spanish term, which is also used in other languages, is undoubtedly linked to its symbolic potential. Both in physical and metaphorical terms the Santiago pilgrim is a traveller, a person on her way. According to Peter Jan Margry it is the pilgrimage on the Camino which has emphasized the way in modern pilgrimage (Margry 2008). The cathedral service in Santiago city, where the journey usually ends, is part of a total package in which travelling the road is, for a great many people, by far the most important element. Since the 1970s the Camino has developed into a very special social and religious arena attracting many thousands of people every year from all over the world.[2] Although the Camino is represented as a mysterious road, walked by world-famous celebrities such as Paolo Coelho and Shirley MacLaine (see Coelho 2006 and MacLaine 2000), the acts of pilgrimage go-

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2   In 2010 270,961 pilgrims were registered, according to peregrinassantiago.es/esp/
post-peregrinacion/estadisticos/?anio=2010. In addition there are thousands of
unregistered travellers.

ing on there are not as such constituted of belief in miracles and divine forces. The emphasis on the journey and the way distinguishes it from pilgrimages to Lourdes and other sacred places where people hope to be miraculously cured from a physical disease, or blessed by a divine figure. The manner of travelling to such places is often not important. The Norwegian pilgrimage, winding as it does through beautiful scenery and picturesque valleys, is a pale reflection of the Camino phenomenon.[3]

Pilgrimage in Norway

Since the 1990s the state church in Norway (the Church of Norway) has been actively promoting pilgrimage in the country. This is a major shift in attitude for a Lutheran church which abolished pilgrimage and cult of saints in 1536, in the wake of the Reformation. Norway is part of secularized Scandinavia, but nevertheless, adherence to the state church has proved to be quite stable. In 2010 79.2 per cent of the Norwegian population, now numbering 5 million people, were members.[4] While most members still baptize their children and choose the ecclesiastical ritual at funerals, attendance at regular services is quite small. Consequently the church is faced with a constant challenge to increase its members' engagement in church activities, a fact to some degree explaining its pilgrimage enthusiasm. However, there is ample evidence that key ecclesiastical actors are personally inspired by the pilgrim ideal—its identity aspects, its ecumenical potential, its promise of an alternative life style, and its connectedness to the country's Catholic history and cultural heritage (see Andresen 2005, Mikaelsson 2011b).

The institutionalization of Norwegian pilgrimage has gradually developed since the 1990s through an extensive cooperation between the state and local authorities, the Church of Norway, and voluntary organizations. A similar type of collaboration is behind the successful Santiago pilgrimage. The relevance of the state church in this cooperation consists primarily in its links to the country's Catholic past, its medieval churches and monuments as well as the spiritual values incorporated in its architecture, myths, symbols and rituals. Working together for a pilgrim renaissance has led the Church to focus

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3   Statistics state that 240 registered persons have done the pilgrimage to Trondheim in 2011. My reference is Cathrine Roncale, head of *Nidaros pilegrimsgård* in Trondheim, in an email dated 8 November 2011.

4   www. kirken.no.

more on its important share in the nation's cultural heritage, and see itself as a resource meeting various needs in a pluralistic, late modern society. The Church is for instance called upon to collaborate in the creation of local identity through celebrations of saints—until recently almost unthinkable for a Lutheran church (cf. Andresen 2005, Mikaelsson 2005 and 2008).

While pilgrim centres have popped up in several places, the main Norwegian destination is the city of Trondheim in the country's mid-region, whose cathedral once housed the relics of St Olav, a popular saint who attracted pilgrims from many parts of Europe during the Middle Ages (Andresen 2005, Imsen 2003). This cathedral, restored to its former grandeur, is the key destination of many routes through Norway and the other Scandinavian countries, which are now called St Olav's Ways, having been awarded the title of European Cultural Routes in 2010 by the European Council.[5] The routes to Santiago were the first to attain this status in 1987. The European Council considers pilgrimage as a valuable element in European identity construction, and the Camino is popularly called the *Calle Mayor de Europa*. Pope John Paul II has likewise hailed Santiago as a place to celebrate the memory of Europe as a spiritually united continent because of its role as a pilgrimage centre (Voyé 2002: 118–19).[6]

Like its Spanish counterpart, Norwegian pilgrimage can be divided into different categories. A major type is organized on a purely individual basis, and performed by individuals with varying religious affiliation, walking alone or in small groups. Other main types are organized by, for instance, local congregations, schools, or pilgrim organizations. To what extent cultural elements, or prayers and services, are included the programme will differ. Pilgrims are sometimes accompanied by a pilgrim priest for a part of the way, or even the whole length of it.

The pilgrim role

There are several kinds of pilgrims amongst the multitudes on the Camino and the rather more modest numbers heading for Trondheim. Naturally their motives and attitudes differ. However, there is a segment that is especially rel-

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5   www. pilegrim.info.
6   www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Routes/default_en.asp. Identity, on supranational, national, regional, and local levels is a relevant issue in the context of pilgrimage as post-secular practice, but it is too extensive a field to enter into here.

evant in this context. These are the ones who are critical of traditional church religion, or who feel themselves to be estranged from regular worship. Many of them could be placed in the category of church members that 'belong, but do not believe' (see Sutcliffe & Bowman 2000: 3; Voyé 2002: 124–5, 130). Still they enjoy the experience of sleeping in monasteries, visiting churches and walking the historical pilgrim routes. Quite a number are also fascinated by medieval history, religious myth and symbolism. In other words, as a pilgrim you can have a certain involvement with church religion, appreciate some aspects of it, but still keep aloof from it. Identification as a spiritual seeker rather than a Christian believer is likely to be adequate for a great many.[7] In fact, this has been registered by the Santiago authories (see below).

The above sketch is an attempt to delineate a kind of post-secular attitude to church religion which seems typical of many pilgrims such as are, for instance, frequently met with in the Norwegian magazine *Pilegrimen*, issued by the Confraternity of St Jacob, an organization which is neutral as to religion and worldviews.[8] This attitude is good enough for the authorities who have created an institutionalized pilgrim role in Spain and Norway. In the following, the outer conditions for performing this role will be presented.

In addition to a number of routes marked with pilgrim symbols, authorities in both countries have taken some responsibility for providing beds for the night, pilgrim guides and other requisites. In Spain there are plenty of cheap hostels, called *refugios*, which are reserved for pilgrims along the Camino. In both countries pilgrims can have a pilgrim record or passport, in Spain it is called the *credencial*. This is a most interesting document in our particular context as its description on the internet shows:

> [The *credencial*] presupposes that the bearer is making the pilgrimage for spiritual reasons. This does not necessarily mean Roman Catholics and pilgrims will not be asked about their denomination, or even whether they are Christian, although of course historically the pilgrimage itself has meant Christian pilgrimage. Today and in practice, however, the *credencial* covers anyone making the pilgrimage in a frame of mind that is open and searching. (www.csj.org.uk/passport.htm)

7   Cf. Illman 2010: 228, referring to an international research project called 'The Pilgrimage Project: a study of motivations and experiences in sacred space', headed by Dr Miguel Farias at Oxford University. The majority of respondents preferred to identify themselves as spiritual, rather than religious.

8   The Confraternity of St Jacob is the first Norwegian pilgrim organization, founded in 1996.

The *credencial* is printed and issued by the cathedral authorities in Santiago, and made available at points along the Camino. It secures access to the *refugios*, and it should be stamped every day at the *refugio* or some other appointed place. When arriving in Santiago, the pilgrim presents her record at the Pilgrim Office near the cathedral in order to get the diploma, called the *Compostela,* an embellished certificate written in Latin confirming that one's pilgrimage has been completed. There are certain conditions which have to be fulfilled to get the Compostela. Walkers must have travelled at least the last 100 km, cyclists the last 200 km, in one stretch, to qualify. People are asked their motivations for the journey, and those who do not qualify as having a spiritual motivation can have another document, a *certificado*, to attest to their pilgrimage. According to Nancy Frey, the religious motive was amplified to 'spiritual' in the 1990s (Frey 1998: 127).[9] The Norwegian authorities have copied this general arrangement and now pilgrims that have walked the last 100 km to Trondheim can have a diploma called *Olavsbrevet*. A pilgrim passport to be stamped at various points along the routes charts the wanderings.

In this way Spanish authorities and their Norwegian followers have created a pilgrim role which distinguishes the 'real' pilgrims from comfort-seeking tourists, but is inclusive when it comes to religion and worldview, merely requiring at least a vague spiritual motive for the journey. Their organized routes and institutionalized norms enable modern pilgrims to walk in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims and experience a sensual link to the past through their bodily exertion. Pilgrim authenticity is thus primarily attributed to physical exercise,[10] leaving ample room for individual understanding of the journey.

There are commercial and other interests in pilgrimage which prefer an inclusive pilgrim role (cf. Mikaelsson 2010, Selberg 2011, Uddu 2008). But even the churches have reasons to accept it. The kind of self-contained interest in the Christian tradition and its monuments that was characterized as a post-secular attitude open up new possibilities for the churches to communicate with the age in which we live, realizing more and more that secularization does not necessarily imply that people lose interest in spiritual matters. Of course the churches are aware that pilgrimage can be a new way to evangelize

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9   Frey has published her anthropological study of the Santiago pilgrimage in a well-
     known book titled *Pilgrim Stories* (1998).
10   Articles in *Pilegrimen* demonstrate that the question of authenticity engages many
     pilgrims. It is not just what a pilgrimage should be in terms of physical exertion
     and mental outlook, it also concerns the historicity of the chosen pilgrim routes in
     Norway.

(see Frey 1998: 127), but there is more to it than that. Pilgrimage has clearly demonstrated to the Church of Norway that many people who avoid evangelization or preaching are receptive to the mediation of religion in historic sacred places, in architecture and rituals, as well as in nature. Also, the desire to feel connected to the traditions of one's ancestors has become apparent as a contemporary identity issue having spiritual overtones (see Hardeberg & Bjørdal 1999). Summarized in a common saying, pilgrimage has shown the Church of Norway that measures associated with 'a lower treshold and a loftier ceiling' will make the church more relevant and attractive to a wider segment of people. Of course I am speaking in broad terms; there are still groups in the state church that do not fit this description. But there is ample evidence that the church is accepting a new public role as a cultural and spiritual resource able to meet various social and individual needs in contemporary society (see Aagedal 2010). The Church of Norway's function as a comforter of the grieving nation was for instance fully demonstrated after the terrorist acts of 22 July 2011 in Oslo and at Utøya.

In contrast to the external pilgrim role, the inward aspect of it is more open. To a large extent it is up to the individual to create the inward, personal meaning of one's pilgrimage. Frey explains that there is no shared definition of the spiritual journey among Camino pilgrims, but 'it is generally related to this idea of the uncontained, nonstructural, personalized, individual, and direct relationship one has to ultimate reality' (Frey 1998: 31). At this point we should perhaps be wary of the tendency to universalize postmodern or post-secular pilgrims as spiritual seekers looking for profound, transformative experiences. The Compostela's demand for a spiritual motivation is no reliable indicator as to the candidates' real intentions, nor their pilgrim experiences. Granting that many can be placed in the spiritual seeker category as examples of the quest culture Steven Sutcliffe and others are speaking about (Sutcliffe 2000 and 2003), it should as well be emphasized that this category may include a mixed group of devoted Christians, atheists, fitness enthusiasts and heritage tourists.

Nevertheless, a common element in current pilgrim discourse is the emphasis on the inward and outward journeys and the fusion of the two. This is illustrated by the Norwegian princess Märtha Louise, who made a pilgrimage with her husband-to-be in 2002 before the couple were married at the cathedral in Trondheim. The couple wrote a book about it afterwards,[11] and

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11 Due to its celebrity authors and romantic title, *Fra hjerte til hjerte* (From heart to heart, 2002), the book had much more public as well as critical attention than a book of this kind would normally have.

especially the princess's tale is a good example of the pilgrim role I am speaking of—a role which uses the church as framework and source of spiritual nourishment without limiting the individual's freedom of reflection and inspiration. The royal couple were accompanied by a pilgrim priest who seemed to function as a good companion, but hardly as a clerical authority. Apparently their psychological journey was made up of a mix of prayer, fairytale, myth, literature, Celtic Christianity, fantasy, and readings of symbols and signs. The princess displays a characteristic seeker identity when she exclaims that 'I will always be a pilgrim, on an eternal quest for my inner church. My high altar.' (Prinsesse Märtha Louise & Ari Mikael Behn 2002: 5). In retrospect, it signals her now famous preoccupation with alternative spirituality (cf. Kraft 2007 and 2008).

The happy young couple did not go on the pilgrimage for therapeutic reasons. However, a playful twist on a Norwegian fairytale proves their familiarity with the idea of a psychological lack so characteristic of the therapeutic discourse in our time. In an encounter with a nasty troll (!), the bridegroom bravely retorts that they are pilgrims on their way to Trondheim to become whole persons (Prinsesse Märtha Louise & Ari Mikael Behn 2002: 28). The passing comment touches on a major theme in modern pilgrimage, the importance of holism, or the fusion of the outward and inward journeys. This fusion seems to be a vital aspect of its therapeutic function.

Pilgrimage as therapy

Nancy Frey refers to pilgrims who call the Camino *la ruta de la terapia*—the therapy route. This epithet could be amplified into a general concept—any pilgrim route where you move along on foot for a length of time could be termed a therapeutic route. When the journey as such is considered to have therapeutic functions, it generally means that the suffering to be cured is psychological in nature. Walking as a pilgrim provides medicine for the soul—its pains, problems or lacks, including the experience of a spiritual void.

The physical exertion is a crucial element of the mental cure. To find the inner way one has to give priority to bodily experience. Like a number of other scholars,[12] Frey emphasizes the important role of movement which combines physical and mental levels:

12   Consult, for instance, Simon Coleman and John Eade's anthology *Reframing Pilgrimage*: *Cultures in Motion* (2004), or Voyé 2002: 126–7.

> Through the movement of the body, through learning new rhythms
> and perceiving with all the senses, various meanings of the journey be-
> gin to emerge which also relate to the life-worlds of the participants.
> Throughout the journey pilgrims are confronted with personal, physical,
> and mental challenges as well as unexpected acts of kindness and pa-
> tience. . . Pain and the limitless horizon may lead one to a greater sense of
> humility. . .Sleeping on the floor reminds another of how easy it is to live
> with less. . . (Frey 1998: 220.)

According to Frey, the therapeutic pattern seems generally to be constituted by two elements. The first is a keen realization of personal wounds or missing elements in one's everyday life. Divorce, death, losing one's job, alienation from one's body, work, self or society are often the reasons for these wounds or lacks. The second element consists in experiences of renewal or transformation. Therapy as it is experienced on the Camino is very often a gradual process in which you open up to the suffering in your soul while you move along. Relief comes from the regenerative effects of walking, from meetings with nice people, and various impressions of the surroundings. (Frey 1998: 45, 220–1.) Pilgrimage stimulates people to 'rework the past' and 'move towards a renewed future' (Frey 1998: 46, 222). A symbolic act which emerges as therapeutic in many pilgrim accounts, is the practice of carrying stones representing mental burdens. A famous place for the depositing of these burdens on the Camino is marked by the large iron cross (*Cruz de Ferro*), on the highest mountain, which stands 1,504 metres above sea level. Here a heap of stones, jewellery and other personal belongings demonstrate the popularity of this custom. People often bring stones from home for the purpose. This practice is also taken up in Norway.

Pilgrimage and the therapeutic ethos

As Märtha Louise's husband jokingly indicated, even for happy and well-functioning people, pilgrimage can have a therapeutic function. Who has attained the ideal of perfect health and mental balance which reigns in modern society? Compare the complex and idealistic understanding of health expressed in the definition of the World Health Organization:

> Health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and so-
> cial well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO
> 1998).[13]

The state of ideal health is not compatible with problems and wounds, then, and suffering of any kind should be avoided. The WHO definition reflects the enormous scientific, social, commercial and individual preoccupation with health from the perspectives of different professions and interests. In line with this understanding of health, scholars speak about the *therapeutic turn* in our society. The focus on therapy is such that it is reasonable to argue that we live in a therapeutic culture, even a therapeutic state. The cultural theorist Eva Illouz maintains in *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions and the Culture of Self-Help* that therapy in many forms now exceeds national borders and is the basis for a new worldwide discourse about selfhood that has crossed and blurred compartmentalized spheres of modernity (Illiouz 2008: 6). This culture of therapy is seen as the effect of several processes: the dissemination of psychology, individualization, capitalism, and secularization. Secularization in this field means a far-reaching shift from a belief in God-given liberation and support to a belief in an individual self that can handle the challenges of life with the right tools and resources, such as psychotherapy, knowledge, meditation, and alternative therapy (see Madsen 2010: 17). And one may add, pilgrimage. The quest for one's true identity or deeper self, which is a significant aspect of contemporary pilgrimage, thus becomes a process with therapeutic aspects. Ian Reader sums up the contemporary pilgrim renaissance as an 'expression of a quest toward a more autonomous, individualized and personalized spirituality' (Reader 2007: 226).

The addition of 'spiritual' to the list of health indicators can in itself be interpreted as a piece of post-secular evidence. Historically spirituality is interwoven with organized religion and piety, but in the modern world it does not necessarily involve belief in God or a divine order of existence. To place spirituality in the context of health as the WHO does, emphasizes its subjective and human character. If we follow this line of thought, repressed or undeveloped spirituality will result in a diminished quality of life, mental impoverishment or even illness.

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13   Compare the original version from 1948: 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease of infirmity.' In 1998 the WHO added two notable elements, 'state' was now 'a dynamic state' and 'spiritual' a necessary component in complete well-being.

In parallel with the intensive focus on health and therapy is the widely held idea that our type of society creates a lot of problems and ills, including a spiritual drought. Pilgrim discourse is often characterized by a general criticism of modern life while at the same time recommending pilgrimage as a method to cope with the situation. One example of this tendency is the Norwegian psychologist Einar Lunga, an experienced pilgrim who has used pilgrimage as therapy for patients. In a well-known speech from 2007, Lunga maintains that human beings are biologically equipped to be wanderers, and that our natural instinct to walk on foot is suppressed by a motorized lifestyle and all the activities which require that we sit. Another frequent criticism repeated by Lunga, is the time pressure and stress resulting from being ruled by the clock, which entails that our innate rhythms and tempos are suppressed. In contrast, pilgrims must establish their own, voluntary discipline of daily routines, and decide what pains and exertions they are willing to endure. (Lunga 2007: 3.) For Lunga, pilgrimage helps people to realize that the source of one's life lies in one's inner being and that joy of life must come from within (*ibid*.). Lunga's views exemplify the WHO understanding of the spiritual faculty as a constituent part of health. He argues that the discovery of an inner self that accompanies physical movement is a spiritual insight (Lunga 2007: 4). The effect of this awakening is a profound change in perception:

> . . .the world becomes sacred and sacralized, a continuous magical mystery like it was in childhood. The wanderer feels born again, the world is born again. Another human being, another world—a 'conversion'. . .If a person has experienced this breakthrough and discovered the inner dimension of wandering, it will no longer disappear. It enriches your life . . .Without being connected to religion, it is anyway a feeling related to religiosity. (Lunga 2007: 4.)

In a study of the Norwegian magazine *Pilegrimen* I noted that variations of this kind of transformative experience were often reported (Mikaelsson 2011a). Abraham Maslow's well-known idea of 'peak experiences' and Charles Taylor's concept of 'fullness of life' also give clues to the kind of experience many pilgrims report.[14]

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14   Compare Taylor's phrasing: 'We all see our lives, and/or the space wherein we live our lives, as having a certain moral/spiritual shape. Somewhere, in some activity, or condition, lies a fullness, a richness; that is, in that place (activity or condition), life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worth while, more admirable, more what it should be.' (Taylor 2007: 5.)

Both pilgrim accounts and research indicate that pilgrimage helps people in several ways: to recover from suffering, to restore their hopes for the future, and to trigger spiritual experiences of the 'fullness of life'. These are all significant, therapeutic aspects connected to the post-secular pilgrim role as it is established in contemporary Europe.

Concluding remarks

In their book *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (2005), Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead describe the subjective turn in modern culture as a turn 'towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences' away from 'life lived in terms of external or "objective" roles, duties and obligations' (Heelas & Woodhead 2005: 2). The type of holistic journeying described here is an example of this subjective turn. It has a therapeutic character, but interestingly, it is also linked to a new, external, pilgrim role created by ecclesiastical and secular authorities. When they open up to pilgrim seekers and outsiders without, as before, emphasizing to them the importance of conversion and faith in God,[15] the churches have more or less accepted a new role as spiritual therapist. Of course there are many self-identified pilgrims who do not care about the institutional role prepared for them, but this fact does not supersede the importance of the role and its associations with a type of authenticity that emphasizes bodily sensation and historical tradition, and leaves the inner meaning of the experience to the individual.

The pilgrim journey provides a new kind of meeting place for believers, seekers and unbelievers, in which a Christian framework and social *communitas* contribute to a common existential space. In this way pilgrimage becomes a bridge between secular society and the churches. However, allowing for the large variety of people going on pilgrimage, it is as relevant to think of the phenomenon as a religious melting pot, a space for cross-over spiritual experiences. Pilgrimage substantiates Charles Taylor's words that we are 'at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee' (Taylor 2007: 535).

15   Traditional Christian conceptions of sin, remorse, guilt and atonement seem to be relevant to a special category of pilgrim, namely prisoners. According to theologian Leif Gunnar Engedal, such categories function as an 'existential sounding board' for prisoners partaking in pilgrimages to Trondheim which have been arranged by the Church of Norway, prison authorities and the Confraternity of St James since 2006 (Engedal 2010: 60).

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URSZULA PĘKALA

Post-secular religious practices entering traditional religion

Introduction

Nowadays we can observe complex interactions between the religious and secular spheres. Several different processes take place simultaneously: the traditionally religious elements function in the secular sphere as if they were part of secular culture; elements of the secular sphere build a specific kind of post-secular religiosity; finally, this post-secular religiosity influences traditional religions. In this article I will focus on the last stage of these changes. My purpose is to describe and interpret the practices we can observe. Because of the complexity of this issue, I will limit my analyses to examples taken from the Catholic Church in Germany, where this process seems to be as popular as it is paradoxical. But before I present how the entry of post-secular religious practices into traditional Catholicism functions, with the possible reasons for and consequences of these changes, it is necessary to place it into a context of the two other stages mentioned above.

From the religious to the secular sphere

In the Western societies, the elements which we usually associate with religion have become separated from their original context; they move from the religious to the secular sphere. I call this phenomenon 'post-religious secular practices'. It has three forms.

The first form is clearly visible in advertisements. They present a new kind of connection between religion and a variety of everyday activities which usually have no special religious meaning. This is a marketing strategy which aims at suggesting that consumption can satisfy the deepest personal needs which are usually satisfied by religion, such as, for example, the need for personal fulfillment, or a happy life.[1] These religious associations obviously have

1   More about this problem see Miller 2003: 73–106.

274

nothing to do with any genuine religious practice. Nevertheless, they seem to replace religion with a secular alternative or, at least, give consumers the illusion that they can do so. The advertising slogans such as: 'Show yourself. Be yourself' (Smart phone Nokia N9), 'Because you're worth it' (L'Oréal), 'Just do it' (Nike), 'The power of dreams' (Honda), 'Driving is believing' (Hyundai), 'Open your mind' (Smart), 'Move your mind' (SAAB), encourage consumers to buy a car, a new model of mobile phone, use a particular brand of shampoo or lipstick, wear particular clothes, and so forth. There is a connection made between psychological needs and consumption. The hidden message is: possessing or using particular goods determines or proves that one belongs to a particular social group, brings one acceptance or prestige in the environment, makes one feel happy and fulfilled (Sobolewska 2009: 14–15). Another example is the character of Santa Claus, appearing for decades in Coca Cola advertisements. He is modelled on a real historical figure—Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, living in the fourth century and still celebrated in Orthodox Christianity. According to the tradition, Bishop Nicholas took particular care of the poor. Probably the only feature of Saint Nicholas that remains in the character of Santa Claus is that of giving selflessly: Coca Cola marketing specialists use this element to build an association between their product and the positive attitude of giving and sharing, with warm feelings and, obviously, with Christmas (Santa Claus appears in Coca Cola advertisements around Christmas time), which in Western societies is a festival of family, being together and sharing.

The second form of post-religious secular practice is a deliberate use of religious elements or associations in order to attract the attention of consumers by means of provocation. One of the examples might be an advertising poster for Pirelli, referring to the monumental statue of Christ in Rio de Janeiro. The poster shows the panorama of Rio de Janeiro with the place of the Christ statue in the middle. The picture of Rio looks as if it was taken from behind the statue, showing it from the back. But in the place of the statue there is the top Brazilian footballer Ronaldo, imitating Christ's pose. The association with the religious (and in this case also a national) symbol is more than obvious.

The third form of post-religious secular practice I would like to mention is a secular use of former religious objects. Because of the decrease in the number of church visitors in Western Europe, many churches which are no longer used for religious assembles are turned into secular objects, such as restaurants, pubs, stores. For instance, the former St Mary Church in Dublin is nowadays a restaurant, while the Paradiso Club in Amsterdam, similarly, was also once a church.

From the secular sphere to a specific kind of religiosity

I qualify the movement from the secular sphere to a kind of religiosity among the post-secular religious practices. What does the term 'post-secular religious practices' actually stand for? In a society which claims to be secular there appear forms of spirituality, expressed by a concern for integral personal development as the main goal—including body, mind, inwardness and harmony with other people and nature. These make for what is usually called 'well-being'. Such forms of spirituality appear in the space previously filled by traditional religious practices, which also gave the individuals the opportunity to gain personal integrity. Thus, well-being practices with all the associated means of supporting or enabling people to achieve well-being—food, clothes, books on good nutrition or personal development, alternative medicine, coaching, workshops on yoga and so forth—are a significant element of post-secular religious practices. It is not to be overlooked that well-being makes for a lifestyle and has impact on the economy—well-being services constitute a huge market. The market enters the spiritual realm and spirituality appears on the market, as it becomes a consumer good: consumers pay for the means to a positive spiritual experience, healing and strengthening the body (Davie 2007: 230–1).

The word 'post' in the term 'post-secular religious practices' does not mean 'after' in the sense of some new era replacing the age of secularism. We cannot observe such a change; rather we notice traditional religions and secularism co-existing simultaneously. The post-secular religious practices, as I understand them, represent forms of spirituality which are making an appearance in the secular context, where no religious practices were present before. At the same time, the society participating in these practices does not cease to claim to be secular. This post-secular spirituality is not a return, or a conversion to a traditional, established religion such as Christianity or Islam—that is an important aspect of the post-secular religious practices. It seems that in this particular context the term 'religious' can mean any kind of spiritual activity. But to what extent is it appropriate to talk about religiosity with respect to the well-being practices? Does religion require a reference to some transcendent reality, or doesn't it? Can these post-secular religious practices create an alternative to secularism? These are questions which cannot be answered in this short article, but will have to be asked in further research on post-secular religious practices. Even though that is not a very precise term, at the moment we have no better one, which could describe this phenomenon. On the other hand, the term is clear enough to be used in this analysis. However, because

of the aforementioned problems with the definition of the post-secular religious practices, in this article I will use this term as relating to the examples in which the religious aspect is explicitly present.

From post-secular religiosity to traditional religion

Having briefly shown the interactions between secular and religious spheres, I can now proceed to the analysis of the main topic of this article: post-secular religious practices which are entering the traditional religions. As it was mentioned in the introduction, I focus on the example of the Catholic Church in Germany. However, similar processes also occur in other Christian communities.

The phenomenon itself

Many Catholic communities offer their members, as well as people they want to attract, forms of spiritual support which exceed the traditional Christian practices (by the latter I mean for example meditation on the Gospel, worship, the liturgy, the sacrament of Confession). They offer spiritual health and well-being practices as we know them from post-secular spirituality, for example, yoga, mindfulness, healthy nutrition. This phenomenon may have two forms: the new post-secular elements are introduced and integrated into the old, traditional Catholic practices, or the traditional Catholic elements are changed into forms of 'post-secular' ones.

Let me present three examples. The first one is the Zen courses offered in some Benedictine centres as a part of the heritage of meditation—according to the organisers they are essential for everyone, independently of the religious and cultural context. The most prominent representative of this stream in Germany is a Benedictine, Father Willigis Jäger, who led the Benediktushof spirituality centre until his retirement in 2007.[2] According to its web page, the centre offers courses and workshops on Zen and Christian contemplation as ways of leading individuals to answers to their existential questions. The centre wants to be religiously neutral. But does it really work? The centre sells workshops on Zen, originally an integral part of Buddhism, under a Christian label—the place is a former Benedictine monastery, founded in the eighth century, as is emphasised by the leaders of the centre. The approach to

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2 http://www.west-oestliche-weisheit.de/benediktushof.html (accessed on 25 October 2011).

Christian contemplation is questionable from the theological point of view. According to the centre leaders, contemplation is something individuals can learn on courses in the same way they might learn any other skills they want to acquire. The centre's web page informs us: 'Following the tradition of Christian mysticism practised over centuries, contemplation involves first and foremost sitting in silence, with mindful walking, one-to-one conversations, body prayer and incantation as further elements.'[3] This approach is actually not to be reconciled with Christian understandings of contemplation, which the Christian theology describes as a gift from God to a human being having a deep relationship with him. Therefore it is not something that could be reached by sitting in silence or mindful walking.

The offer of Benediktushof is a typical example of the phenomenon explored in this article. On the one hand, the post-secular religious practice, which is the Zen meditation extracted from its original religious background and treated merely as a method of meditation, an exercise for body and mind, enters the Christian context, which is the prayer and meditation tradition of the old Benedictine monastery. On the other hand, the practices of Christian contemplation and mysticism are reduced to post-secular forms, since they are presented (separated from the whole mystic tradition) as something everyone who seeks internal silence, balance and peace can learn on workshops, independently of the religious background. However, the Willigis Jäger's centre distinguishes between Zen meditation and Christian contemplation, while for example the Benedictine Abbey at Beuron offers seminars on 'Christian Zen-Meditation': 'The courses employ the old Christian tradition of prayer in silence and stimulation by Eastern experiences (Zen-style).'[4] The combination offered at Beuron seems very questionable from both Christian and Buddhist points of view. There are two fundamental problems with such an amalgam. Firstly, Christian anthropology is different from the Buddhist one. According to Christian anthropology the human being is created by God as a unique being, endowed with the vocation to a personal relationship with God himself; the identity of each human being is different from the divine one and remains so forever, even after death, because the final aim of human existence is resurrection. For Buddhism a human being is one of many incarnations of the element belonging to the absolute principle of the universe. The aim of

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3   http://willigisjaeger-foundation.com/kontemplation.html (accessed on 25 October 2011).

4   http://www.erzabtei-beuron.de/quelle/exerzitien.php#meditation (accessed on 27 October 2011, my translation).

human existence is to liberate this element from the body and let it return to the absolute. There is no idea of a preservation of any individual identity. Secondly, meditation is closely connected to anthropology—if human existence, according to each of the two religions, has different aims, meditation has different sense as well. The purpose of Christian meditation is to meet interpersonally the living God, whereas Buddhist meditation is a step on the path to unity with the Absolute in order to break free from the cycle of incarnation. Actually, the combination of Zen and Christian meditation is impossible at the doctrinal level and therefore also at the practical level. Otherwise it would mean a loss of the specific features of the both elements—the Christian and the Buddhist one.

Another example concerns the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, a programme of spiritual retreat based on meditation on the Gospel and on a personal relationship the participant has with God. The purpose of Ignatian exercises is to discover one's vocation, to make important decisions, or just to intensify one's religious life. What is offered nowadays under the label 'Ignatian exercises'? As an example, the web page of the spirituality centre in the diocese of Mainz reads as follows: 'The participants should perceive their life, their environment, but also the Gospel with all senses. The body experiences—for example euphony or yoga—and the attention paid to the feelings, impressions and psychological condition are integral parts of the exercise course.'[5] In practice the meditation on the Gospel may be immensely reduced. Instead of helping with the meditation of the Gospel, the person leading the retreat introduces relaxation exercises and other activities for increasing the awareness of the body and senses. These practices and the emphasis on psychological conditions do not belong to the Ignatian spiritual tradition, but they rather constitute elements of the well-being practices. What happened to the exercises of Ignatius in their modern German version is *par excellence* an introduction of post-secular religious practices into a traditionally Catholic practice.

The next example is the fascination with Hildegard of Bingen. This Benedictine nun, living in the twelfth century, was one of the most influential women of the Middle Ages. She was a mystic, composer and writer, but today Hildegard is associated rather with her natural medicine methods and healthy cuisine than with her spiritual heritage. The church institutions themselves contribute to this situation by offering workshops and courses on fasting and

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5   http://www.bistummainz.de/einrichtungen/bildungshauser/kardinal_volk/zentrum/ GROSSEEXERZITIEN/vortrag.html (accessed on 25 October 2011, my translation).

good nutrition as practised by Hildegard. The religious aspect of fasting is present only in the background. The main purpose of these events, open not only to engaged Christians, is the harmony of body and mind; in other words, well-being—as for example during the fasting week for women according to the methods of Hildegard which is offered by the diocese of Freiburg.[6]

However, the popularity of Hildegard's healing practices reaches beyond the scope of the Church. To some extent, Hildegard undergoes the same process as mentioned above in the case of Saint Nicholas; she becomes a master of the healing diet, offered among many others,[7] and a brand name for good nutrition, independent of, or even in isolation from her other religious activities. Some manufacturers and shops are specialised in 'Hildegard's' products—for example spelt, which is the basis of good nutrition according to Hildegard, or different types of herbal tea or spices. One of the companies advertises itself on the web page as 'the only manufacturer of the authentic Hildegard products'.[8]

Causes

The most interesting question is: why do the Catholic communities integrate these post-secular practices into traditional religiosity, or let their own traditional features become a kind of post-secular practice? Did they cease to find in their own tradition the resources for reaching inner harmony and spiritual health? Why do they look for these resources beyond their own spheres, or why do they try to appear not (only) as one of the biggest religious traditions, but also as one of the suppliers of well-being? I identify two kinds of cause for this situation, which are both closely connected—causes which can be identified as being outside the Catholic Church and those which are present within. The Church is a part of society, therefore influenced by it. It experiences internal changes, which are partially consequences of the interpretation of its own sources, continually renewed across the centuries, and partially as a reaction to the changes in the world around it.

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6   http://www.erzbistumfreiburg.de/html/aktuell/aktuell_u.html?t=&&cataktuell=955%7C957&m=24400&artikel=9404&stichwort_aktuell=&default=true (accessed on 25 October 2011).

7   See e.g. the offer of the non-medical practitioners: http://www.richtig-heilfasten.de/hildegard-von-bingen-fast en.html (accessed on 25 October 2011).

8   http://www.hildegard.de/ (accessed on 25 October 2011, my translation).

Causes outside of Catholicism

The first cause is consumer culture. Consumer culture is a way of life which involves buying and selling goods or services. It may be defined as 'social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets' (Arnould 2006: 605). The consumer culture concerns everybody—both non-religious people and church members. It influences religiosity by making it more superficial. Religious beliefs, symbols and practices are turned into abstract elements which can easily be extracted from their original religious context and function as if they are separated from this context[9] (Miller 2003: 29–30).

The attitude of the consumer society takes in religion, which becomes one of the goods available for helping one to discover one's real identity; to achieve harmony with God (in whatever sense the term 'God' might be used) and with other people. Such a religion does not require any effort, sacrifice or conversion. It is just something that makes people feel better; one among a number of other spiritual therapies.

Just like religious desire, consumer desire represents a typically human longing for something more—neither of them can be satisfied. Actually, the two desires have the same root, but different objects. In the Christian tradition, this unlimited desire should be redirected from the earthly sphere to God, who is the only one able to fulfil it (contrary to the earthly goods). In case of the consumer desire this redirection does not occur. Instead, the desire keeps seeking its fulfillment in new goods—material objects, power, fame, career, delight. The hope of finding fulfillment some day is stronger than the past experience of not having been able to find it yet (Miller 2003: 126–8).

Consumer culture also presents another interesting paradox. Most modern consumers would agree that charity works are something good and necessary in our world (the Catholic Church in Germany is famous for this kind of activity). But how to bring together consumption and charity? Is it part of an authentic will to do something selflessly or is it rather merely one of the ways available to a consumer to feel better? An individual can make a money transfer to a charity organisation in order to consume this positive feeling of having done a good thing.[10]

9   Cf. the examples above.
10   For similar paradoxes see Miller 2003: 16–19.

The second external cause of religious practices entering traditional Catholicism is that religion becomes an object of individual choice. This process is very clearly noticeable in the United States. It is described by the rational choice theory (RCT): 'The theory itself is relatively simple: it postulates that individuals are naturally religious (to be so is part of the human condition) and will activate their religious choices, just like other choices, in order to maximize gain (however conceptualized) and to minimize loss' (Davie 2007: 69). According to Grace Davie, RCT is as crucial for the United States as is the secularisation theory for Europe. Davie claims that in Europe thinking about the church (and religion generally) as an institution is still present in both the church and society. Therefore the category of institutional affiliation matters for the church members. Europeans do not see their religious institutions as enterprises competing for customers on a spiritual marketplace, but as institutions for the common good (Davie 2007: 12). But on the other hand, the tendency to believe without institutional belonging increases in Europe. Thus the tendency to choose freely any form of religiosity appears there as well (Davie 2007: 76). More and more people leave the church in order to gain more space for individual spirituality. This trend was emphasised by about 240 German (or German speaking) professors of Catholic theology who signed a 'Memorandum' calling for urgent reform of the Church in February 2011.[11] Catholicism is more often associated with an institution than with spiritual life. It also might be the reason for which people living in Germany, a country where the Christianity is the major religion,[12] seek spirituality outside of Christianity, for example in Buddhism or esotericism.

The popularity of esotericism, which includes a mix of religious elements, superstitions, spiritualism, meditation and therapies for body and mind, is the third cause of the aforementioned process. This stream becomes very strong on the spiritual market (not only as an idea, but also as good business in the form of the books and diverse artifacts or workshops on sale). This esotericism is seen as being in very serious competition with the Church in the field of spiritual and physical healing, or the experience of salvation, liber-

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11   http://www.memorandum-freiheit.de/ (accessed on 26 October 2011).

12   In 2006 in Germany, a country of 83.27 million inhabitants, there were 25.7 million Catholics, 25.1 million Lutherans, 1.5 million members of Christian free churches, 1.4 million Orthodox Christians, 23.8 million people with no religious belonging— a number almost as high as each of the two biggest churches. 4.77 million were subordinated to other religions—Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, new religions, esotericism. Religionswissenschaftlicher Medien- und Informationsdienst e.V. http://www.remid.de/index.php?text=info _zahlen_grafik (accessed on 25 October 2011).

ation and any kind of spiritual support. It has already influenced the thinking of Church members—for example there are Catholics who do not see any contradiction between the hope for reincarnation and a belief in resurrection (Claussen 2006: 134–6).

The fourth cause is the very popular idea of personal development which is connected to contemporary individualism. This idea can be considered to be an integral part of well-being practices. Its purpose is to grant an individual a harmonised, integrated personality, to be able to reach the most important life goals (professionally as well as personally) by means of coaching and personal training. The number of people interested in using these practices, as well as those offering the practices continues to increase. Personal development appears on the spiritual market as a secular idea. It is focused on the individual, with no relation to God, or any transcendent reality. It does not mean that the idea of personal development itself is foreign to the religion, even though it is expressed in different terms. The secular term of personal development could be used to describe spiritual growth in its Christian meaning—including personal integrity, living in a deep relationship with God and other people, developing personal virtues and struggling against weaknesses (sins). But Christianity and the Catholic Church are hardly ever associated with the opportunity for personal growth.

Causes inside Catholicism

The first cause inside Catholicism for the offering of well-being practices by Catholic institutions is the understanding of the Church's mission. The mission of the Church according to herself is to proclaim the Gospel and gain new disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19). Therefore it means that the Church grows by gaining new adherents. Today we no longer see such a rapid growth of the Church as in the first centuries of her existence; on the contrary, in Western Europe the Catholic Church is losing members. In the case of Germany the number of Catholics who have decided to leave the Church has doubled in the last three years.[13] Thus the concern of the Church is nowadays not only to follow the words of Jesus in order to gain new disciples, but also to retain a potentially high number of the present members. Among the German Catholics the longing for full churches; thinking of the Church in number categories, is still present, even though notable voices say that it is quality, not quantity that matters. In Germany the number of Church members is also important for another reason, which has nothing to do with evangelisation.

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13   http://www.kirchenaustritt.de/statistik/ (accessed on 26 October 2011).

The Catholic (as well as the Lutheran) Church in Germany is financed from obligatory taxes paid by citizens who declare their belonging to the Church. The decrease of members can lead in the future to significant financial problems for the Church.

Consciously or unknowingly, the Catholic Church becomes a part of the spirituality and well-being market and struggles for 'customers'. This struggle is crucial, not only for spiritual, but also for economic survival. In this struggle the church tries to show that Catholicism is not a burden but a support, that it can provide substantial benefits and that it represents not only an old, historic tradition, but that it could be topical and attractive for modern people. The inclusion of post-secular well-being practices into the church's 'offer' constitutes one aspect of this attitude. Paradoxically, this process in the Church in Germany does not mean that the Church would be really ready to become just one of a number of possible options on the spiritual market.

Another reason for well-being practices gaining supporters in the Church is the contemporary way in which the Catholic liturgy is celebrated. For many Catholics the liturgy seems to be incomprehensible, fossilised and monotonous. On the one hand, especially the lay Catholics complain that the liturgy offers them too few possibilities to engage and has no connection to their everyday problems; they understand the liturgy as old-fashioned ritual. On the other hand, the priests seem to have lost the sense of the liturgy—they do not explain the meaning of liturgical symbols and gestures, fail to point to the connections with everyday life which could be found in the liturgy. The well-being practices seem to offer more in this area—they refer to the practical aspects of life and allow for various forms of personal engagement.

Consequences for Catholicism

The entry of the post-secular religious practices into traditional Catholicism in Germany is very interesting for research, not only as a single phenomenon in the Church practice, but also because it is connected to the self-understanding of the Church and her attitude towards her own tradition. In other words, it exposes ongoing complex changes inside the Church. The fact that the post-secular practices can be attractive for the Church has several causes, as has been presented above. Yet, if that phenomenon is perceived together with other changes taking place in the Church, the consequences arising from the current situation will be remarkable.

We can observe that Catholicism loses its specific features, becomes more and more similar to the world surrounding it as a result of a simplification or the elimination of some of its traditions and practices on the one hand and

by offering practices which are also offered outside the Church (often without any requirement of institutional affiliation and obligations, which can be seen as an advantage) on the other hand. Although bringing the post-secular practices into the Church is not the exclusive cause of this process, it is strengthened by such practices.

Let me point to two examples from the German Church of the loss of her specific features. The first and maybe the most remarkable example is the liturgy. As I mentioned above, many Catholics are no longer aware of its complex meaning. Therefore, for example, some prayers (e.g. the *Lamb of God*), are being removed from the Mass as unintelligible. Often, one of the readings from the Bible is also removed or replaced by some other texts or a longer sermon. Another example could be the fact of neglecting one of the crucial topics of Christian faith—reconciliation and forgiveness connected to the Christian notion of sin. The principle of reconciliation appears at the social and political levels (e.g. reconciliation between Germany and Poland, or Germany and France after World War II), but in reference to the personal relationship between God and man, or among people, it is almost absent. The Sacrament of Confession, which according to the Catholic faith is an opportunity to reconcile with God and receive his forgiveness, disappears from German Catholic churches because more and more people (including the priests) cease to regard it as important as it used to be a few decades ago.

Since the Second Vatican Council, openness towards the contemporary world and dialogue with it has been one of the leading ideas of the whole Catholic Church.[14] One of the aims of the Council was to make the Church's message more understandable and topical to modern society. However, this openness, according to the Council, does not ever mean a loss of specific Catholic features. Adapting the well-being practices, as we know them from the post-secular context, or modelling the Church's own traditional elements to forms of such practices, may be seen as an example of that openness and dialogue, but it can also bring a risk for the clarity of the Church's mission which should be—according to her own sources—the proclamation of the Gospel.

The time when the Catholic Church played a leading social, political and cultural role in Europe has definitely passed. Therefore the Church looks for a new role and new ways of presenting herself in the society—it is comprehen-

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14   The most significant document of the Council concerning this matter is the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 'Gaudium et spes' from December 7, 1965.

sible and belongs to the church's self-understanding according to the Council. As I mentioned above, Catholicism becomes just one of the offers on the spiritual market—it is undergoing this process, regardless of the fact that it is not in accordance with the purpose of the Church itself. When the Church ceases to be an obvious part of society, or to represent an obvious world-view, it can create a question mark (Claussen 2006: 40–1), but only if it retains its identity.

The Catholic Church assesses consumer culture negatively. Pope John Paul II expressed his concern about the consumer lifestyle in his Message for the Celebration of World Peace Day in 1999.[15] Theologians also criticise consumer culture—from a practical perspective, as a social phenomenon (Gay 1998), or from the ideological aspect (Ward 2000, Long 2000). In my opinion, one of the tasks for the Church today is to analyse deeply consumer culture, not only seeing it as a negative phenomenon, but also as a new circumstance the Church has to face. Then the 'offer' has to respond to this new situation.

I also think that another important task for the Church ministry nowadays is to realise who are the people coming to the church, as well as who those remaining on the outside are. What do they look for? Do they really seek what the church 'offers'? In the United States we can talk about a generation of seekers—people who appreciate experience rather than faith, who look for individual fulfillment, who do not trust religious institutions, although they long for a community which would suit them; at the same time, they negotiate the conditions and limits of their religious affiliation before they engage and they do not hesitate to change their affiliations (Roof 1993: 8, 259–60). There are seekers in Germany as well. The well-being practices implemented into the Church's 'offer', which are not directly connected to the Catholic tradition, can somehow meet their needs, because they are not as binding as, for example, the Sacraments. But do these practices make it possible for the Church to present the Catholic tradition and faith as they really are? What will happen to those who want to learn something essential about Catholicism? Will they find the answers they look for?

15   http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_14121998_xxxii-world-day-for-peace_en.html (accessed on 26 October 2011).

Conclusion

The issue of this article is the phenomenon of the post-secular religious practices entering traditional Catholicism, shown in the example of Germany. An exhaustive analysis was impossible in such a short form, but the aim of the article is actually to sketch the phenomenon itself with its complex causes and possible consequences.

It is clearly visible how paradoxical the situation of the post-secular society is. People are looking for some kind religiosity or spirituality. Catholicism realises that the post-secular forms of religiosity are very popular and that many people choose them instead of the traditional Church. It could offer them spirituality based on ages of experience. But instead of making its own spiritual tradition competitive on the spiritual market, Catholicism seems to offer Christianised post-secular goods, or its own traditional elements represented in a secularised form. It seems difficult to predict how it will all end. However, we observe an interesting encounter and interaction between an 'old' religion and a new religiosity, which will certainly have impact on further presence of the Church in the society.

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OUTI POHJANHEIMO

The enrichment of magical thinking through practices among Reiki self-healers[1]

Prologue: in the field

A whispering voice with tone of solemn affirmation broke the silence: 'you have now received your first Reiki tuning.' A group of eight people were sitting still, their chairs in a line, holding their hands in the *Gassho* position.[2] The owner of the voice, the teacher of the Reiki course, started to speak again. 'Spirits of all kinds were filling the air as I did the tuning.[3] It was almost like a rush hour in the city of Helsinki, so crowded with spirits was the space.' She told us that some of these spirits stepped out and took their positions behind the people participants. 'These spirits might be your personal guides on the Reiki-path, or they might have some other personally significant meaning to you.'

Everybody received their own spiritual guides; some got two of them. The spirits represented well-known mythological figures such as Merlin, or characters from different religious traditions, such as the Archangel Michael. Some were just 'ordinary folk', such as the spirits of an old man and a little girl. Some spirits were more like an attribute as pure lightness, or just vague beings; one was simply 'a green creature'.[4]

The Reiki Master had started the 45-minute long ritual by beating on a big shamanic drum. She walked around and stopped behind each of us by turn.

2   In the *Gassho* position palms are together and fingers are pointing upwards. The position is used when praying or when greeting in Japan and in various Buddhist traditions and among western yoga practices where it is better known by the name of *Namaste*.
3   The word 'tuning' is my own translation from the Finnish word *viritys*, which means something like 'not in balance' (as with a musical instrument) and needing to be brought into balance. In English Reiki literature and in scholarly studies the word 'attunement' is used. See, for example, Macpherson 2008.
4   Field diary Reiki 1/2010.

Everyone was asked to sit comfortably and to keep their eyes closed or half-closed. Listening to the drumming and feeling the resonance of the drum roll in the body created a sense of a magical space, partitioning off the big gymnasium, in which the course was taking place. When the drumbeat stopped, the sound of harmonic music arose from the flat-top in the background.

The tuning itself looked like a mime in which the Reiki Master was shaping the air and trying to untie some invisible knots. At times, she pushed and pulled the air upwards and downwards, then twirled the air above, in front of, and behind the participants, one after another. Twice she touched the participants. First she took the hands of a person, opened them so that they made the shape of a bowl, whirled the air over it, blew into the hands and then closed the hands back into the *Gassho* position. It looked as if she had transferred some transparent essence into the hands of the person. In the final part of the tuning the Reiki Master touched each of the participants by putting her hands on their shoulders. Some reported afterwards that her hands felt ice-cold; others felt them to be hot. These two acts of concrete touch helped the participants to recall and outline their impressions. The reminiscences of the others might also help to recall one's own impressions, although this recollection could also be an act of mimicry. For example, a vision of one big eye was reported by several of the participants. Also visions of colours and pictures were reported, as well as the hearing of sounds and feeling bodily sensations.

After everybody had verbalised her, or his, experience of the initiation, the teacher showed us the first Reiki symbol: *Cho-Ku-Rei*. According to the preceding lessons, it was necessary to tune the channels before the Reiki symbols could work as vehicles of healing. Basically, the Reiki healing energy is said to be ready to operate under two conditions. For one thing, the channels have to be opened up by the Reiki Master, and for another, a definite symbol is needed to activate the Reiki energy through the tuned channels. *Cho-Ku-Rei* is the symbol used when healing oneself or others by means of physical contact. The symbol was enacted first by drawing it on paper, and then in the air. In healing practice, the symbol is drawn on the healer's palms. The other symbol was given the day after the tuning. It was called *Sei Hei Ki*, and it is designed for use when healing emotional states or attitudes.[5] We were told that it could be too much for somebody to get two tunings in one day. We were also reminded to drink plenty of water during the weekend, as it is believed to help the energies to flow.

5   In the next stage of Reiki three more symbols are given. With the aid of these symbols the Reiki-trainer is said to be able to heal regardless of time and space.

The first symbol to be learned, *Cho-Ku-Rei*.
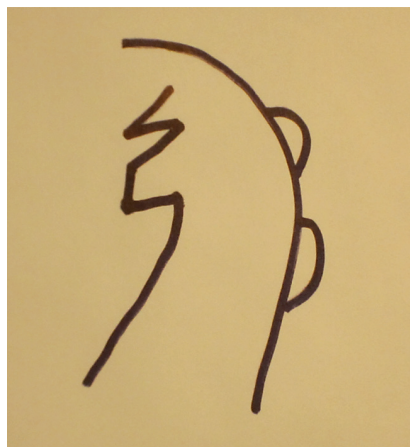
The symbol when healing mind, *Sei He Ki*.

The lessons before the tuning prepared the trainees for the magical act. Questions such as where does Reiki energy come from? what kind of energy is it? and what are the benefits of practising Reiki? were on the agenda. We were told that Reiki came to the western world via Hawaii. A Hawaiian-born Japanese woman, Hawayo Takata (1900–80) learned the philosophy and practice of Reiki in Japan (1935–7) under the guidance of Chujiro Hayashi (1880–1940), who was one of the first students of Usui Mikao (1865–1926), the founder of the Reiki symbols.[6] The importance of lineage is emphasised among Reiki Masters (teachers) and practitioners. At the head of the lineage is the founder of Reiki, Mikao Usui, and in the Western lineage then comes Chujiro Hayashi, and Haway Takata follows. Finnish Reiki Masters usually have at least five names in the lineage before them.

6   There are different interpretations of the historical origins of Reiki. Some practitioners espouse more esoteric interpretations, others focus on the techniques (hand-positions, symbols, tuning the channels) which Usui Mikao passed on to Hawayo Takata. Some followers of Mikao Usui have regenerated Reiki on the basis of their own experiences, others have respectfully devoted themselves to Usui Mikao's work by continuing the tradition according to his original instructions. But all the different branches of Reiki represent one of two major traditions: the traditional Japanese Reiki and Western Reiki. The difference between these traditions is said to lie in the exercise of intuition and meditation, which are more typical for Japanese Reiki. In Japan, there are nowadays six Reiki lineages independent of Usui's Reiki Healing Society. In this article the detailed background knowledge of the history of Reiki and the different lineages of teachings are not relevant to the analysis.

The meaning of the word 'reiki' comprises of two elements based on two words the meanings of which are then united. *Rei* means spiritual and *ki* means life force.[7] Reiki is *par excellence* a healing method based on the belief that there is a universal healing energy which can be channelled through the hands. It is a common belief among Reiki practitioners that the energy in question is actually the purest loving energy in the whole cosmos. People worked with it thousands of years ago, for example in ancient Egypt, and then it was forgotten.[8] According to this belief, such energy is 'dormant' within us, and has to be reactivated. Once activated through initiation, it is in use for the rest of one's life.

The Reiki teacher[9] of this weekend course was pedagogically very skilful; a talented speaker, supportive and inclusive. Her attitude was positive and she performed in a lively manner. She spoke in dialect. Her appearance was folksy and accessible. She was not normative, but rather seemed flexible in relation to the different interpretations concerning Reiki. She rather encouraged us to use intuition when practising Reiki.[10]

She told us stories which were easy to remember either due to one, exceptional element or first-hand experience. For example, she told us the story of a lawnmower and a woman who called her one day and asked: 'is it really true that you can give Reiki to anything?' 'Yes', the Reiki teacher answered. After a while the phone rang again, and the previous questioner said that she had just used Reiki on the lawnmower, 'and it works'. Many similar narratives were told. They all included concrete problems which were then solved by means of Reiki energy. 'It works' seem to be the best evidence of the authenticity of pure Reiki healing energy. She also told us about very touching, traumatic events that had happened to her. These stories were also easy to remember as they affected everyone present. The unspoken message beyond these sad stories

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7   The original meaning of word 'reiki' has also become a matter of speculation.

8   Such narratives of 'a lost paradise' or 'a golden age long ago' are well-known in many religious traditions.

9   Reiki teachers have gone through first, second and third stages of Reiki initiations before they are able to teach others.

10   The concept of intuition is very popular in everyday speech and among spiritual healing practices. Usually intuition means, in these contexts, a kind of pure and genuine knowledge within us. The source of intuitive knowledge is either in one's own religious tradition, or it might be channelled through some entity from outer space (for example God, the Holy Ghost, a cosmic entity, a Reiki spirit). The easiest way to use intuition is to just trust in thoughts that come to mind in relaxed circumstances. (Field diary 1/2010.)

was 'if she can survive happily through such difficult ordeals, then Reiki must be a very powerful tool'.

The Reiki teacher also told us some examples of when she herself had 'certainly been in the wrong mood and had not been able to even think about Reiki'. In that way she emphasised that Reiki might not work if one is not in a well-balanced state of mind. She counselled us to keep Reiki on our mind also after the course. 'The challenge I am facing every day is how to integrate these subtle, positive practices into everyday living with children, and home life.'

Reiki

The spread of Reiki has been rapid in the Western world since 1980, when Hawayo Takata died. She kept the Reiki symbols in secret and passed on the teachings of Reiki only as an oral tradition. Takata initiated 22 Reiki Masters, who in turn have initiated several new Reiki Masters. The first Finnish Reiki Master started her courses as early as 1985. It is estimated that there are tens of thousands of trainers in Finland, and millions all over the world.[11] Nowadays the symbols and detailed instructions of the hand positions along with illustrative pictures are available to all via many Reiki handbooks and web pages.[12] Some books give a step-by-step description of how the initiation into Reiki mastery is done. Still, the tunings of the Reiki channels have to be made by the Reiki Master. It cannot be self-made.

Training in traditional Reiki has three degrees (levels). No special background or credentials are needed to receive training, but the preceding levels have to be performed before proceeding to the next level. The prices of weekend courses vary between 200 and 500 euros in Finland. Personal guidance for becoming a Master costs 1,000–2,000 euros a year. It includes several personal meetings with a Reiki Master, and becoming a Master can take some years.

11 Unofficial estimates of trainees vary, but according to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, which included a comprehensive survey of CAMs (Complementary and Alternative Medicines) used by Americans, more than 1.2 million adults had used an energy healing therapy, such as Reiki, in the previous year.

12 The first book in English was William Lee Rands's *Reiki: The Healing Touch*, published in 1980. The first Reiki book by a Japanese Reiki Master (Hiroshi Doi) *Modern Reiki Method for Healing* was translated and published in English in 2000.

In this article, Reiki is an example of a spiritually based healing context, which offers an entry into the magical thinking through the ritual initiation. There are several practices like Reiki in the field of new spirituality. Their backgrounds are situated in a variety of religious traditions, although many religious ideas in the field are based on assimilation of ideas and practices familiar in Eastern religious traditions.[13]

Why is Reiki so particularly famous in the field? It would seem that Reiki is very flexible and easily integrated to other practices. Several persons I have met in the field who have practised or are practising Reiki have usually mixed it with elements from other healing practices.[14] One factor, furthermore, which explains the popularity of Reiki has to do with healing. Healing, as well as illness and sickness, involving pain and relief from pain, are universal experiences felt by everyone. Complementary and alternative ways of healing are as popular among ordinary folk now as they have been throughout the history of medicine. Even medical nursing staff participate in Reiki courses in their leisure time. One reason for the popularity might also be that Reiki courses are open to everybody. Everybody can learn to heal. After initiation, participants are promised, and believed, to be rewarded for the ability to heal themselves and those near to them with the help of cosmic energy.

The study

In this article I study what I call the enrichment of magical thinking among Reiki self-healers. By the term 'enrichment', I refer to an observable thickness (or density) of spontaneous reasoning going along lines of magical trains of thought. This includes, for example, assumptions of agency and magical contagion.

At first my research interests focused on intuitive presumptions beyond expectations of healing in general. When in the field, I soon realised that intuitive thinking prevailed over reasoning and behaviour. Actually, it looked like the intention was to stimulate one's mind towards intuitive thinking,

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13 Overview studies concerning the new spirituality (or New Age) include contributions by, for example, Wouter J. Hanegraaff (1996) Paul Heelas (1996) Meredith McGuire (1998), Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas (2000) and Steven Sutcliffe (2003).

14 Besides observation of Reiki courses, my ethnographic data includes notes and material from mind–body–spirit festivals in Finland (*Minä Olen -messut* 2001, 2009, 2010, 2011, *Hengen ja tiedon messut* 2008, 2009, 2011).

and vice versa, to relieve the mind from analytical and reflective thinking. New questions followed: What were the features that encourage intuitive and magical thinking during Reiki courses? How did the routine performance of magical thoughts happen? What was the impetus to continue practising magical thinking?

My theoretical frame of reference goes back to studies about the architecture of mind, and especially those concerning the duality of mind, known as two minds theory, or dual-process theory. My approach is based on latest experimental findings in cognitive and social psychology concerning both intuitive, magical thinking and reflective, analytical thinking[15] (Chaiken & Trope 1999; Epstein 1994; Epstein & Pacini 1999; Evans 1989, 2008, 2010; Evans & Over 1996; Hammond 1996; Kahneman 2011; Lieberman 2003; Nisbett *et al*. 2001; Reber 1993; Sloman 1996; Stanovich 1999). In the study I mix qualitative data and analysis with a quantitative frame of reference. My study belongs to the field of the cognitive science of religion (henceforth CSR), which is a relatively new multidisciplinary research programme.[16]

The analytical frame of reference includes three stages, or steps. The first stage is the 'entry into the magical world', the second is the 'acquisition of magical skills', and the third is the 'development of magical expertise'. This three-step model is actually analogous with the general characteristics of skill acquisition (see Fitts 1954, Fits & Posner 1967, Anderson 2000), which is the model used in the study of the cognitive structure of expert performance. The study of cognitive learning structures and acquisition of skills is often focused on technical skills and the automation of skills until the competence in question is acquired (as for example in learning to drive a car). The steps of the skill-learning model are; 1) the cognitive stage, 2) the associative stage and 3) the autonomous stage.

The famous '10,000 Hour Rule' is a research finding in the field. According to this rule, it takes approximately 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to master a skill (Ericsson 1996, Ericsson *et al*. 2006). In the study, conducted in Berlin 1993, K. Anders Ericsson and his colleagues divided students into three

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15   Cognitive and social psychology have both studied the same subject, unaware of each other until 2006 when Jonathan St. B. T. Evans and Keith Frankrish organised the first major conference 'In Two Minds: Dual-process Theories of Reasoning and Rationality' and brought together scholars from different disciplines to discuss the contributions to dual-process theory.

16   The history and the developmet of CSR is nicely presented in, for example, Aku Visala's award-winning study *Religion Explained? A Philosophical Appraisal of the Cognitive Science of Religion* (2009, published by Ashgate in 2011).

groups ranked by excellence at the Berlin Academy of Music, and then correlated achievement with hours of practice. They discovered that the best had put in about 10,000 hours of practice, the good 8,000 and the average 4,000 hours. In later research this rule was applied to other disciplines (sports, the arts, science) and the similar results were found (Ericsson *et al.* 1993, 2006).

The question of expertise might be relevant also in the context of the study concerning the enrichment of magical thinking. The development of expertise and virtuosity might not be characteristics only of gifted musicians, chess-masters or top-level athletes, which are the groups most studied. Would anybody who practices anything deliberately (for 10,000 hours) become a master in the skill?

In the context of dual-process theory and the recent findings concerning magical thinking, I am looking for the enrichment of magical thinking and development in expertise in the context of Reiki case. Before that, I will give a brief overview of the theoretical frame of reference of this study.

Two minds

Two fundamentally different ways of thinking—intuitive and reflective—have been a subject of interest and speculation throughout the history of science (e.g. Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Schopenhauer, Freud, James). The rapid advances in studies focusing on the mind[17] support the propositions of these early scholars. Over the past 20 years, there has been an accumulation of a considerable body of empirical evidence for dual processing in learning, reasoning, decision-making, and social cognition (Evans & Frankish 2009, Evans 2010). While the emphasis and details differ somewhat between theorists, there is a broad consensus that the two processes (minds) might include the set of features itemised here.

Intuitive thinking evolved early; it is fast, spontaneous, automatic, concrete, heuristic, holistic, contextualised, mainly unconscious, and it is biased by personal emotions, experiences, beliefs, associations and generalisations. Analytical thinking, by contrast, evolved relatively recently and is slow, controlled, reflective, logical and abstract. By means of systematic processing, more or less, humans can correct and transpose reasoning based on intuitive presumptions. At times, the intuitive and the reflective minds might also

17   The general background for cognition-based approaches are the cognitive revolution and the rapid development of computer science from 1950s onwards. The rapid development of technical innovations (for example, audiovisual techniques and brain-scanning) affords an opportunity in the experimental studies of mind to discover knowledge which was based earlier on observation and introspective thinking.

compete with each other. The latest findings indicate that the unconscious, intuitive mind is more in charge of our so-called conscious thinking than we have hitherto believed. (Wegner 2002, Evans & Frankish 2009, Evans 2010.) The processing of the intuitive mind is unobserved. For example, stereotypical presumptions might direct our reasoning and behaviour in ways we consciously do not accept.

The study of religions and the intuitive mind

Intuitive thinking has been the primary target of scholars in the field of CSR since the beginning of this recent inter-disciplinary research, as actual religiosity is by and large intuitive.[18] Many CSR scholars have touched on the question of the basic duality of the mind in pursuance of other contributions to the research programme.[19] Ilkka Pyysiäinen, particularly, has discussed in detail the distinction between what is intuitive and what explicit in religious thought in general and specifically in relation to counter-intuitive concepts and agency (2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2009). He clarified the wide field of dual-process studies by listing eleven different dichotomies characterising the two systems of reasoning (Pyysiäinen 2004b).[20] Pyysiäinen has emphasised that the cognitive functions supported by 'the A-system' (intuitive thinking) are, for example, intuition, fantasy, creativity, imagination, visual recognition, and associative memory (Pyysiäinen 2004b: 135, see also Sloman 1996). These functions are often observable in religious contexts.[21]

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18   Todd Tremlin (2006: 172–82) has been involved in discussions within CSR concerning how these two minds are differentiated from each other in religious thought. Dan Sperber's (1997, see also Mercier & Sperber 2009) contributions deal with cognitive architecture from the view of an evolutionary and massively modularist framework.
19   For example; the minimal counter-Intuitiveness hypothesis (MCI) of Pascal Boyer (Boyer 1994, 2001; Boyer & Ramble 2001; Barrett & Nyhof 2001), the notion of hypersensitive agent detection device (HADD; Guthrie 1993, Barrett 2000), the intuitive theism hypothesis of Deborah Kelemen (1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2004; Kelemen & DiYanni 2005), the hazard precaution model of ritual behaviour by Boyer and Pierre Lienard (2006a, 2006b), E. Thomas Lawson's and Robert N. McCauley's ritual form hypothesis (1990), the model of religiosity theory of Harvey Whitehouse (2004) and the notion of afterlife belief put forward by Jesse M. Bering (2002).
20   There have been several kinds of concepts about the intuitive and the analytical mind. For example, automatic vs. controlled, heuristic vs. analytical, reflexive vs. reflective, associative vs. rule-based, implicit vs. explicit etc. (Pyysiäinen 2004b).
21   Furthermore, Finnish scholars like Jani Närhi have contributed to the research on intuitive thinking in connection with paradise representations,while Elisa Järnefelt is revising her dissertation concerning creationist thinking (Närhi 2008, 2009).

Close to the dual-process model is the observation that natural intuitions tend to overwrite theological doctrines and drive behaviour. CSR scholar Justin Barrett has termed the theory concerning the difference between idealized theological doctrines and the beliefs people actually have, as 'theological correctness'. Barrett argues that there seem to be two parallel God concepts. The basic concept is used in real-time, fast processing of information, while the learned, more complex concepts are used when theological doctrines are explicated (Barrett 1999, Barrett & Keil 1996). What we think we believe in, and what we spontaneously assume when there is no time or space for rational thinking, are fundamentally based on two different types of reasoning. Later Barrett (2004) argues, on the basis of diverse studies from CSR and cognitive psychology, that religious belief is natural. It is intuitively satisfying because it is cognitively easy to accept in the frame of cognitive constraints (Barrett 2004: 17).

Mood and cognition

Besides cognitive constraints in the processes of intuitive and reflective thinking, theories of mood and cognition from social psychology are relevant in the context of this study. Experimental studies of 'positive affect' (PA) and 'faith in intuition' (FI) have predicted superstitious beliefs and sympathetic magic (King *et al.* 2007, Hicks *et al.* 2010) and, thus, are relevant in this study. Like the studies concerning subjective rationality (first identified by William James in 1893), also called the feeling of meaning, which pertains to a feeling about an event or experience which one has found to feel 'right'. This feeling of rightness is responsible for our perception that experiences make sense (Mangan 2000). How does mood direct cognition, and what kind of mood is needed to activate the process of enrichment of magical thinking? According to CSR scholar Pascal Boyer (1996: 626), 'enrichment arises from the broad initial, intuitive principles, together with the expectations that they trigger, towards the complex theoretical structures' (as for example religious doctrines).

Magical thinking

The terms 'magic' and 'magical thinking' have a wide range of meanings in the earlier history of the study of religion. Also, many interesting hypotheses have been presented in the long tradition of scholarly discussions concerning magic. In what follows I will highlight just three names from the history, as the definitions of these scholars have proved still to be applicable a hundred years later. Two of them are so-called Victorian anthropologists, Edward B. Tylor (1871) and James Frazer (1911), who were the first to define 'the uni-

versal laws of magic'. They were both looking for patterns of thought underlying magical actions. Tylor pointed to the importance of analogical reasoning and he, in accordance with the evolutionist framework, claimed that *primitive* people replace cause and effect with associations of ideas based on similarity, contagion and contiguity. Frazer elaborated Tylor's ideas on magic into the famous typology of sympathetic magic. The law of contagion or contact is based on the principle that two things once in contact will retain a connection regardless of time or space. Whereas the law of similarity is based on the principle that like attracts like. For example, the similarity between plant parts and body parts indicated their efficacy in treating diseases in those body parts.

The French anthropologist and sociologist Marcel Mauss (1950) emphasises that the concept of *mana* is also an important element of magical thinking. He pointed out that the essence (*mana*) is unitary, and thus, remains in every part taken from the whole (*pars pro toto*). The concept of *mana*, according Mauss, connoted the driving force, or essence, that travels along the lines determined by sympathy (Mauss 1972: 117).

In the early twentieth century, magical thinking was situated at a lower grade in the hierarchy of the evolution of human mental processing. Magical thinking was seen as fundamentally different from the Western style of thought. It was also believed among Western scholars that there is a major difference between magic and religion, and that the primitives were still too immature to be able to practise Christian monotheist religious thinking. The tenacious belief that there is no need for magical thinking as education increases the level of knowledge, is still alive. The latest evidence, nevertheless, supports the argument that humans, regardless of education or secularisation, are apt to think in magical ways, as the two minds theory predicts. (Wegner 2002, Evans 2010.)

In the late twentieth century Carol J. Nemeroff, Paul Rozin and colleagues found that Frazer's, Tylor's and Mauss's principles of magic seem to work in the thinking of educated, Western adults (Rozin *et al.* 1986; Rozin & Nemeroff 1990; Nemeroff 1995; Nemeroff & Rozin 1994, 2000) The findings are very interesting and open up our understanding concerning magical modes of thinking, also in non-religious contexts. Of particular interest were studies concerning different kinds of disgust. Their findings indicate, for example, that people conflate germs with evil, as reflected in, for example, refusing to wear the sweater, said to have belonged to Hitler or some serial killer, even if it was sterilized. Emotions seemed to override rational thinking.

The law of contagion holds that physical contact between the source and the target results in the transfer of some effect or quality (essence) from the

source to target. Qualities may be physical, mental, or moral in nature, and negative or positive in valence.[22] 'The most relevant feature of a source—in the mind of the perceiver or practitioner—is what is believed to be transmitted. Both properties and modes of transmission may be metaphorical.' (Nemeroff & Rozin 2000: 4.)

According to Rozin and Nemeroff beliefs about negative contagion are more general than positive ones (Rozin & Nemeroff 1990: 208). And further, negative beliefs are stronger in situations of conflict. Contact with a host of negative things (e.g. unknown strangers, malicious others, their possessions or bodily residues, death and physical corruption of any kind) is felt to be physically dangerous and/or morally debasing to the person. Contamination and pollution are the terms used when an essence and its effect are negative in valence. There are also scientifically validated instances of contagion, for example, in germs and the transmission of illnesses.

Still, magical contagion is far broader in terms of what may be transmitted and how (Nemeroff & Rozin 2000: 4). 'In the broader concept transmissible properties include physical or moral properties and may be harmful or beneficial. Thus goodness and evil are as transmissible as influenza.' (Nemeroff 1995: 147.) Contact with smaller set of positive things such as loved ones or personifications of goodness or holiness (for example, the Virgin Mary), or their possessions or residues, can be felt to enhance or elevate the self (Nemeroff & Rozin 2000: 7).

Nemeroff, Rozin and their colleagues state that magic is an intuitive, and possibly universal, aspect of human thinking, ranging from spontaneous, vague, 'as if' feelings, all the way to explicit, culturally taught beliefs. Magical thinking involves the sympathetic principles of similarity and contagion, and the notion of an imperceptible force (essence) that drives, carries, or provides the mechanism for effects (Nemeroff & Rozin 2000).

What is magical thinking in terms of intuitive processing? Magical thinking is based mainly on the processes of the intuitive mind, although it also represents inferences typical of reflective thinking. For example, different kinds of explanation models and 'folk-theories' concerning the unseen world, or spiritual beings and their aims and wills, are popular 'analytical' concepts in the new spirituality.[23] In the religious context intuitive, magical thinking

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22   The term 'valence' is used in psychology in discussing emotions. It means the intrinsic attractiveness (positive valence) or aversiveness (negative valence) of an event, object, or situation.

23   Folk-theories differ from scientific theories, for example in evidential values. The word 'theory' in everyday speech means the possible hypothesis or explanation of

is highly ranked because it is cognitively effortless due to the nature of concepts. Intuitive decisions are not, however, unconscious decisions; they are rather based on feeling instead of reflection (Evans 2010: 166). 'When we "go with our gut" we choose to do what feels right. Reflective thought is a slow, cognitively expensive, and tiring process. Intuition and feeling are fast and easy bases for decision-making. The feeling that we do things because we consciously intend to do them has been shown to be a powerful illusion. We can and do confabulate explanations for our own behaviour, giving ourselves and others false introspective reports of the reasons for our actions.' (Evans 2010: 169.)

As intuitive thinking is, among other things, strongly context-bound, spiritually-based alternative therapies or religious environments are the most useful contexts in which to study the delivery of magical meaning-making. That is, magical thinking is best observed through spontaneous speech, which is shared in the positive atmosphere created during the gatherings of those who are interested in holistic healing.

In the following anlysis I will observe the data from Reiki training courses by focusing on magical thinking and the contextual cues which support and enrich it. The data of the case-study has been collected in the field by way of participant observation which includes tape-recordings.

Three stages of analysis

The analysis of enrichment of magical thinking among Reiki practitioners is presented in the frame of three stages or steps. As explained above, the stages progress as follows: the first stage is the entry into magical world, the second involves the acquisition of magical skills, and the third development of magical expertise. An analogy with the general characteristics of skill acquisition model concerns a three-stage process of becoming expert in some skill.

This analytical frame of reference, in the context of dual-process theory and the new findings concerning classical definitions of magical thinking, makes the observation of the process of enrichment of magical thinking visible. Through the analysis I try to understand what are the contextual cues

some phenomenon. Scientific theories have to argue their claims and prove them according to the criteria of the research community. Lay persons' 'theories' are usually not challenged by counter-criticism.

supporting magical, intuitive thinking; how the magical thinking is routinised, and what is the impetus to continue the magical practices.

The first stage: the entry into the magical world

In the data, participating in Reiki training and the act of accepting the initiation through the tuning ritual is an entry into the magical world of thinking. In the initiation ritual and during the healing practices everybody gets the subjective experience of the working of Reiki energy. The Reiki Master reinforces the view that after the initiation, besides the ability to heal, the participants are connected to the unseen world via Reiki energy, and that gives them an ability to listen to their own inner, intuitive voice (or the voices of different spiritual beings). Supposedly, these people, by virtue of participating in the Reiki course, are apt to think intuitively. They come to the course on their own initiative, and they are curious to learn more about Reiki. Some of them have had positive experiences of Reiki treatment, and some have heard about Reiki from close relatives or friends. The educated guess here could be that very sceptical thinkers do not take part in weekend Reiki courses.[24]

The source of magical contagion is universal Reiki energy. It is transferred during the initiatory ritual from its cosmic source to the Reiki trainee with the help of the Reiki Master. Actually, according to Reiki doctrine, the external spirit does not overtake the body as in spirit possession. Humans are rather 'the channels' through which spiritual power can operate.

On the whole, the atmosphere in the course was very positive. Many had positively loaded expectations of the Reiki course beforehand. During the jointly shared time, the group became closer, and positive affects strengthened among participants by means of social influence.[25] Positive affects (PAs), faith in intuition (FI) and feeling in meaning supported the enrichment of intuitive, magical thinking as the experimental studies predicted. Narratives told by the teacher (Reiki Master), evidence heard ('it works') and the approving attitude of the teacher created positive atmosphere felt in the field.

Although many elements typical of new spiritual movements (e.g. soft lights, candles, the scent of incense) were absent, as the course took place in the gymnasium of an ordinary school, the use of drumming created the feeling of a sacred space. A shaman drum does not feature in original Reiki prac-

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24 The psychologist Marjaana Lindeman (*et al.*) has divided people into supernatural-thinkers and sceptical-thinkers on the strength of the results of survey studies (Lindeman & Aarnio 2006, Lindeman & Saher 2007).

25 The way in which our own views are affected by those of other people around us is known as social influence (Evans 2010: 150).

tices, but several Reiki Masters have integrated their Reiki practice with items or practices from other spiritual traditions. (Melton *et al.* 1990, Macpherson 2008.)

According to the expertise model, subjects develop a declarative encoding (knowledge about facts and things) of skill during the first stage. That is, they commit to memory a set of facts relevant to the skill. Learners typically rehearse these facts as they first perform the skill (Anderson 2000: 281; Fitts & Posner 1967: 11–15). Practising the new skills, step by step, first by drawing the symbol on paper and in the air, then learning the hand positions, and finally practising the healing in group healing sessions, where each in turn lay down on the floor, others keeping their hands on certain places in the body, is concrete and practical and includes 'ordinary' acts. At the same time, with these bodily practices, the meaning of the practices is associated with the flow of the universal healing energy, Reiki. At this stage, participants come to understand what Reiki skill is composed of. According to the model first described by Fitts (1954), attention is significant for the acquisition of skill at this point in the process.

At the entry stage not many normative rules were explicated by the teacher. On the contrary, every question was answered with approval and positivity. For example, the question of the source of Reiki energy compared with Christian beliefs presented no problem at all. 'The loving energy covers everything and the source is the same, it just has different names.' The social influence of the group affects our own views, and 'the main reason people believe things is because other people believe them as well, especially when those other people are members of the same social group.' (Evans 2010: 150.)

The second stage: acquisition of magical skills

The second stage, involving the acquisition of skills, might be seen also as an analogy to the classic ritual-theory of Arnold van Gennep (1909/1960) as this stage of practising the skills is a liminal state (*marge* in Gennep's vocabulary). The initiation is received, but the future is 'unknown'. In this data the second stage is critical in the sense that probably those not impressed enough, or those facing contradictions with religious or moral beliefs acquired earlier, might decide not to continue practising.[26]

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26 Some fragmentary notes from the field point to the conflicts due to negative after-thoughts according to the source of the spirits involved in Reiki initiation. There will be more discussion about negative intuitive thinking in my forthcoming doctoral dissertation.

Participants have been advised by the Reiki Master to rehearse new skills once a day during at least three weeks at home. Repeated practice leads to automation, as the connections among various elements required for successful performance are strengthened. Through the rehearsal of the Reiki healing technique, the trainers accustom themselves to the magical ways of thinking as they were encouraged during the course.

The third stage: the development of magical expertise

In the third stage development from novice to master begins. Those trainees who have arrived at this stage, participate in the Reiki II course, the next level. They have practised Reiki technique and they are interested in learning more about Reiki. The difference between the participants in Reiki I and II courses is in behaviour. These are not novices anymore, and they show it by speaking openly about their intuitions (about everything). Explanations based on magical contagion are usual. Narratives of miracles made with the help of Reiki are now told by others than the teacher, as in the first course. Bursts of creativity, fantasy, intuition, and imagination fill the air as participants express freely and spontaneously their thoughts and feelings.

Some of them have done tattoos of Reiki symbols on their skin. Some tell how they drew Reiki symbols on paper and put them in their bras or in clothing, under the pillow, in their wallet, or some other personally significant place. The participants also reveal how they have decorated their homes with symbols. Several, creative ways of using Reiki symbols are compared. The meaning and usage of Reiki symbols have been extended to cover protection, success in love affairs or prosperity. People laugh merrily at each other's ideas for using Reiki in new ways. After the new tunings (opening up new channels for new symbols), participants tell detailed narratives of fantasy travel. Obviously, the atmosphere feeds the imagination of participants. The role of the teacher is smaller than in the 'novice-course'.

It appears that magical causal reasoning has automatised rather quickly among the participants.

Along with magical thinking, normative rules based on intuitive and magical biases are strengthened. This is reflected in the rituals that practitioners have created. Rituals aiming at protection are more usual than in the first stage. Also, cleansing rituals become more important as more complex doctrines are adopted through the reinforcement of magical thinking, due to implicit learning in the new social group. Studies show that we have a fundamental tendency to form ourselves into in-groups and out-groups (Evans 2010: 155).

Conclusions and discussion

In this article, I have observed the enrichment of magical thinking in the context of spiritually-based healing which is practised on Reiki courses.[27] At first, I introduced a piece of ethnography, precisely, the magical act of initiation. During the act the essence of universal Reiki energy is believed to transfer from the cosmic source via the Reiki Master into the student.

The magical ritual seems to follow the line of magical thinking outlined in the studies concerning magical contagion by Nemeroff, Rozin and colleagues.

According to the latest study presented above, magical thinking is included in the processes of intuitive mind in many respects. Classical theories of sympathetic magic have proven to be a part of our natural way of thinking. Experimental studies have shown that the law of contagion seems to operate also in modern people's minds, mostly on unconscious level. Magical thinking is easy, it feels right and it gives the feeling of meaning and control over one's life. In the studied context, positivity, heuristic creativity and a joyful atmosphere were strongly present in contrast to above mentioned studies, which focused mostly on feelings of food disgust and magical thinking about illness virulence, or were observed in the contexts of stressful and uncertain events.

It seems obvious that, in a spiritually-based healing course such as the Reiki training illustrated here, triggers that activate intuitive, magical thinking, are strongly present. The triggers are contextual cues. As the intuitive mind is contextually bound, heuristic processes are easily activated. Context drives cognition, in this case, towards intuitive and magical thinking. Contextual cues support intuitive thinking and biases beyond magical thinking. The atmosphere and social influence are probably the most important factors in creating a context that supports intuitive thinking, as the studies in social psychology have stated. The positive atmosphere needed in a healing context arises on the basis of many elements which are cognitively easy to adopt. These include, for example, emotionally touching cues, personal experiences and narratives which support magical meaning-making. Also the proclaimed intention in the field is to feed the 'intuition' of participants. The concept of

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27   This article is based on study and findings to be presented in more detail in my doctoral dissertation: 'Intuitive presumptions beyond expectations according healing, and enrichment of magical thinking in religious contexts' in which I compare the Reiki data with the data collected among the devotees of Nokia Missio.

intuition in everyday speech and in spiritual contexts is comprehended as one's inner voice, which is believed to be a source of true knowledge.

We can assume that a spiritually-based healing practice, like Reiki, is one possible entry into the world of magical thinking. The enrichment of magical thinking was clearly observable during the timeline of one weekend course, and specially, when compared with the second course, when participants had already practised Reiki techniques and the automation process was going on. The analytical framework of three stages exemplifies the process of enrichment during the Reiki course. In the first stage (entry), those who are interested in, or curious about holistic healing, acquainted themselves with Reiki. Then in the stage of the acquisition of skills, participants deliberately practise their new skills. Those who are willing to continue practising, take part in the next level course, which is the third stage; the development in expertise. From the second course (and the third stage in the analysis) onward, development in expertise begins.

The impetus to continue practices might originate in feelings of joy or other positive feelings, including the experience of learning a healing method. Positive feelings both precede and follow when things are cognitively easy to learn. Everybody can and does learn the skills. Also 'the 10,000 hours rule' is very fascinating to consider in this context, as a path to religious expertise.

Then, a new question occurs: what kind of expert is the magical virtuoso? The characteristics of a magical expert would probably include creativity, fantasy, intuition, imagination and associative, magical thinking. One of the master's aims is to release the mind from (too) reflective thinking, and trust more in intuition. What is then the role of the reflective mind, if practices like Reiki can be felt to enhance or elevate the self? As Gerald Clore and colleagues have put it: 'Although positive mood sometimes leads to better performance in creative tasks, some tests find that a happy mood also leads sometimes to more responses and more errors. Because positive affect may signal success in a task, it may lead to an early exit from any particular stage of the process. This may result in impulsiveness and a tendency to go with whatever responses come to mind, including novel ones. However, creativity also includes relational, holistic, integrative thinking.' (Clore *et al.* 2000: 46.)

The hypothesis presented here, that some kind of mixture of both implicit and explicit learning (might) play a significant role when explaining why participants of spiritually-based healing practices or similar still continue practices within 'the world of magical thinking', is worth further study.

In this context, Justin Barrett's concept of 'theological correctness' could be seen to be analogous with 'medical correctness', as conceptions and beliefs ac-

cording to illness and healing depart from those based on analytical, scientific thinking. In the field of spiritually-based healing there are plenty of concepts, practices and beliefs which have little resemblance to official medical practice. On the contrary, intuitive, magical thinking tends to override medical doctrines and drive behaviour. Supposedly, medical sciences do not support holistic ways of thinking, and, when people get ill or sick, the search for meaning behind one's illness arises. Concepts based on intuitive and magical thinking make meanings which feel right and are both cognitively easy and intuitively satisfying. Furthermore, positivity affects health and gives a feeling of control over one's sickness and health.

When observing magical thinking, two views occur. On the one hand the innate cognitive constraints determine what kind of information we are dealing with, and how we are dealing it. On the other hand, contextual cues direct cognition. In this article I focused on contextual cues directing the cognition towards magical thinking, and showed that in the Reiki context, at least, the cues have a supportive role both in the process of enrichment of magical thinking, and in creating the experience of a spiritually guided healing process.

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MARTIN RADERMACHER

Devotional fitness

Aspects of a contemporary religious system

Introduction

Since the earliest records of religious life, fasting and disciplining the body have been known in most, if not all religious traditions (Griffith 2004: 23). In recent decades, a new form of religiously shaped body imags has emerged in US evangelicalism. Today, there is a lively field of religiously motivated fitness in the USA. There are countless groups, movements, programmes and individuals promoting some kind of devotional fitness.[1]

The aim of this paper is to describe some more or less representative groups within the area of devotional fitness in the USA, to compare their ideas to those held in Christian congregations in Germany and to extract some of the most important features of these movements.[2] The approach is mainly descriptive; occasionally, however, there will be some analytic or even explanatory fragments, mostly in sections 'Historical fragments' and 'Analytical reflections'.

The descriptive section, 'Examples of fitness in US evangelicalism', will have a short look at three of these movements and then examine one of them more thoroughly, namely, the concept of 'Shaped by Faith' by Theresa Rowe. This programme is a spiritually refined fitness regimen aimed at physical and mental health and well-being. It deliberately blurs the boundaries between different and sometimes opposed areas of knowledge and makes use of 'secular' as well as 'religious' motifs and practices.[3] As do most programmes in this

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1   To get a first impression, have a look at www.spiritandmuscle.com, www.exercisewithpurpose.net, www.danielplan.com, http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/, www.thepowerteam.com, www.weighdown.com.

2   In this paper, I will not in detail focus on economic and marketing related questions, the programmes' connections to congregations and denominations, and gender aspects. However, these questions have to be kept in mind and will be dealt with another time.

3   The term 'secular' will be used quite often here, but—for lack of space—I will not discuss the various definitions of 'secularity' and 'secularisation'. For the purpose of this

area, Rowe continuously reminds her adherents to never stop working with and on themselves, the most important goal of their efforts being the union of mind, body and spirit, in short 'whole-person wellness' (Rowe 2010[4]).

The next part of the descriptive section ('Aspects of religion and fitness in Germany') will look into the connections between sports and religion in Christian congregations in Germany. Evidently, those groups have noticed the attractiveness of sports and fitness in contemporary Western society and consequently have developed their own point of view concerning these issues. Despite some striking similarities with regard to recurring motifs, however, there is no evidence that anything like devotional fitness is about to emerge in the German context.

In the third section, I will briefly describe some of the historical trajectories which have influenced contemporary body ideals in both 'religious' and 'secular' contexts in the United States and Germany. This section has a rather provisional and tentative character—it only serves to hint at some important threads which cannot be elaborated in detail for the time being. To give a historical explanation of devotional fitness is not the goal of this paper.

In the analytical section, I will look at the material again, this time screening it for striking similarities and recurring motifs which allow me to suggest a preliminary definition of 'devotional fitness'. One particular feature of these currents, the blurring of genres, will be dealt with more thoroughly in section 'The blurring of genres in devotional fitness'.

I will end with some ideas as to how these concepts of devotional fitness could be researched within the analytical frame of cultural semiotics (section 'Conclusions'). The paper thus takes up one thread of the envisaged PhD project,[5] the task of which is to describe devotional fitness as a particular type of popular religion (following Hubert Knoblauch) and to ask whether it may be explained in terms of different theories of society, one of these being the theory of cultural semiotics.

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paper, it will suffice to apply a commonsense definition of 'secular' as 'non-religious' (whatever that is). One should be careful, though, not to implicitly uphold the secularisation thesis in a strict manner by using these categories.

4   http://www.shapedbyfaith.com/theresa-rowe-heart-story

5   Working title 'Devotional Fitness: an American Phenomenon of Popular Religion and Analytical Approaches from the Perspective of Theories of Society' ('Devotionale Fitness. Ein amerikanisches Phänomen populärer Religion und gesellschaftstheoretische Erklärungsansätze').

Description: what is devotional fitness?

Examples of fitness in US evangelicalism
Christian Fitness

Christian Fitness is a television programme described by its producers as a 'unique, fun and interactive program unlike any other show on television' (Christian Fitness TV 2010[6]). It combines both nutritional advice, guided fitness exercises and 'uplifting scripture' in 25 differently themed shows. Each programme lasts 30 minutes and is designed for beginners and advanced participants who would like to work-out at home. Christian Fitness is produced by CTN, the Christian Television Network,[7] and can be watched at various times throughout the US on about 20 channels. It is also available on the internet via streaming (Christian Fitness TV 2010[8]).

Christian Fitness has been established because, as its initiators say, they wanted to do something about the negative effects of our sedentary lifestyle. Naturally, this is not just a problem of society in general, but of Christian society as well. As every Christian is called to witness the gospel, they 'must be spiritually and physically strong'. Christian Fitness TV therefore regards itself as providing a service to Christians who understand the necessity of a 'spiritually strong life and healthier lifestyle' (Christian Fitness TV 2010[9]).

Chrstian Fitness is not intended to be a sheer fitness programme, designed to heal people physically. More importantly, it is their explicitly stated intention to reach for spiritual salvation. Besides fitness related advice, you will find all sorts of evangelically shaped spiritual advice: to read the Bible, to pray every day, to be baptized and to serve with other Christians in a congregation, to consider the Bible as the final authority and to spread the Christian faith (Christian Fitness TV 2010[10]).

The programme is presented by Robert and Lori Evans. Robert Evans is the liaison to the president of CTN and a personal trainer by profession. He is said to have been called by God to launch Christian Fitness TV:

6   http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/about.html

7   The Christian Television Network has been on air since 1979 and reaches about 15 million viewers. It is intended to promote Christian values and to spread the Gospel and therefore provides a 'wholesome Christ centered alternative to standard television fare' (Christian Television Network 2010, http://www.ctnonline.com/about-ctn.html).

8   http://www.ctnonline.com/affiliate-stations.html/

9   http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/about.html

10   http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/about.html

> After years of training people in martial arts the Lord is now using those experiences for God's glory to help encourage Christians to exercise and have a desire to take care of their Temple of the Holy Spirit by being physically fit and honoring the Lord with their lives in all things (Christian Fitness TV 2010[11]).

His spouse and female counterpart on the show, Lori Evans, got involved with Christian Fitness after a series of surgeries and illnesses, during which time she reports to have had a vision telling her to help people understand the necessity of leading a healthy life:

> Through God's miraculous healing hand and an encounter with the Lord Jesus, she is now using those experiences to help Christians understand the benefits of proper nutrition and learning the word of God (Christian Fitness TV 2010[12]).

Besides numerous videos on how to exercise, the web pages of Christian Fitness also provide a blog which contains entries about various topics, ranging from nutritional advice, gift ideas, and announcements on upcoming shows, to spiritual guidance (Christian Fitness TV 2010[13]). Christian Fitness thus provides a 'complete package' for committed Christians who are concerned with issues of physical health and well-being and would like to pursue these matters in an explicitly evangelical setting.

The Power Team

The Power Team is a group of bodybuilders who perform in churches in order to make people enthusiastic about becoming Christian. Their mission is, in their own words, to

> reach people of all ages, who would typically not ever attend an event in a church setting, with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Drawing people from all walks of life together into one setting, through the use of performing visually explosive feats of strength, by incredible athletes, who share the life-changing message of the cross. (The Power Team 2007.[14])

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11   http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/about.html
12   http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/about.html
13   http://christianfitnesstv.com/blog.html
14   http://www.thepowerteam.com/vision.html

The members of the group regard themselves as called by God to 'reach the lost'. They say they have proselytized 100,000 people since the late 1990s (The Power Team 2007[15]).

The group was analysed by Sharon Mazer in the 1990s.[16] Mazer argues that the abilities every one of the members performs on stage have a double function: on the one hand, the exceptional strength is a sign of the body-builder's faith in Christ, on the other hand it demonstrates the powers of their God (Mazer 1994: 162). Besides drawing people into the church, they also spread what they consider to be moral values. Their ability to perform feats of strength represents their power of will to resist drugs, alcohol, premarital sex and so forth (p. 164). Their central message is: 'That my body is powerful . . .that I can perform as other men cannot is due to God's grace, which I have earned by dedicating myself—soul and body—to Christ' (p. 169).

The Power Team offers live performances across the United States and around the world. They are booked and paid for by host congregations and perform in civic centres, hotel ballrooms, sports palaces, and on fairgrounds. Once booked, they will give several shows during one week at one place, usually from Wednesday to Sunday. Each show lasts about 90 minutes and ends with an altar call (Mazer 1994: 183). All of these so-called 'crusades' culminate in the service on Sunday morning.

They describe their programme as follows:

> The Power Team communicates Biblical truths & scripture utilizing explosive and stunning feats of strength like: breaking baseball bats like twigs, bending horseshoes & steel bars, crushing concrete walls, rip phone books like pieces of paper and many other incredible power demonstrations. . .Then, a Power Team leader closes with a motivational message and altar call, encouraging the lost in the audience to seek salvation. All the momentum, both in the church & the community, is focused on encouraging visitors & new converts to attend the Sunday morning service. (The Power Team 2007.[17])

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15 http://www.thepowerteam.com/letter.html
16 Mazer wrote her paper in 1994, when The Power Team was still led by its founder John Jacobs who left the team in 2003 to initiate a new strength-based ministry named John Jacobs's Next Generation Power Force (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Jacobs_(Power_Team_Minister), accessed on 31 January 2011). However, much of Mazer's analysis remains valid.
17 http://www.thepowerteam.com/faq.html

Weigh Down Workshop

The Weigh Down Workshop, founded by Gwen Shamblin in 1986, is somewhat different to the above-mentioned examples. Shamblin is one of the most successful (and controversial) authors in the field of religious dieting. She does not primarily focus on working-out and living healthily, instead she emphasises the idea of losing weight in a religious manner. In her conception, reducing weight turns out to be an essential step on the spiritual path to salvation. Shamblin does not directly state that God does not like overweight people, but, in the words of Gregor Schrettle, being thin, which has long been a cultural imperative in modern US society, is conceived of as a religious imperative in the Weigh Down Workshop (Schrettle 2006: 11, 13).

Shamblin's theory may be summarised as follows: people are overweight because they mistake their spiritual emptiness for physical hunger. She argues that only God can fill this emptiness everlastingly (Weigh Down Ministries 2010[18]). The solution to being overweight is simple and consists of three basic rules:

1. Relearn how to feed the stomach only when it is truly hungry.
2. Relearn how to feed or nourish the longing human soul with a relationship with God.
3. Relearn how to recognize the different 'hunger' urges and not confuse them. (Weigh Down Ministries 2010.[19])

One can take part in the Weigh Down Workshop in many ways. The most committed way is to join one of the classes, which take place all over the US, ranging from beginners' classes ('Weigh Down Basics') to advanced courses ('Weigh Down Advanced') in six grades. Additionally, you can purchase books and DVDs which explain Shamblin's programme.

Shaped by Faith

'Shaped by Faith' is a devotional fitness programme designed by Theresa Rowe.[20] In many ways, the physical aspects of her fitness programme are

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18   http://www.weighdown.com/AboutUs/TheWeighDownApproach.aspx
19   http://www.weighdown.com/AboutUs/TheWeighDownApproach.aspx
20   Interestingly, Rowe grew up in a catholic family (Rowe 2008: 38–9). She does not clearly state her religious affiliation, but she has taught fitness classes at the Owensboro Christian Church, a non-denominational church in Kentucky with evangelical affiliations.

based on Pilates, which Rowe emphasises as an apt technique to reach 'whole-person wellness' (Rowe 2008: 135).

Rowe stresses that she is not explicitly dealing with how to lose weight. Although losing weight is a positive side effect of her programme, it is not her primary focus: '*Shaped by Faith* is not about losing weight; it is about creating a synergy of physical and spiritual health. I call it, quite simply, whole-person wellness.' (Rowe 2008: 1–2.) 'Whole-person wellness' is defined as 'our spirits and bodies working together to make us healthier, holier, and more able to endure' (p. 3). Drawing from her own experience, she believes that 'neither physical health nor spiritual health can be achieved quite as purely without the fusion of the two' (p. 217).

Why does she connect the spheres of healthy living and being religiously committed to the Christian God at all? She has found that the best motivation to live healthily and thus be physically in good shape, 'is found in my spirit, my connection with God' (Rowe 2008: 2). Consequently, she urges her readers to merge their spiritual and their fitness journey: '[B]y allowing our spiritual walk to support our physical walk, and by realizing how profoundly our physical growth affects our spiritual growth, we embrace a merging of entities that will lead us closer to whole-person wellness' (p. 2). Not only does religion support fitness, it also works the other way round: fitness has an effect on spiritual attitudes: '[A]s I engage in the constant challenge of maintaining a healthy body, God's spiritual truths take on new, stronger meanings and applications in my life' (pp. 2–3). In this way, the mutual fusion of the entities of fitness and religion becomes complete.

The cover of *Shaped by Faith* promises the 'ten secrets to strengthening your body and soul'. These 'secrets' are elaborated in ten chapters. Building on the basic premise that all areas of life should be merged together when seeking whole-person wellness, every chapter is organised into five parts: 'Shaped by Life', 'Shaped by Fitness', 'Shaped by God', 'Shaped by Prayer', and 'Theresa's Top Three', the last one serving as a short summary of each part. The chapters—and the core ideas of Rowe's 'secrets'—are summarised on the back cover of the book:

> *Listen* to your body and to God's voice
> *Breathe* deeply to release your emotions and to guide your prayers
> *Partner* with other people—and with God—to bring out your best
> *Stretch* your limbs and your expectations of what is possible
> *Align* your spine for proper posture and stand tall in your faith
> *Transform* your life through small, daily changes

> *Center* your actions with a strong inner core
> *Balance* yourself by embracing the instabilities in your life
> *Endure* challenges through exercise and regular time with God
> *Rest* your body with a Sabbath-spirit
> (Rowe 2008: back cover).

I will now give some selected examples, taken from Rowe's book to illustrate her style and her pivotal ideas. Every chapter throughout the book begins with the section 'Listen', which contains a quotation from the Bible.[21] The idea of this chapter is: 'we must listen to our bodies, and we must respond with great care and love for the temple that God gave us' (Rowe 2008: 9–10). Listening to the body means to be aware of the slightest change and to make the appropriate adjustments if necessary (p. 14). This level of awareness should be implemented into day-to-day life. Then our 'mental, physical and spiritual elements function in concert to achieve whole-person wellness' (p. 15). Listening to God and to our body thus promotes the goal of achieving whole-person wellness.

In the chapter entitled 'Breathe', Rowe suggests that breathing can have spiritual and physical dimensions. This idea is drawn from 1 Thess. 5:16–18 which asks Christians to 'pray continually'.[22] Consequently, Rowe considers every breath a prayer: 'I have learned that God moves in and out of us with each breath we take' (Rowe 2008: 41). Correct breathing techniques play an important role in exercise; and as you are consciously breathing while working-out, you might as well pray while exercising (p. 40).

The motif of praying continually is further elaborated in one of Rowe's articles published on her website. In 'Working-Out In His Spirit' she considers how to implement this demand into her daily life. Describing the apostle Paul as the ideal archetype of a dedicated Christian who stood up for his faith in every circumstance, she draws the conclusion that it is her task as a believing Christian to follow his example in every possible way. In order to really pray continually, she therefore focuses her mind on prayer in every situation of life. Consequently, this prayerful attitude must also be kept up when working-out at the gym. Praying continually, then, is 'a practice that we can easily

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21   Prov. 4:20–2 (New Living Translation): 'Pay attention, my child, to what I say. Listen carefully. Don't lose sight of my words. Let them penetrate deep within your heart, for they bring life and radiant health to anyone who discovers their meaning.'

22   1 Thess. 5:16–18 (New International Version): 'Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

incorporate into all facets of our lives' (Rowe 2010). She gives an example of how she herself implements a prayerful attitude in her fitness classes:

> Just last week I had my fitness class jumping rope for 6-minute intervals in between strength training segments. During the first jump rope session I decided to pray out loud, sort of a cadence prayer to demonstrate how each of us can turn our work-out time into a praise and prayer session. (Rowe 2010.[23])

In the chapter on 'Endurance', Rowe talks about mental and physical suffering, which is described as a 'key element for gaining spiritual endurance. As we suffer, we are strengthened because our relationship with Christ gains intensity. And suffering not only builds our spiritual endurance, it becomes the true test of it.' (Rowe 2008: 187.)

As mentioned before, Rowe takes many of her work-out routines from Pilates. And although Pilates has been developed without any explicit religious references,[24] Rowe does not hesitate to integrate it into her spiritually refined work-out:

> When a person combines Pilates and strength training exercises along with healing Scriptures, there is a physical and spiritual healing that takes place in the body that is extraordinary. We can strengthen and heal our bodies when we meditate on things above while exercising in His spirit. (Rowe 2008: 209.)

Even though Rowe does not leave any doubt that she thinks of a sporting life as the best and healthiest way to live, she brings forward a clear set of priorities. God always comes first in anything she does: 'God comes first, followed by a healthy lifestyle' (Rowe 2008: 146). Although she knows of the addictive qualities work-outs can have, she strongly advises her readers to be aware of the higher power of God: 'Of course, our desire for God always comes first, but once we discover the way exercise makes us feel, the way it improves our lives, we can't get enough' (p. 110). Sports and exercising, she emphasises, should never be done for their own sake; one should remember that every-

23 http://www.shapedbyfaith.com/health-tips-and-articles?id=39
24 Developed in the early twentieth century by Joseph Pilates, the programme originally revolves around six principles: concentration, control, centre, flow, precision and breathing (Pilates & Miller 2007).

thing is done for God: 'If you choose to run, do so because it makes you more able to endure life and because God has given you life' (p. 186).

Theresa Rowe teaches fitness classes at the Owensboro Christian Recreation Ministry in Owensboro, Kentucky. The purpose of the Recation Centre is, in their own words, 'to introduce and integrate people into the body of Christ'. In addition to that, the centre aims to provide opportunities for families and friends to get together and socialise. They provide 'fitness, sports and leisure activities in a Christian setting' aiming at people from all ages (Owensboro Christian Church 2008[25]).

Aspects of religion and fitness in Germany
Protestantism

The Baptists of Hanau, a town close to Frankfurt, are an evangelical,[26] non-denominational congregation within the Union of Evangelical Free Church Congregations in Germany (Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland) with approximately 85,000 members in 600 parishes. This specific parish in Hanau arranged a so-called 'Feriensportarena', a sporting event for children from 9 to 14 on their school holidays, in October 2010. Announced under the heading of diaconia, its purpose is to provide the opportunity to do sports, to be together with friends, to learn about the Baptists' beliefs and simply to have fun. Types of sports offered were soccer, volleyball, handball, basketball and others. The typical day, as described on their homepage, would start with a communal breakfast and some spiritual input, such as meditative or religious thoughts and ideas. They would then spend the day together, mainly occupied with all kinds of games and activities. (Baptisten-Gemeinde Hanau 2010.[27])

The Working Committee Church and Sports of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Arbeitskreis Kirche und Sport der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland) was founded in 1964. Its intention is to promote 'Christian life in sports', and to encourage Christians to lead a sporting and healthy life. On their website, they hint at the wholeness of body and soul which should be

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25 http://www.owensborochristian.org/#/rec-center/group-fitness
26 The German 'evangelical' congregations are not 'evangelical' in the same way as their US counterparts. The term 'evangelical' is not synonymous with the German term 'evangelisch'. 'Evangelical' refers to a specific kind of Christian religiosity, which is based on the experience of conversion and tends to pronounce the gospel with a certain degree of fervour (Moxter 2010: 74). The German Evangelicals are usually more moderate in both regards.
27 http://www.baptisten-hanau.de/feriensportarena.html

taken into the responsibility of the church. The committee is open to ecu-
menical work but mainly cooperates with representatives of the parishes and
congregations of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche
in Deutschland 2010). Just like the 'Feriensportarena' in Hanau, this ap-
proach does somewhat resemble the activities of the Owensboro Christian
Recreation Centre.

The missionary organisation **'Athlete calls Athlete'** ('Sportler ruft Sportler',
abbreviated SRS) is an evangelical group which 'promotes and accompanies
sportspeople based on biblical principles' (Schmidts *et al.* 2010[28]). It was
established in 1971 by Helmfried Riecker as a sub-group of the mission-
ary organisation 'Missionswerk Neues Leben'. They support people who are
committed to sports and advocate a lifestyle which 'honours God and the
people'. They encourage sportspeople to live a Christian life and to express
their Christian convictions within the context of their engagement in sports.
The group organises Bible meetings for sportspeople, work-out meetings
and special training units; additionally they organise events and seminars
on topics related to 'Christians and sports' (Schmidts *et al.* 2010[29]). 'Athlete
calls Athlete' is fundamentally based on the Gospel. According to their under-
standing, God wants companionship with all human beings, explicitly includ-
ing sportspeople. Therefore, they focus on those people who have a talent for
sports. In their day-to-day activities 'Athlete calls Athlete' works together with
evangelical churches, free churches, congregations and diaconical organisa-
tions (Schmidts *et al.* 2010[30]). Apart from encouraging people to live a healthy
life under the premises of a Christian world-view, 'Athlete calls Athlete' active-
ly proselytises among sportswomen and sportsmen (Schmidts *et al.* 2010[31]).

Their attitude towards fitness and exercise can briefly be summarised as
follows: doing sports is a motivating and joyful activity which promotes a
healthy and happy life, but one should not deprive those athletic achieve-
ments and challenges of their essential purpose, which is a life led in God's
grace. The unity of body, mind and soul is stressed explicitly—in this as-
pect, their opinion about fitness does not differ much from Rowe's attitude
(Schmidts *et al.* 2010[32]).

A more obvious connection to US devotional fitness can also be found on
the organisation's websites. To illustrate their goals and activities, they pub-

28   http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=101
29   http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=101
30   http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=101
31   http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=696
32   http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=696

lished an interview with the US national soccer player Tobin Heath (born May 29, 1988). She is a successful soccer player in the United States women's national soccer team and deeply involved in her Christian belief. She says that she thinks of every day as a new day to love and understand Jesus and give him space in her professional and private life. She is quoted as saying:

> I am excited about his plans for me, he is the boss; wherever he will lead me, I will go, whatever he asks me to do, I will do (Schmidts *et al.* 2010).[33]

This connection to US evangelicalism is somewhat superficial and of course does not imply that there is any form of correspondence with regard to the spiritual necessity of conforming to certain body images. But it shows that German Evangelicals are aware of the fact that, in the United States, people who share their beliefs can be role models for them both in the religious and in the athletic regard.

The 'Athlete calls Athlete' Academy (labelled SRSakademie) is a study centre focusing, as they put it, on body, soul and spirit. They are convinced that only by connecting these three aspects can success in sports and private life be achieved. Athletes, they claim, should not just be successful in sports, but also have an exemplary function in their parishes. They ought to bring biblical values into sports and sports into the Christian communities (Schmidts *et al.* 2010[34]). The academy is closely affiliated with the 'New Life Seminar' ('Neues Leben Seminar'), located in the German Westerwald. The New Life Seminar is an education centre for all Christian denominations. In general, it is a missionary education centere, teaching people to spread the Christian faith. They have specialised in missionary work among sportspeople and thus have designed a course of studies in sports missions, which lasts two years (Missionswerk Neues Leben 2010[35]). The 'New Life Seminar' and the organisation 'Athlete calls Athlete' cooperate in arranging this course of studies. Elements of their teaching programme are: the principles of sports mission, sports and the Bible, sports and community, and sports science (Missionswerk Neues Leben 2010[36]).

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33 'Ich bin gespannt auf seine Pläne mit mir, er ist der Chef. Wo immer er mich hin-führt, will ich gehen. Was immer er für mich bereit hält, will ich tun.' http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=1041&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=361&cHash=027c32f6a08a68b06c5b80ace47d070f

34 http://www.srsonline.de/index.php?id=700

35 http://www.seminar.neues-leben.de/

36 http://www.seminar.neues-leben.de/index.php?file=4_2_13

Catholicism

The following is an example of what a Cistercian monk thinks of sports, in this case, basketball. Phillipp Neri lives in the Cistercian monastery 'Stift Heiligenkreuz' close to Vienna (Austria) and is passionate about basketball. He was interviewed by the magazine *YOU!* in 2007. In this interview, he expressed the opinion that monks have to do sports for a simple reason: monks, just like most people in Western societies, lead a sedentary lifestyle, which lacks balance. Doing sports is just as healthy for monks as it is for every other human being. Consequently, he reports that they have a gym in their monastery and that many of his fellow monks jog in the forest. Asked whether monks do not pray all the time, he says: 'You can consider sports as prayer, too' (Lapka 2007).[37] This statement strikingly shows that the motif of praying continually and under all circumstances is well known both in Rowe's and in Neri's world-views, although they are set in quite different religious contexts and histories. Neri then elaborates that there are parallels between sports and religion. In his opinion, you can train your team skills in sports and you need those skills in religious life too (Lapka 2007[38]).

The Catholic sports association 'DJK Sportverband' classifies sports under the heading of 'sports for the people', that is, within the context of diaconia. The organisation is a union of local sports clubs; their intention is to promote the experience of companionship and community, to bring people and cultures closer together, and to harness sports as a nurturing tool in daily life. Sports and doing sports is appreciated as an opportunity to spread Christian values and beliefs (DJK-Sportverband 2010[39]). Thus, taking care of sports education is again considered to be a diaconical activity, as has already been shown with reference to evangelical groups in Germany.

The DJK, founded in the 1920s, has approximately 500,000 members and is one of the largest Catholic organisations in Germany. It is organised in more than 1,100 local groups and 27 unions (Hofschlaeger 2006: 17). They explicitly think of their task as a service to people ('Dienst am Menschen') and draw this conviction from the Gospel (Siemes 2006: 5–6). One of their slogans is that the church and sports are both supposed to serve people. Sports

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37   'Du kannst auch Sport als Gebet sehen.' http://www.youmagazin.com/page/show_ details/44-reportagen/343-drei-punkte-wurf (no longer available online).

38   http://www.youmagazin.com/page/show_details/44-reportagen/343-drei-punkte-wurf (no longer available online).

39   http://www.djk.de/1_wir_ueber_uns/frame_wir_ueber_uns.htm

clubs and parishes are expected to be partners in refining communal relationships (DJK-Sportverband 2010[40]).

The DJK arranges sporting spiritual exercises ('Sportexerzitien'). Spiritual exercises in general are meant to be exercises of spiritual consciousness in stillness and loneliness. Their goal is to think anew about one's faith and to gather strength for life in spiritual contemplation (Keilmann-Stadler 2006: 11). Sporting spiritual exercises are based on the idea that working-out can be oriented on the Christian value of charity (Hofschlaeger 2006: 15). Sports thus becomes a means to an end; the end being a Christian life. Sporting spiritual exercises want to promote a holistic understanding of body, spirit and soul (Keilmann-Stadler 2006: 12). This motif of holism has so far been recognised as an essential feature of both Evangelical and Catholic concepts dealing with sports and fitness in the USA and in Germany.

Differing from US devotional fitness, these sporting spiritual exercises simply provide the chance to find relaxation and concentration in a focused form of companionship (Keilmann-Stadler 2006: 12). Sports and prayer co-exist, but they do not necessarily blend together and become one. Frequently, announcements about sporting spiritual exercises reproduce an aphorism attributed to Teresa of Ávila in which she advises to 'be friendly to your body, so your soul will want to live in it'[41] (Keilmann-Stadler 2006: 12; Siemes 2006: 5).

Doing sports is considered to be a secular activity which can be used for the purpose of the church. Bernward Siemes[42] therefore writes that the 'seemingly worldly occupation' of working-out will educate participants in Christian values[43] (Siemes 2006: 6). Athletic activities can be a means to reach spiritual aims because every sportsman and sportswoman can realise that their breath is an 'elixir of life and a gift from God'.[44] You will feel your body more intensely with all senses; sports thus becomes a means on the way to being a spiritually refined human being (Siemes 2006: 6–7). These ideas are strikingly reminiscent of Rowe's concept of breathing and praying.

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40   http://www.djk.de/4_kirche_u_sport/frame_kirche_u_sport.htm
41   'Sei freundlich zu deinem Leib, damit deine Seele Lust hat darin zu wohnen.'
42   Bernward Siemes is a Catholic theologian and sportsman working with adolescents in a Catholic community in Bonn, Germany.
43   'Das scheinbar weltliche Tun in sportlichen Vollzügen schult die Teilnehmenden im fairen und achtsamen Umgang miteinander.'
44   'Zum Sport gehört die Atemschule: beim Laufen, Schwimmen den richtigen Atemrhythmus finden, bei der Ausdauer den Atemtakt halten. . .Den Atem als Lebenselixier und Geschenk Gottes wahrnehmen. Nicht umsonst wird der Geist Gottes auch als Ruach = Atem Gottes bezeichnet!'

Ultimately, Siemes emphasises that sporting activities are considered useful in a transcendent context: movement, he writes, as the source of life, can have effects on spiritual attitudes and abilities. It can spawn spiritual experiences and trigger one's journey towards God (Siemes 2006: 8). These ideas do not yet explicitly build on a slimness ideal; neither do they proclaim that spiritual salvation can mainly be reached through physical exercise, but they rely on the same basic understanding which is brought forward by Rowe.

Historical fragments: predecessors and prerequisites

'Religious' and 'secular' body ideals in North America

It is at around 1900 that most scholars place the roots of modern American fitness history (Griffith 2004: 70; Schrettle 2006: 151). But only in the period after the Second World War, Christians from many denominations developed ideas of health and thinness, inextricably blending 'secular' and 'religious' motivations (Griffith 2004: 3, 17). These turned out to be highly appealing to a lot of adherents reaching far into the twenty-first century (Griffith 2004: 160).

However, these ideas can be traced further back into the history of US culture. Being thin and living healthily is neither a new value, nor is it an exclusively religious one. On the contrary, it seems evident and even commonsense that the ideas of slimness and beauty which are brought forward by trends in US devotional fitness are deeply entrenched in non-religious areas of society. Nevertheless, it can be argued that they developed out of religious (mostly evangelical) ideas: '[R]eligion has played a key role in the development of the American thinness mania in some unusual and complex ways' (Schrettle 2006: 92). With regard to the religious history of America, Protestantism has played a major part in shaping religious and secular body images since colonial times (Griffith 2004: 4).[45] In fact, dieting is an essential element of US

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45   Besides Protestantism, the ideas of New Thought have had a lasting influence on modern body images, but I will not follow this thread here. Emerging in the nineteenth century, New Thought combined Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, spiritualism, holiness-movement, evangelicalism, and, most importantly, mind-cure. It attributed great potential to the powers of the human mind, which was thought to be able to overcome bodily needs. Refraining from human appetites thus became an important part of New Thought practices and physical signs of successful abstinence—such as slenderness—were appreciated. (Griffith 2004: 97; see Griffith 2004: 110 ff. for more details.)

popular culture—a culture strongly influenced and shaped by religion, that is, the variations of US Protestantism. Consequently, Schrettle argues that 'a decisive reason why America is literally obsessed with weight loss is to be found in its religious heritage and tradition' (Schrettle 2006: 94).

Both religious and non-religious historical backgrounds shape the emergence of devotional fitness. However, the connection is complex and mutual. Religion did not simply adopt secular values, but had itself an impact on the emergence of these values. A historical predecessor of the contemporary slimness imperative had first been stated in a religious context, that is, the milieu of the early Puritan settlers in the USA. They were confident that they were God's chosen people, freed from their European 'captivity' and, to uphold the biblical metaphor, guided to a new 'promised land' by God. Although the founding fathers of the US promoted a strict secularism when they established their citizenship, strong Christian components persisted in America's self-understanding (Schrettle 2006: 123–4). Among Christian elements, there were the Puritans' ideas of chosenness, of individual responsibility, and, more importantly, of asceticism, frugality and strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyments. Schrettle therefore argues that this Puritan asceticism slowly developed into a secular thinness imperative (p. 125).

The insightful argument Schrettle brings forward builds on the Weberian thesis of the Protestant ethic. *This ethic spawned capitalism which gave birth to consumer culture which in turn was the fruitful ground on which the (non-religious) slimness imperative could grow* (Schrettle 2006: 126).

> Asceticism. . .could not simply be replaced by boundless tolerance for indulgence in consumption. . . .American culture was not ready to accept consumerism as a new universally valid approach to life without any counterbalance. . . .Dieting was ideally suited to meet these requirements. The attack on fat was apparently perceived as an appropriate means through which the nation felt it could keep up, in modified form, the Puritan tradition and heritage. (Schrettle 2006: 151–2.)

It is arguable to what extent the Puritan heritage has had a decisive impact on today's slimness imperative and whether or not other influences might have played an equally important role.[46] But undeniably, the non-religious slim-

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46   Aspects to consider in this regard will be, e.g., New Thought, the 'Easternisation' of the West and a widely observed fear of the effects of a sedentary and urbanised lifestyle.

ness imperative may, at least in part, be understood as an indispensable reaction to the economic abundance of the twentieth century, which itself may be traced back to the Protestant ethic and its economic implications.

Bearing these arguments in mind, the situation of the Evangelical congregations in North America in the 1950s and 60s may be looked at in a different light: religious officials and congregations had to deal with the now widely accepted non-religious slimness imperative. They had several options to deal with this culturally approved body ideal: ignoring it, opposing it, or adopting it. Gwen Shamblin's Weigh Down Workshop, for example, can be seen as a complete adoption of the non-religious slimness imperative (Schrettle 2006: 160). Shamblin does not try to evade the all-encompassing significance of slimness, rather, she turns to the highest authority imaginable to enforce this imperative. 'The complex blend of religious and cultural influences. . . thus creates a uniquely strong compulsion to conform to the prevailing slimness ideal' (p. 166). Just as the Puritans understood wealth and success as signs of God's grace, Shamblin interprets proper body weight as a manifestation of God's approval.

The initial premise that believers are rewarded for their efforts, either through material blessings (for the Puritans) or weight loss (for Shamblin), promptly becomes the basis for the reverse conclusion. Only those who are 'blessed' with either success or beauty are righteous in God's eyes, and salvation is a result of good works or good looks (Schrettle 2006: 185).

The point is that the Weigh Down Workshop is deeply embedded in both religious and secular dimensions of US history and cannot easily be transferred to other cultural systems. Shamblin's ideas draw from a cultural environment which is based on the slimness imperative as a constitutive element of modern American popular culture (Schrettle 2006: 198). What used to be a 'secular' value with 'religious' roots—conforming to a standardised body ideal—has been implemented into the religious framework of certain groups within Evangelical Christianity.[47]

Residues of Protestant ethics in European body images

Given that the religious slimness ideals in devotional fitness are closely linked to body ideals developed in popular culture, the question arises as to

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47 Of course, this is only one possible explanation. Devotional fitness might as well be understood as 'westernised yoga'—a thesis which, though highly plausible, has not been considered by Schrettle. I will consider this thesis comprehensively in further research.

what kind of body standards are brought forward in non-religious sectors of European societies.

And again, the effects of the Protestant ethic understood in Weber's sense are also observable in Europe, though in a somewhat different fashion than in North America. In secular European culture being healthy is a widespread and accepted goal and indulgence is considered an obstacle standing in the way to this goal. Svenja Zimmer argues that the aim of healthiness shows the same irrational qualities that have been observed by Max Weber with regard to the acquisition of monetary wealth. Both the striving for health and the striving for money impose some kind of asceticism on people. While Weber's conception assumed that the inner worldly asceticism of Protestantism was peformed in the hope of *eternal life*, the goal of inner worldly health-asceticism is intended to render possible a long, albeit not eternal, life *on earth*. Zimmer therefore states that the transcendent goal is turned into an immanent goal lacking religious connotations. Religious concepts are abandoned in contemporary health-oriented European secular culture. (Zimmer 2010: 37.) In short: the qualities which Weber ascribed to economic wealth can equally be found in society's attitudes towards nutrition, health and ideals of slenderness, but they do not have religious dimensions any more (Zimmer 2010: 54).

Consequently, the European body ideal of our times may be called a 'secular' one. Compared to US devotional fitness, one could therefore assume that in Europe the re-importation of religious qualities into the widespread and mostly accepted slimness ideal has not (yet) taken place, or, stated conversely, that secular body ideals have not yet been fully implemented into Christian world-views. This lack of spiritual input might be explained by the fact that 'religious' and 'secular' realms are and have been explicitly disjointed in most Western European societies. Therefore, a blending of the areas cannot be as easily achieved as in the USA.

Even if there does not seem to be much of a chance for devotional fitness to develop in a genuinely European fashion, one should at least assume that it might be imported from the USA, as are so many other trends. But that does not seem to be the case, either. Why has devotional fitness not yet reached Europe? Books and DVD's can easily be purchased all over the world, but as of today you will not find any such phenomena as German Weigh Down Workshop groups or fitness classes based on Rowe's programme. Once again, this can probably be explained by pointing out the differences between European and US religious history. In the USA, religion has always been closer to popular culture: it has constantly been more visible and has opened up quickly to new media and technologies. These conditions may have facilitated

the re-importation of religious ideas into seemingly 'secular' fasting, sports and dieting and, *vice versa*, the inclusion of 'secular' values into Evangelical settings. In Germany, and probably in Europe as a whole, Christian congregations have mostly taken conservative points of view, opposing or even refusing popular culture and the values connected to it.

Analytical reflections

Genre: pray yourself thin

The US movements described above can be situated within a genre tentatively called 'Pray yourself thin'. This genre and its developments will be introduced here in a sweeping fashion to embed the above-described movements, especially Rowe's fitness programme, into the general developments within this field.

In 1957, Charlie Shedd, a Presbyterian priest, published *Pray Your Weight Away,* in which he explicitly stated that one could measure the amount of individual sin by simply stepping on the scales (Griffith 2004: 162). 'Fat was the embodied mark of disobedience and distance from God, while weight reduction signified the restoration of holiness' (p. 165). Belonging to the same genre, Deborah Pierce authored the book *I Prayed Myself Slim* in 1960. Pierce, an episcopate from the southern states, pronounces body and beauty standards to be God's will for all Americans, marking all deviance from that norm as a sin (p. 162).

Both Shed and Pierce drew on New Thought ideas,[48] which had by then become acceptable within the Protestant society (Griffith 2004: 163). Even in these early examples of the genre, Ruth Marie Griffith spots an interconnectedness between popular and devotional culture:

> [T]hese Christian slimming programs were attractive because of their practical aspects, which linked each book to the popular diet literature of the day and so lent it an air of sensibility without subtracting from its devotional message. . . .Prayer was the key to a thin body, but more commonplace activities played a no less essential role. (Griffith 2004: 168.)

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48   As mentioned above, I cannot deal in depth with the influence of New Thought on devotional fitness in this paper.

> The non-devotional aspect of these programs was their promise of a
> healthy, happy life with friends and family which was achievable to all if
> they obeyed a dietary regimen (Griffith 2004: 170).

As hinted at in the introduction, the genre is abundant with ever-new books, groups, authors and work-out programmes appearing on the scene. Only a few of them have been taken into consideration in section 'Examples of fitness in US evangelicalism' here, and those will serve as a frame of reference for the following sections, which try to undertake a systematic approach towards the phenomenon.

Towards a definition of 'devotional fitness'

Based on the descriptive section, I suggest a preliminary definition of devotional fitness as a symbolic subsystem of religion. The understanding of religion as a symbolic system consisting of subsystems is based on Clifford Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system. Following Geertz, culture may be understood as a

> historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a sys-
> tem of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of
> which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about
> and attitudes toward life (Geertz 2009: 89).

In his often quoted definition,[49] Geertz notes as one of the five features of religion that it is 'a system of symbols' (Geertz 2009: 90). Symbols, he elaborates, are objects, events or acts which convey meaning. They are the 'tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms' (p. 91). Symbols constitute symbolic systems which serve as models for and of society (pp. 93–4).

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49   His full definition says that 'a religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' (Geertz 2009: 90). Geertz's definition as a whole could be a suitable starting point to decide whether or not devotional fitness is religious from the scholarly point of view, but I will deal with this question from a somewhat different angle.

What characteristics render a symbolic subsystem of religion a system of 'devotional fitness'? Following Robert A. Orsi,[50] Griffith writes: 'Devotionalism. . .is "religious experience at the limits", in the sense that prayerful appeals to divine figures are so often suffused with sickness, suffering, fear, and loss; and yet devotional experience materializes in deceptively mundane forms' (Griffith 2004: 5).

One may think that it is just the semantics used by fitness teachers that make their programmes *look like* religion. '[C]ontemporary diet and fitness jargon is glutted with religious metaphors, conversion narratives, testimonials, and a vocabulary that tirelessly invokes the rubric of "spirituality"' (Griffith 2004: 11). But that is not all there is to observe; religious associations do not just remain on a superficial, metaphorical level:

> What marks religious diet culture as *devotional* is the addition of expressive relationships with sacred figures such as God or Jesus, accompanied by the belief that the human body's fitness affects such relationships in direct and indirect ways. . . .Devotional dieters. . .deeply care about food intake and physical health because they sense that the able-bodied—those who restrain their bodily desires and seek some degree of health—may more easily establish familiar, loving relations with the divine powers controlling the world. (Griffith 2004: 5.)

> Much of what marks the contemporary message as distinctive, in fact, is not its concern with food and fitness per se, but the apparent willingness of authors to accept and even celebrate the most extreme cultural body standards, converting them *from social constructs into divine decree* (Griffith 2004: 204, italics added).

In short: the crucial idea which separates devotional fitness from secular fitness and locates it in a distinctively religious realm is the idea that 'fit bodies ostensibly signify fitter souls' (Griffith 2004: 6), that 'thinness is (or should be) the visible marker of godliness' (p. 180).[51]

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50 Griffith quotes Orsi from a keynote address given at the 'Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism Conference' in Chicago, April 23–5, 1998, which is no longer available online.

51 Taking a completely different approach, 'secular' sports could of course be analysed from the point of view of a scholar of religion applying a functional definition of religion. Certain elements in non-religious sports can easily be analysed from the perspective of our discipline, such as personal stories of 'conversion'. The crucial dif-

The participants' motive is not just to lose a few pounds, look better and live more healthily. The real aim of keeping to a regimen is to show obedience to God's will; everything else is just a positive side effect (Griffith 2004: 216). '[B]ecause the body is God's temple, being slender is part of living the true Christian life' (p. 180).

On a general and analytical level, I will consider devotional fitness as a subsystem of the cultural symbolic system of religion as described above. On a more specific and descriptive level, devotional fitness can be depicted as a particular form of popular religion in Hubert Knoblauch's sense. This will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

The genre of devotional fitness is 'highly individualistic' and based on personal commitment and achievement (Griffith 2004: 171). This trait of character in the emerging phenomenon of devotional fitness hints at a general condition of modern religious movements: they are widely considered to be individualistic and subjectivist, putting the individual and his/her goals at the centre of attention—an understanding which has been comprehensively researched in the social and cultural sciences (e.g. in Kneer & Nassehi 1993: 162; Dumont 1991: 287–8; Knoblauch 2009: 81–2). This is one of the reasons I would like to think of devotional fitness as a particular form of popular religion in Hubert Knoblauch's sense, which stresses, among other characteristics, the apparent trend of subjectivisation in recent religious movements.

Popular religion, as understood by Knoblauch, highlights two characteristics of contemporary religion: popularity and the transformation of religious communication (Knoblauch 2008: 3). Religious communication crosses the boundaries between institutional settings and popular culture. Signs and symbols interpenetrate and are not just confined to ecclesiastical and institutional settings (p. 4). This blurring of genres takes places on two levels: Firstly, there is a rather superficial exchange of symbols in communication. Secondly, there is also a communicative transfer on a more profound level in terms of themes and topics (p. 5). The third feature of popular religion, which has already been hinted at, is a distinct subjectivisation. Each and everyone may search and find answers to the ultimate questions for him/herself (p. 7). All these traits may easily be recognised within the above described field of devotional fitness: Firstly, devotional fitness takes place in a highly popular current of contemporary fitness culture. Secondly, there is a spirited exchange of

ference, though, is that a secular sportsman would describe his 'conversion' in terms of being overweight and being thin, whilst a religious sportsman would add the aspect of being far from god and being close to god.

334

communicative symbols and topics: religiously rooted motifs are observable in devotional fitness and themes from 'secular' mainstream culture are widely spread within the semiotic system of devotional fitness. And thirdly, the individuals themselves are expected to find their own paths to physical and spiritual perfection, choosing from a variety of regimens available on the market.

Finally, it has to be stressed that the area of devotional fitness is indisputably highly heterogeneous. The only common ground is some idea of a healthy (and usually slim) body, which can and should be reached through devotional practice and for the glory of God. The ways to get there are as diverse as the people behind it. The Power Team promotes force and muscle, Rowe puts forward a rather moderate means of evangelically enhanced Pilates, and Shamblin in the end does not recommend exercise at all, because, in her account, working-out physically is, like eating, just a pretext to fill emotional holes:

> [T]rust God, not exercise—He is jealous of our misplaced dependence. The only exercise you require is getting down on your knees to pray and getting the muscle of your will to surrender control of your natural, God-given hunter and fullness guide to the Creator. (Shamblin, quoted in Schrettle 2006: 132.)

After having defined devotional fitness in a preliminary way, I will hint at some recurring motifs, the crucial symbols which can be observed in the communicative system.

1. *The body as God's temple.* You can find this idea in Rowe's account: '[W]e must respond with great care and love for the *temple that God gave us*' (Rowe 2008: 9–10, italics added). Additionally, Rowe teaches a fitness class at Owensboro Christian Church with the intention to 'help you take care of your body (*temple of the Holy Spirit*) by dedicating each class to God our heavenly Father' (Owensboro Christian Church 2008, italics added[52]). You can also find this motif in Christian Fitness TV: '[T]ake care of [the] *Temple of the Holy Spirit* by being physically fit' (Christian Fitness TV 2010, italics added[53]).

2. *Continuous prayer.* The next central foundation of Rowe's devotional fitness programme is the imperative to pray continually, which is taken from

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52 http://www.owensborochristian.org/#/rec-center/group-fitness
53 http://www.christianfitnesstv.com/about/html

1 Thess. 5:16–18.[54] Strictly applying this imperative in daily life, it is inevitable to consider working-out just as much as an opportunity to pray as every other activity (Rowe 2010[55]).

3. *God as a motivator.* The above-mentioned class taught by Rowe is based on the slogan 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (Phil. 4:13) (Owensboro Christian Church 2008[56]). Christ thus becomes the ultimate motivator and last resort the devotee will turn to in his physical exhaustion. Shamblin makes use of the same source of motivation when she argues why her diet programme differs from non-religious programmes.

4. *Suffering builds endurance.* Suffering, whether in life or in an extremely exhausting exercise session, builds both physical and spiritual endurance: '[S]uffering not only builds our spiritual endurance, it becomes the true test of it' (Rowe 2008: 187).

5. *Breath and the Holy Spirit.* This motif is based on Job 33:4.[57] Rowe perceives breathing as a direct connection to God: 'I breathe to live, I breathe to maximize exercise, and I breathe to take in the *breath of the Almighty*' (Rowe 2008: 23, italics added). Rowe also states: 'I have learned that God moves in and out of us with each breath we take' (Rowe 2008: 41). Especially while doing sports, breathing often becomes a strikingly conscious effort—and thus God's presence will be more intensely part of the exercising. Similar ideas can be found in Catholic sporting spiritual exercise.

6. *Holism.* As has already been hinted at, holism is a wide-spread idea in both the US and European 'religious' and 'secular' wellness and fitness contexts. In Rowe's understanding, holism is realised in the striving for 'Whole Person Wellness' (Rowe 2010[58]). Moreover, the unity of body, mind and soul is an important featue of both evangelical and Catholic organisations in Germany.

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54   'Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

55   http://www.shapedbyfaith.com/health-tips-and-articles?id=39

56   http://www.owensborochristian.org/#/rec-center/group-fitness

57   Job 33:4 (New International Version): 'The spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.'

58   http://www.shapedbyfaith.com/theresa-rowe-heart-story

7. *Attentiveness*. The idea of attentiveness is very obvious in Rowe's pro-gramme: 'In our wellness journeys, we must listen to how our bodies respond to even the smallest movements. . .In fitness, this kind of attentiveness is often called mind-body exercise.' (Rowe 2008: 14.) Being aware of one's body and its needs has also been highlighted as an essential ability in German Catholic groups.

8. *Balance.* Rowe emphasises the need to strive for balance in both physical and spiritual things (Rowe 2008: 145–6). Closely related to holism, this sym-bol of a balanced life is a prevalent notion not only in contemporary religious movements but also in alternative holistic approaches to healing.

It will now be interesting to have a closer look at the roots and provenance of these symbols, how they came to be part of the semiotic system of devotional fitness and how they constitute some form of 'identity' for this system. For example, the last three motifs (holism, attentiveness, balance) do not seem to be of exclusively Christian origin; at first glance, and rather intuitively, they are associated with popular forms of Eastern religions in the Western world. These and other questions will not be further elaborated in this paper, but they will be examined comprehensively in follow-up research.

These have been the most important recurring motifs within the symbolic system of devotional fitness. The most striking structural characteristic of this is the blurring of branches. This structural feature is closely linked to the sub-stantial idea of holism; the concept of holism is a necessary prerequisite for a structural blending of entities. This will be dealt with in the next section.

The blurring of genres in devotional fitness
One of the central characteristics of devotional fitness is the intermingling of secular and religious realms. That this is not merely an observer-imposed fusion will now be shown by drawing from primary sources, mainly from Rowe's book *Shaped by Faith*.

Rowe's idea of 'whole-person wellness' can only be achieved by blending spiritual and physical concepts: '[B]y allowing our spiritual walk to support our physical walk, and by realizing how profoundly our physical growth af-fects our spiritual growth, we embrace a *merging of entities* that will lead us closer to whole-person wellness' (Rowe 2008: 2, italics added). Fitness prac-tice reaches far into spiritual affairs in Rowe's opinion:

> 'Shaped by God' will describe how these fitness practices influenced my discovery of God and how my relationship with Him *intertwines* into my fitness routines. This is where simple fitness actually transcends into whole-person wellness. (Rowe 2008: 4–5, italics added.)

In a similarly striking manner, the first question to be answered in the FAQ-section of Shamblin's website is: 'What does God have to do with this [weight loss] anyway?' The answer to this question is that only with God's help will the dieter succeed in his quest to resist the temptations of food, to stand firm against the 'magnetic pull of the refrigerator' (Weigh Down Ministries 2010[59]).

This convincingly illustrates that even insiders such as Shamblin and Rowe recognise that religion and dieting or religion and fitness are not necessarily perceived as belonging together. They realise that the society they live in does not automatically intertwine spiritual and physical affairs and, therefore, spend a good deal of their efforts on bridging those different areas.

This blurring of genres does take place on several levels. Beyond the general level of religion/fitness, the merging of conceptions of body and spirit as well as of body, spirit and mind, is strongly highlighted. Spirit and body are mutually interconnected; it is not just the body which receives support from the spirit, the same is true the other way round: '[A]s I engage in the constant challenge of maintaining a healthy body, God's spiritual truths take on new, stronger meanings and applications in my life' (Rowe 2008: 2–3). The overlapping is not one-sided—there is a bidirectional penetration of the areas.

The overlapping of pure physical exercise and spiritual growth is sometimes, especially in the context of Rowe's idea of holism, put in terms of simple metaphors like this one: 'Just as aligning our physical spine makes us strong, balanced, and healthy, aligning ourselves with God and putting on His armor strengthens us, protects us, and satisfies our soul' (Rowe 2008: 103). However, Rowe often leaves this level of plain metaphorical speech behind and puts forward a substantial merging of physical fitness and spiritual ability. In the following statement, which has already been referred to above, she manages to incorporate Pilates, which originally lacks religious components, into her system:

> When a person combines Pilates and strength training exercises along with healing Scriptures, there is a physical and spiritual healing that takes

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place in the body that is extraordinary. We can strengthen and heal our bodies when we meditate on things above while exercising in His spirit. (Rowe 2008: 209.)

Spiritual and physical health can only be achieved if you pursue both goals together:

> I am, after all, asking you to apply not only challenging physical lessons but also spiritual ones. But the trajectory of my own life has made me convinced that neither physical health nor spiritual health can be achieved quite as purely without the *fusion* of the two. (Rowe 2008: 217, italics added.)

This manner of merging different entities is characteristic of Rowe's programme. The Power Team, for example, reveals dissimilar qualities. They make use of a fusion of popular performance and evangelical proselytising (Mazer 1994: 163). This is a completely different way of merging two originally separate areas: 'What we see is essentially a pastiche that visibly mimics many of the most popular, most secular forms of performance' (p. 166). However, Mazer remarks that this kind of fusion does indeed have effects on a deeper level: 'What began as an echo of popular performance now claims its place as an act of worship' (p. 185). Fitness becomes prayer, just as it does in Rowe's concept.

The intermingling of religious and non-religious areas is also convincingly shown in Schrettle's account of Shamblin's Weigh Down Workshop:

> The Weigh Down Workshop, on the one hand, is an organization that assists people in their pursuit of the seemingly secular goal of weight loss, and it employs religious means both to substantiate the necessity of this collective pursuit, and to achieve the desired goal (Schrettle 2006: 107).

As has been shown in the previous sections, the intermingling of religious and non-religious genres is not a new phenomenon in US culture, but has accompanied the emergence of devotional fitness from the start. Griffith stresses the interconnections between secular and religious culture several times. For a long time, scholarly studies have brought forward the assumption that the history of American fitness culture has been a history of secularisation. Griffith's analysis instead 'highlights the indispensable role of religious belief and practice all along the way' (Griffith 2004: 12).

Because the historical developments of both secular and religious fitness culture and body images are obviously closely linked, Griffith talks of a 'blurring of genres' especially visible in more recent publications in the genre of 'Pray Yourself Thin'. In the course of a professionalisation of devotional fitness guidebooks, authors now mostly abolished the assumption that there was

> a Christian culture separate and apart from the secular world: now, identical norms for health and beauty were simply assumed to apply to Christians and heathens alike, and acceptance in the secular world evidently bolstered the credentials of Christian dietitians (Griffith 2004: 186).

A blurring of genres is also perceivable with regard to the sources cited in devotional fitness literature. Bible passages and quotes taken from 'scientific' studies alike are constantly used to foster nutritional advice while emphasising that the modern sciences merely confirm biblical truth (Griffith 2004: 205). Finally, there is no clear line to be drawn between religious and secular norms in American fitness culture. Even when people argue that slimness should only be a spiritual goal they still mention the worldly benefits of their convictions such as health, beauty, love and prestige (Griffith 2004: 241).

Conclusions

Looking back at the introduction, the goals of this paper were to describe some groups and concepts within the area of devotional fitness in the United States, to compare those ideas to Christian congregations in Germany and to extract some of the most important features. These tasks have been dealt with in the previous sections. Although more research is under way in this concern momentarily, for now the description provided may serve as a useful basis to conduct further analyses.

Summing up this brief account of devotional fitness, I will return to a tentative hypothesis which can generate subsequent research on this topic: *devotional fitness is a religious symbolic subsystem of society which can be analysed in terms of Hubert Knoblauch's concept of popular religion*. Devotional fitness may be seen as an area of society which is characterised by the overlapping of demarcations, especially of demarcations dividing the religious from the secular and religious from medical subsystems. Devotional fitness may therefore be seen as an example of what Knoblauch (2009: 266) calls popular re-

ligion. Knoblauch emphasises the mutual interconnections between popular culture and religious culture in popular religion. The incidences of popular culture in religious settings (e.g. bodybuilding in churches), and the appearances of religious culture in fitness contexts (e.g. Gospel recitations in Pilates work-outs), are so tightly connected that it seems impossible to make a strict distinction between which elements of devotional fitness are 'secular' and which are 'religious'—a finding that strikingly supports Knoblauch's thesis.

To look at devotional fitness from the theoretical perspective of semiotics will imply an examination of the symbolic stock of these movements. Only a few of the symbols belonging to this stock have been described in section 'Towards a definition of "devotional fitness"'. The next step is to ask here where these symbols come from; how they have been redefined for the purpose of a 'new' semiotic system and what kinds of relations exist among those signs. In this manner, it could be possible to reproduce the semiotic code which makes the system of devotional fitness a communicative system distinct from other contemporary religious systems.

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TOMMY RAMSTEDT

Making sense of personal and global problems

An analysis of the writings and lectures of Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde

Introduction

Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde (b. 1939) is a well-known figure in the Finnish alternative spiritual milieu. She is an author and lecturer on parapsychology and ufology and has been a guest on several talk shows in the Nordic countries (e.g. *Arto Nyberg* 2007, *Eldsjäl* 1995). The topics discussed by Luukanen-Kilde range from the psychic abilities of mankind to visitations from extraterrestrial beings. Since the mid-1980s Luukanen-Kilde has developed conspiracy theories about an elite group governing the world in secret. Luukanen-Kilde is a bestselling author and draws audiences of several hundreds to her talks. Her conspiracy theory view of the world offers explanations for all kinds of personal, national, as well as global problems and disasters. Personal health problems, tragic incidents such as school shootings, economic crises and unemployment, earthquakes and floods can, according to her belief system, all be attributed to a single cause; namely to the actions of a clandestine, malevolent group. The popularity of Luukanen-Kilde's books and lectures can be seen as an example of how people in late modernity are seeking alternative interpretations of themselves and of world events.

Early life and career as a medical doctor

Many personas in the alternative spiritual milieu ascribe to themselves one or several academic degrees in various areas such as history, anthropology or physics. In some instances these degrees are acquired from unaccredited private institutions or from so-called 'diploma mills' rather than from distinguished universities. Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, however, holds a real degree in medicine, which she studied at the Universities of Turku and Oulu, graduating in 1967. She worked as a medical doctor in the region of Lapland, where she became chief medical officer in 1975. (Kuningas 1999: 4–5.)

344

According to Luukanen-Kilde, her interest in alternative spirituality and parapsychology started in her childhood when a relative named Solveig explained reincarnation to her. In 1975, when Luukanen-Kilde moved to the town of Rovaniemi, she was invited to participate in a local meditation group. In these settings she learned the art of automatic writing and in 1980 a medium from Great Britain, who was visiting the group, told her that she would become a famous author. (Kuningas 1999: 4–6.)

Excursions in alternative spirituality and parapsychology

Luukanen-Kilde reports having started to produce automatic writing in the spring of 1979. The entity that she channelled identified itself as Solveig, the dead relative that had explained reincarnation to Luukanen-Kilde in her teens. Through automatic writing, Luukanen-Kilde produced texts about the meaning of life and spiritual evolution. When asked about the purpose of the messages Solveig explained that Luukanen-Kilde would come to write a book with the title *Kuolemaa ei ole* (There is no death). (Luukanen 1982: 129.)

The book *Kuolemaa ei ole* was published in 1982. It became a bestseller both in Finland and several other Nordic countries. The first part of the book is a study of parapsychology, with chapters on topics such as telepathy, mediumism, clairvoyance, poltergeist activity and reincarnation. This part of the book differs little from other works aimed at introducing parapsychology to the general public which have been published in Nordic countries between the 1930s and the 1960s (e.g. Björkhem 1939, 1951). The second part of the book comprises a text that Luukanen-Kilde claims to be the result of automatic writing, by means of which she had channelled her dead grandmother, Aino Sofia Halmetoja. This text consists of many themata that are also common in other channelled books within the New Age or alternative spiritual field.

The dead grandmother talks about reincarnation, spiritual evolution, and about people having spirit guides who help and guide them in their lives. One theme that the grandmother also talks about is that when people attain a higher consciousness the world will become a harmonious place. Luukanen-Kilde gained a national and international reputation when her first book became a bestseller in Finland and in other Nordic countries. She also appeared on several Finnish talk shows and at alternative spiritual fairs. Luukanen-Kilde has been the most popular lecturer at the fair *Ultrapäivät* on several occasions, attracting audiences of over 700 people (Kuningas 2010: 6–7). In 1983, Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde acted as one of the founders of Lapin Parapsykologinen Seura ry (The Parapsychological Society of Lapland).

Interest in ufology and conspiracy theories

In 1985 Luukanen-Kilde was injured in a car accident. She retired and later claimed that extraterrestrials had saved her from dying in the accident. In the autumn of 1987 Luukanen-Kilde married the Norwegian diplomat Sverre Kilde. In the same year she attended a conference on parapsychology in Basel, Switzerland, where the participants had the opportunity to experience their previous lives by means of hypnosis. Luukanen-Kilde did not, however, look into a previous life but instead had experiences of UFOs and extraterrestrials (Kuningas 1999: 7–8). In her books *Tähtien lähettiläs* (Envoy of the stars, 1991, published in Swedish in 1992) and in *Kuka hän on?* (Who is s/he?, 1993) Luukanen-Kilde delves more deeply into the world of UFOs, extraterrestrials and government conspiracies. Luukanen-Kilde appeared in the documentary *Vieraita taivaalta* (Visitors from space, 1992) made by the Finnish UFO-enthusiast Juhan af Grann. In the documentary Luukanen-Kilde talks about out-of-body-experiences during which she has travelled to other planets and also offers descriptions of extraterrestrials. Luukanen-Kilde claims that extraterrestrials come in all sorts of different forms, some resembling humans, some only having bodies of pure energy. In 1996, Luukanen-Kilde organised the first Finnish international UFO-conference in Hanasaari, Finland (Kuningas 1999: 8).

The focus of her latest book, published in 2007 and entitled *Salatut maailmamme* (Our secret worlds) is on how the secret power elite controls the world by means of highly advanced technology. Luukanen-Kilde discusses supercomputers and the implanting of microchips into people, as well as how it is possible to change ordinary people into killers and assassins through mind-control. In the book she offers numerous accounts of how she herself has been a victim of harassment from the secret power elite. She claims that her phone has been tapped several times and that government agents have broken into her home, stealing documents about UFOs.

Public visibility via the internet

Bevolution / The Human Project is a Danish group that conducts interviews with people active in the alternative spiritual field and spreads them via video-sharing websites (http://www.bevolution.dk/). Between 2009–10, the group conducted interviews with Luukanen-Kilde which were posted on the video-sharing site YouTube. In these interviews Luukanen-Kilde explains how the

world is run by a secret power elite that seeks to diminish the population and to control all aspects of human life. She also addresses current world events such as the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and the swine flu scare, for which she offers her own explanations. She claims that the tragic shootings at Jokela High School in Finland in 2007 and at Kauhajoki in 2008 were the result of mind-control.[1]

She claims that behind the swine flu scare and vaccine there is a plot by the secret power elite that governs the world. The aim of the plot, she says, is to make the power elite rich by selling vaccines and that the vaccine is actually a poisonous compound that will in time be activated in order to eliminate two thirds of the world's population. In a Spanish translation of the video Luukanen-Kilde was wrongly titled the Finnish Minister of Health. This video became a great success on YouTube and was viewed over two million times. This large number of viewings was noted by the Finnish tabloid newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat*, which linked to the video on its homepage, probably leading to the interview getting further publicity.[2]

The interview was also picked up by the Tunisian newspaper *Assabah* which ran a story about it. On the front page of *Assabah* in November 2009 was the headline: 'Disturbing statements made by the Finnish Minister of Health: The United States are trying to kill two thirds of the world population'. This was noted by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sent a letter which was published in *Assabah* correcting the false claim that Luukanen-Kilde was the Finnish Minister of Health (Ulkoministeriö 2010: 78).

In the interviews made by Bevolution / The Human Project, Luukanen-Kilde frequently refers to popular movies such as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959/2004), *Enemy of the State* (1998) and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). She explains that Hollywood movies are telling the actual truth about how the world really is. She especially likes the movie *Control Factor* (2003), recommending it as a movie that everyone should watch. The movie is a fairly low-budget production about an average American man who discovers that he is part of a mind-control experiment. The secret group behind the experiment causes a person to go berserk in his workplace, killing several of his colleagues. To the horror of the protagonist, even his seemingly loving girlfriend, played by Elizabeth Berkley, turns out to be on the payroll of the malevolent secret

1   http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=27FC6B6543EB891C (accessed on 2 September 2011).
2   http://www.iltasanomat.fi/ulkomaat/suomalainen-ufolaakari-levittaa-netissa-salaliittoteorioita-sikainfluenssasta/art-1288339463117.html (accessed on 2 September 2011).

group. Luukanen-Kilde claims that this movie shows the truth and especially highlights the fact that it is always someone close to you that is used by the secret elite to control you.[3]

Although the world-view Luukanen-Kilde offers might at first glance seem quite complex, with its aliens, parapsychological phenomena, super-technology and secret malevolent groups, its major theme is essentially that the world is a battlefield between the forces of good and the forces of evil. According to her nothing happens by chance and the story that she offers gives explanations to all sorts of issues and problems, both personal and global.

Habermas, the post-secular and the public sphere

According to the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, contemporary Western societies find themselves struggling with how to adjust to the continued visibility of religious communities and religious ideas in the public sphere. Habermas describes this situation in terms of a move towards post-secularity, entailing a 'change in public consciousness' and an increasing awareness with regard to issues related to religion among Western populations. Habermas enumerates three reasons for this change in consciousness. The first is that religion is often presented as a key factor in global conflicts, and as a cause for war and terrorism. Another reason is the immigration of people from so-called traditional backgrounds. A third is that religious leaders and institutions figure more prominently in value-laden public debates, offering interpretations and opinions about contested ethical questions, such as abortion or climate change. (Habermas 2008: 19–20.)

Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde is a prime example of how people in the alternative spiritual field are able to gain visibility for their ideas in the public sphere. Although her ideas might seem outlandish, or even absurd, she is nonetheless publicly offering interpretations of tragic events such as economic recession, earthquakes and school shootings. Through talking about popular mainstream movies such as the *Manchurian Candidate* (1959/2004) she is referring to frameworks and ideas that are already widely familiar to people today. The success of her books, the large numbers of viewings of the videos of her on YouTube and the interest of tabloid newspapers can be taken as an indication that her conspiracy theory view of the world is finding some resonance among people in Finland today.

3   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ_sgvttP_s (accessed on 2 September 2011).

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2007   *Arto Nyberg*. Yle TV1. 25.3.2007. Helsinki: Production House

Eldsjäl

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OLLE SUNDSTRÖM

Is the shaman indeed risen in post-Soviet Siberia?

Introduction

In his exhaustive study of 'shamanism' among the Altaic peoples in Southern Siberia, the renowned Soviet ethnographer Leonid P. Potapov contends that 'under the present conditions there are no remnants or survivals of Shamanism as such left in Altai'. What remains are legends and reminiscences, but these can no longer be told by people with personal experiences of Altaic 'shamans' (Altaic, sg. *kam*) and their rituals. According to Potapov, modern socialist culture has changed the minds of the Altaic peoples to the degree that they are now a materialistically thinking people, and 'shamanism' has completely disappeared. In addition, he contends that there are no prospects of its return after the deathblow dealt by Soviet anti-religious repression in the 1930s—'shamanic' rituals were forbidden and ritual paraphernalia such as drums and costumes were expropriated by the authorities.[1] Only 'shamans' knew 'shamanism' and since the former are gone, the latter can never return (Potapov 1991: 314–15).

Considering that Potapov in his study follows Altaic 'shamanism' through 1500 years, depicting it as a 'religion' and 'theology' which stayed more or less intact over the centuries, his statement seems more like a pious hope based on the Soviet vision of a society liberated from superstition, religion, and spiritual exploitation. Potapov himself delineates Altaic 'shamanism's' development from a 'state religion', allied with the ruling elite in the ancient Turkic empire, to a 'folk religion', associated with the family, the village and the clan, and focusing on healing and the securing of 'luck' in hunting, fishing and

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the breeding of livestock. Furthermore, as a folk religion it has, according to Potapov, recurrently been exposed to persecutions by proponents of competing religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and others (Potapov 1991: 84–107). From this perspective it might seem remarkable that 'shamanism' should not have survived 70 years of atheist repression, missionary work and the Soviet transformation of society.

Already by the time Potapov's book was published, during the very last months of the existence of the Soviet Union, there had, in fact, appeared a number of persons claiming to be 'shamans', with an ancestry dating from the time of 'shamans' of the first half of the twentieth century. These individuals were also part of organisations and movements promoting the revival of 'shamanism' in the autonomous Altai Republic[2] (Halemba 2003: 175–6). In other parts of the former Soviet Union similar processes took place.

It may, thus, seem that Potapov was all wrong, or at least that his assessment was a bit rash. But it is little more complicated than that, I would say. As always, it is a question of definitions; of how we use and understand our concepts. To begin with I am sceptical that we can speak about a 'religion' existing as an essentially intact entity over several hundreds or thousands of years, as Potapov does. We must at least ask ourselves to what extent it has in that case been a uniform and constant phenomenon, considering all the different forms that it has taken under all the varying conditions in which it is supposed to have existed. To describe world-views and ritual practices as essentially intact is hardly possible even with formally institutionalised religions such as Buddhism, Christianity or Islam, if we look at the highly differing interpretations, practices and forms which those traditions have taken through the centuries, and in the various social, political and cultural contexts in which they have been found. When we, as observers from the outside, conceptualise Buddhism, Christianity and Islam as 'religions' that have existed for a number of centuries, it does not necessarily imply that they have constituted one and the same phenomenon at all times. It is rather the case that the temporal and spatial variations, as well as the competing, oftentimes contradictory, claims of representing an 'orthodoxy' or 'orthopraxy' within one or other of these 'religions', is generally understood. The degree of insight into these matters is, of course, deeper the more knowledge you have of these

2   The Altai Republic is not to be confused with the neighbouring region Altai Krai. Both areas are part of the Russian Federation, but while the Altai Republic has a considerable ethnic Altaic population (33.5 %), Altai Krai is almost exclusively inhabited by Russians and other descendants of European immigrant groups (Germans, Belarusians, Ukrainians).

cultural expressions. Despite this insight it can be justified to use concepts such as 'Buddhism', 'Christianity' or 'Islam' in our descriptions, for the simple reason that the practitioners of these religions do so themselves. Then you have at least described a self-identification, even if that does not mean that all those who define themselves as Buddhists, Christians or Muslims are recognised as such by other Buddhists, Christians and Muslims; or that they all understand the concept in the same way.

With the concept of 'shamanism' things are different. To my mind, it is not possible to establish an ancient, more or less intact, Altaic 'shamanism' surviving over the centuries in the way described by Potapov. In that case, of course, I must agree with him when he claims that the indigenous world-view and ritual practices of the Altaians during the first half of the twentieth century have disappeared. Nevertheless, I would contend that today, in post-Soviet Altai, as well as in many other parts of Siberia, shamanism exists in the same sense that there is Buddhism, Christianity and Islam in the region. This conclusion might seem peculiar, but in the following I will try to explain what I mean.

Before I move on I would just like to mention that my survey here of present day shamanism in Siberia is mostly based on other scholars' investigations and only to a limited extent on my own experiences of it.

The 'shamanists'

The Altaians were far from being the only group in the Soviet Union that was regarded as including practitioners of 'shamanism'. In the expanding empire that the Russian Tsars, ever since the sixteenth century, had been building, and which the Bolsheviks took over, there were more than 30 peoples, or ethnic groups, that the Russians considered as traditionally being 'shamanists'. These peoples inhabited northernmost Russia, Siberia and the Far East.[3]

However, linguistically, culturally, economically and historically these peoples do not form a homogeneous group. The various peoples spoke quite

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3   Since the designation *Siberia* in former times—as well as today in the non-Russian speaking world—includes both Siberia proper and the Far East, and since the indigenous peoples of northern Russia (the Sami and the Nenets) both linguistically and culturally have much in common with some groups living to the east of the Urals, I will in the following, for the sake of brevity, refer to these peoples as the 'Siberian peoples' or the 'indigenous peoples of Siberia'. It is only for the Sami that this categorisation is somewhat inappropriate.

separate languages, belonging to completely different language families—the Eskimo-Aleutan, the Chukotka-Kamchatkan, the Altaic and the Uralic. In addition, there are a couple of isolated languages, Nivkhi and Ket, for which no relationship to any other language family has been found.

The traditional ways of life of these peoples, up until the first decades of the twentieth century, may have shared some similarities at a general level. They were hunters, fishermen, gatherers and stock-breeding nomads or semi-nomads. But looking more closely at their economies, you find an array of varying ways of subsistence: sea mammal hunting on the ice coast; wild reindeer hunting on the tundra; reindeer breeding; fishing in lakes and rivers; hunting for elk, either for consumption or as fur-bearing animals for trade; horse, cattle, goat, or sheep breeding. These peoples also held widely varying world-views and mythologies—closely interwoven with the particular people's specific history and geographical surroundings—as well as locally elaborated rituals engaging locally acknowledged invisible powers. Moreover, these world-views and ritual practices varied between clans and other groupings within one and the same ethnic group, depending on social, economic and political circumstances. Not least, this kind of variety prevailed between the peoples' most prominent religious experts, those who have been ascribed the epithet 'shamans'.

What all these ethnic groups more decisively had in common was their relationship to Russian power. Ever since they were incorporated into the Russian Empire they have been colonised groups, gradually becoming minorities in their own home countries.[4] Like many other colonised groups in other parts of the world they have experienced being ruled and defined by authorities who reside far away. These authorities have generally had a quite superficial understanding of their situation and have seldom given priority to their needs.

Since the 1920s the Soviet government distinguished one particular category among the indigenous peoples of Siberia. These, among themselves very different peoples, were called the 'small' or 'small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East'[5], since each group consisted of compara-

4   One important exception from this characterisation is the Tuvinians, who were not subjected to Soviet-Russian sovereignty until 1944. Today the Tuvinians constitute the majority (77 %) of the inhabitants of the autonomous Tuva Republic within the Russian Federation. The differences between the 'small-numbered' peoples and other indigenous peoples of Siberia (such as the Sakha, Buryats, Altaians and the Khakassians) are in this regard also considerable.

5   *Malye/malochislennye narody Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka.*

tively few individuals. The smallest groups numbered but a couple of hundred (e.g. the Oroks and the Enets) while the larger ones (e.g. the Nenets and the Evenks) numbered 30,000–40,000, by the end of the Soviet period. Today the official designation for this category of peoples is 'small-numbered indigenous peoples'.[6] To qualify as such in a legal sense—and thus have access to, for example, state subsidies and other privileges—the group shall inhabit the homeland of their forbears, maintain a traditional way of life and subsistence, and number no more than 50,000 individuals. In the Russian Federation at present, 40 peoples belong to this category (Beach 2009, Newcity 2009).

When the indigenous peoples of Siberia, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, were subjugated to Russian supremacy, they came to be defined as ethnic groups under particular ethnonyms. However, they were not always defined and named in the way the different groups delimited and called themselves. When Soviet authorities, in the 1920s, made partly new classifications of the peoples and assigned new ethnonyms for them, some groups became categorised together with groups that they had no knowledge of, or contact with, and whose language or dialect they did not understand (Vakhtin 1992: 8). In the Soviet standard work *Narody Sibiri* (Levin & Potapov 1956: 19–20)[7] it was pointed out that many of these 'peoples' consisted rather of different clans and tribes, and that the self-identifications varied a great deal within one and the same people. It was further contended that Tsarist ethnicity policies aimed at conserving these variations, thus impeding the ethnic consolidation process that, from a Soviet perspective, was considered to be a natural effect of historical development. In contrast, Soviet ethnicity policies, it is claimed, supported ethnic consolidation. Even if such a comment today might seem a bit paternalistic, it is important to mention that at the bottom of these Soviet administrative classifications and measures was, after all, a sincere aim to improve the lives of the indigenous peoples. The pragmatic simplifications made it possible to create written minority languages, carry out education in at least some of the small languages, and introduce minority rights that were to some extent ahead of their time (Sundström 2007: 129–43).

Besides the 'small-numbered peoples', *Narody Sibiri* also describes other, more large-numbered, indigenous peoples of Siberia, which were also considered to be traditional 'shamanists' (even if several of them in addition adhered to Buddhism or Christianity)—the Sakha (more well-known as the Yakuts), Buryats, Altaians, Khakassians and the Tuvinians. If the 'small-numbered

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6   *Korennye malochislennye narody.*
7   The book was later published in English, as *The Peoples of Siberia* (1964).

peoples' amounted to roughly 185,000 individuals altogether by the end of the Soviet era, the Buryats and the Sakha, for example, numbered around 420,000 each. By comparison with the small-numbered ones, the larger Siberian peoples were considered to be more strongly consolidated as ethnicities, and to have more highly developed cultures and economies. Some of them, such as the Altaians, historically had also governed state-like empires. But even when it came to these more 'developed' and 'consolidated' groups, the authorities lumped together groups with diverse identities and contrasting cultures and speaking distinct languages or dialects.[8]

The ethnic identities that were defined by the Soviet authorities gradually became the self-identities of the peoples themselves, and today the ethnonyms that were given to them are oftentimes used as self-designations. In that process has also arisen a sense of affinity between the various Siberian peoples—an affinity that has its foundation in the Russian classification of them, as well as in common experiences of being colonised non-Russian peoples (*inorodtsy*) under Russian supremacy (Forsyth 1992: 363). When the Soviet Union collapsed, the small-numbered peoples organised themselves into the Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON).[9]

'Shamans' and 'shamanism'

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the word *shaman* did not occur in most of the indigenous languages of northern Russia and Siberia. The exception to this was some Manchu-Tungus languages, for example Evenk, from which the very word is supposed to have its origin. It was German and Russian scientists, and later on also Russian-Orthodox missionaries, who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began to describe the most prominent ritual specialists among the peoples of Siberia with the term *shaman*

8 Thus, e.g., the ethnicities the Kachas, Sagais, Beltirs, and Koibals were brought together under the common ethnonym the Khakassians, and the Altai-Kizhi, Telengits, Telesys, Teleuts, Chelkans, and the Tubalars were all classified as the Altaians. The Telengits, Teleuts, and the Tubalars are today recognised as distinct peoples, officially belonging to the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation (Donahoe et al. 2008: 996).

9 *Assotsiatsiya korennykh malochislennye narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka*. One interesting detail in this context is that at the top of the RAIPON main page on the internet you find a picture of a ritual drum (see http://raipon.info/).

(Znamenski 2003: 1 ff).[10] In the various indigenous languages those religious functionaries that were to be classified as 'shamans' were designated with such terms as *nojd* (in Kildin Sami), *tadebya* (in Nenets), *ŋə''* (in Nganasan), *chirta-ku* (in certain Khanti dialects),[11] *oyuun* for a male and *udagan* for a female (in Yakut), *kam* (among the Altaians), *böö* (in Buryat) and, of course, *sama*, *saman* or *šaman* (in Manchu-Tungus languages such as Nanai, Ulchi, Even and Evenk). These are merely examples of terms for religious specialists in the various languages, and there were usually subcategories as well as other categories of ritual experts besides these.

One could certainly argue for the existence of 'shamans' among these peoples however such a 'shaman' may be designated in different languages. This is, in fact, the explicit or implicit argument behind every employment of the term *shaman* outside its narrow Manchu-Tungus context. The important thing to note here is that the concept 'shaman' was created by so-called outsiders—by European visitors—and that this category served its functions in these visitors' approaches to the indigenous Siberian cultures. In the early scientific world-view, where nature as well as culture should be classified in order to be explained, 'shamans' became the foremost example of foreign peoples' 'charlatans' who duped their kinsfolk with 'superstition' and cheap tricks. Some observers considered them to be mentally unstable or unwell individuals making a career out of controlling their hysterical fits. To Christian missionaries they were, first and foremost, servants of the Devil. Depicting foreign peoples' spiritual and political leaders as frauds, maniacs or devil-worshipers could be the only reason needed to motivate colonisation and the subjugation of the land and the peoples. There were, of course, other attitudes and assessments to be found among European travellers visiting the peoples of Siberia. In the Romantic reaction against Enlightenment rationalism, 'shamans' were at times idealised as the children of nature, with capacities to

10   The term was indeed already being used in Russian and other European literature during the second half of the seventeenth century, e.g. in Protopop Avvakum's relations of his encounters with the Evenks during his Siberian exile. However, according to Znamenski, at that time the term *shaman* was never used as a transcultural category, but specifically relating to the Evenk religious functionaries.

11   Indeed, the list of indigenous words for different types of Khanti 'shamans' is extensive (as it is in many other languages and cultures), something which has caused a debate among scholars as to whether the concept 'shaman' is at all applicable for Khanti religious experts (Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 176 f.). From my point of view, the Khanti case shows with clarity the coarseness of the concept 'shaman' and the way it obscures indigenous classifications and conceptions.

make use of primordial mental faculties for creative solutions to a variety of problems related to health and prosperity. Some nineteenth century scholars also opposed far-reaching comparisons between 'shamans' in different cultures, maintaining that the differences between them were too many (see further Znamenski 2003, 2007).

Since 'shamans' and their activities were regarded as being such a dominant feature of indigenous Siberian cultures, 'shamanism' has in many cases been used as the designation for indigenous Siberian religions in their entirety. From the Siberian examples the concepts were later on generalised and applied to ritual specialists and religious practices in other parts of the globe, preferably to those found in cultures that formerly were classified as 'primitive' and which today are commonly known as 'indigenous'. Some scholars have argued that the concept of 'shamanism' is appropriate only for a subset of religious beliefs and activities within these religions. Thus, 'shamanism' could occur together, or side by side with other subsets within one people's religion. The different peoples' religions could vary among themselves, but 'shamanism' was supposed to be more or less uniform and constant cross-culturally and through the ages (see e.g. Hultkrantz 1973; Pharo 2011: 60).

In Russian we find two terms denoting what in English is translated as 'shamanism'—*shamanstvo* and *shamanizm*. Often these terms are used quite synonymously, but some scholars have seen crucial semantic differences between them. According to the Soviet ethnographer Lyudmila Khomich, *shamantsvo* usually refers to 'early religious beliefs associated with the presence of a particular person, who conducts cultic acts in the form of a certain ritual', while *shamanizm*, in contrast, applies to 'the totality of notions about the surrounding world and humans, which paved the way for the formation of a phenomenon such as *shamanstvo*' (Khomich 1981: 5). *Shamanstvo* would thus, as applied by some, be a more specific concept which narrows down certain beliefs and ritual acts in connection with a distinct ritual functionary, a 'shaman'. *Shamanizm*, on the other hand, would be a wider concept designating a type of world-view, and does not necessarily presuppose the presence of 'shamans'.

Descriptions of Siberian 'shamans' and their activities in ethnographic literature are strikingly similar. 'Shamans' oftentimes perform in a particular ceremonial costume and use drums in their rituals. Their rituals aim at securing success and prosperity in hunting, fishing, stock-breeding, human and animal procreation, health and so on. Ordinarily they preside over recurrent calendric and life-cycle rituals. They commonly possess the capability to do harm through ritual acts and words, and they master the arts of the interpretation of dreams and visions as well as divination. In the capacity of

their proficiencies they are likely to be the authorities in their communities regarding a variety of issues. A would-be 'shaman' generally experiences a 'calling' in which he or she is beset by invisible beings which are presupposed within the world-view of the community. The process of being called to initiation as 'shaman' usually follows a certain pattern where the novice resists the call from the invisible beings, is cast into a state of confusion or disease, eventually capitulates to the will of the beings, recovers and takes on the new role. During rituals 'shamans' are described as undertaking out-of-the-body journeys to other places or dimensions of reality, where the invisible beings reside. Frequently, but not always, 'shamans' are described in this way.

Scholarly debates about the content and usage of the concept of 'shamanism' have been extensive, and they are likely to continue. There is neither the space, nor any need to account for these discussions and attempts at definitions here.[12] However, it is worth mentioning that scholars define and use the concept differently, in the sense that they distinguish different components as being decisive for something to be defined as 'shamanism'. Therefore the concept means slightly different things in different texts.

The type of definition that has been most common and has brought most attention—at least in American and Western European research—are the ones taking the performers' trance or ecstasy as the main criterion for distinguishing a ritual activity as 'shamanism'. Usually, this type of definition is associated with the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1964), since it is through his work that it has been granted wide circulation. In Soviet ethnography—the research tradition that during the nineteenth century maintained the study of the indigenous religions of Siberia—the proposed 'shamanic' trance was not particularly conspicuous, even if it can be found in some authoritative scholars' definitions and descriptions (see e.g. Tokarev 1964: 283). One reason for the lack of a mention of trance or ecstasy in Soviet research was the anti-religious attitudes and the particular analysis of history, religion and society maintained by the Marxist-Leninist perspective. As a consequence the Soviet discourse focused on the 'shamans'' social and political

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12   An excellent, and comprehensive, survey of the history of the concept in both European and American research is one by Znamenski, 2007, where the important Russian research is also accounted for (something which regrettably is missing in many English language introductions). One of the more recent introductions is DuBois, 2009, which represents the American and Western European research tradition, where examples of 'shamanism' to a lesser degree are collected from northern Asia. For recent critical investigations of the concept 'shaman' and 'shamanism', see e.g. Pharo 2011 and Rydving 2011.

roles rather than on their mental conditions (cf. Suslov 1931: 90–1). Another reason was probably that 'shamanism' was taken as such a self-evident feature of the indigenous Siberian cultures that the need for elaborated definitions, emphasising trance or other criteria, was not urgent. Yet another, most essential, reason was also that many of the Soviet ethnographers were not able to observe any state of trance, in the proper (psychological) sense, among 'shamans' during their field trips (see e.g. Gracheva 1983: 127; Potapov 1991: 100–4; Smoljak 1998). This fact could, of course, be due to the disappearance of trance in 'shamans'' rituals during the twentieth century. But then again, if one counts trance as the crucial criterion for 'shamans' and 'shamanism', it would mean that it was not these phenomena that the Soviet ethnographers encountered and described.

In a widely cited article the French anthropologist Roberte Hamayon (1993) has objected to the focus on 'trance' or 'ecstasy' in studies and definitions of 'shamanism'. Her point is that it is not possible either to empirically prove, or in any meaningful sense examine, trance states among performing 'shamans'. In addition, she finds theoretical problems with taking altered states of consciousness as a point of departure when studying 'shamanism'. To attribute the 'shamans'' behaviour during rituals to physiological and psychological factors implies that this behaviour is to be regarded first and foremost as dependent on nature, rather than on the cultural expectations that surround a 'shaman'. One consequence of the dominant focus on trance in research is, according to Hamayon, that 'shamans' have been psychologised and that the cultural and symbolic prerequisites for their behaviour have been seen as secondary. She distinguishes two main trends in the psychological approaches to 'shamanism' in the history of research. The first one she calls the 'mystical', which in many respects emanates from Eliade's work, albeit as an over-interpretation. Here 'shamanism' is understood as an 'exemplary kind of spiritual quest or a technique for seeking self-promoting "powers"'. It is this approach that has been cultivated within western neo-shamanism (see below). The second trend she names the 'psycho-pathological', in which it is contended that 'shamans' are mentally ill, but that they succeed in controlling their disorder, and subsequently are able to assist others that are mentally unstable (Hamayon 1993: 5–6).

Hamayon's conclusion is that a state of trance, in its psychological sense, is neither sufficient nor necessary for the ritual acts of 'shamans'. Neither is 'trance' sufficient or necessary for the understanding of these ritual acts by outsiders (i.e. researchers). What is essential is instead the 'shaman's' ability to have direct contact with the 'spirits'—the invisible beings presupposed in

the world-view in which he or she acts. 'Shamans' never act in isolation, on their own authority, but always in the context of a collectively held symbolic universe, in which the 'shaman' plays a certain role—'the shaman "in trance" is like the actor on stage'. According to Hamayon, what is sufficient and necessary in order to understand 'shamanism' is therefore to understand the symbolic system that each 'shaman' plays about with (Hamayon 1993: 17). The Soviet ethnographer Anna Smoljak presents a similar conclusion when she states, concerning the Nanai belief system, that 'behind the shamanic faith proper there is a "background" of general religious and non-religious beliefs, without which it is impossible to understand the conceptions of the shamanist' (Smoljak 1998: 11). Despite their conviction that the ritual activities of Siberian ritual specialists must be understood and interpreted with regard to the specific social and ideological contexts in which each one of them performs, both Hamayon and Smoljak maintain the categories 'shaman' and 'shamanism'.

The case of the trance shows how difficult it is to find a common denominator which would unite all purported instances of 'shamans' and 'shamanism', and which at the same time would distinguish them from other phenomena. Even if there may exist several similarities between different descriptions of Siberian ritual specialists' rituals and world-views, it is still unclear how widely and frequently these similarities are to be found. Are they, for instance, more numerous than the differences? It is also a delicate task to establish whether seeming resemblances represent the 'essence', the indispensable features, in all the instances referred to as 'shamanism'. Further, there does not seem to be any agreement, among scholars, as to the origin or reason for the supposed similarities. Are they due to historical contacts and influences between peoples and cultures, or are they expressions of universal human responses to certain psychological, social or ecological factors? One question that is only too rarely asked is whether the resemblances found in descriptions of Siberian 'shamanism' depend on similarities between the authors of the descriptions, that is, between the European observers that have documented 'shamanism' for their contemporaries and for posterity. It is after all from them we have the major part of what information there is on 'shamanism' in history. What role does the describers' level of knowledge, underlying purposes and theories play for the categorisations made of these foreign peoples' cultural expressions? To demonstrate decisive similarities between these European observers' schooling, professions, social positions, gender, linguistic, religious and cultural affiliations is often a much simpler procedure than pointing out any similarities between Siberian 'shamans'. Since our knowledge about these

scholars and missionaries, as a rule, is much more thorough, and the sources much more extensive, it is, of course, also easier to point out decisive differences between them in a nuanced way.[13]

My point here is not that there is a total lack of similarity between so-called shamans and the respective world-views they act within. Nor am I claiming that some sort of trance might not be an important part of many of their ritual performances. I also realise that it can serve certain analytical purposes to categorise partly similar, and at the same time partly dissimilar, phenomena with one common concept. But such an analytic concept must not be confused with a descriptive term. In such a case there is a risk that we understand different 'shamans' or 'shamanisms' more in the light of each other, rather than in the light of their respective specific contexts—this on no other basis than some, perhaps peripheral or superficial, resemblances (cf. Rydving 2010: 24–6). The important thing to call attention to here is that there was no notion of a common 'shamanism' among the Siberian peoples themselves a hundred years ago. Each indigenous group held world-views and ritual practices that were framed by the specific groups' historical, social, political, geographical and ecological situation, and they functioned as an attempt—good or bad—to handle this situation.

The variation that meets both the eye and the ear in terms like *nojd*, *tadebya*, *ŋə''*, *chirta-ku*, *oyuun*, *udagan*, *kam*, *böö* and *sama* can illustrate the variation that existed in the category of specialists collected under the heading 'shamans'. Even if this illustration, as pointed out above, does not rule out the possibility that we are dealing with, in some way or another, commensurable phenomena, it pinpoints yet another most important aspect—that these world-views and ritual activities were performed in a whole variety of quite separate languages. World-views are deeply ingrained in the languages in which they are communicated and performed (and we may well ask the question whether they exist at all outside the fabric of language). Thus, the persons that acted under these different designations did so in distinct linguistic, historical, social, political and cultural contexts. When outside observers classified them as belonging to one and the same category they distinguished one or a few features in the belief systems and activities under study, which they, as outsiders, considered being both common denominators as well as essential features in what 'shamans' believed and performed. Such a classification has, of course, its own linguistic, historical, social, political and cultural context.

13 For a more exhaustive reasoning of this kind of source criticism, see Sundström 2008.

I use the quotation marks around the terms *shamans* and *shamanism* here to emphasise that they are derived from a certain context. This context is European and does not represent indigenous Siberian nomenclature or ways of conceptualising the phenomena referred to. One interesting observation, though, is that if the concepts 'shamans' and 'shamanism' were formerly exclusively used by outsiders to designate indigenous Siberian religious practices—despite the rich variations between them—the concepts have now been adopted by indigenous proponents of a revival of indigenous religions. For this late and post-Soviet movement there is a significant motivation to use the terms *shamans* and *shamanism* (or to be exact, since the words we are dealing with are used in Russian, *shamany* and *shamanizm*) without the quotation marks, since they in this context reflect self-designations (cf. Rydving 2011: 8). Not to put too fine a point to it, one could say that formerly there was no shamanism in Siberia, but now there is.

Thus, I employ quite the reverse strategy than the one chosen by V. I. Kharitonova (2009). She uses quotation marks when referring to post-Soviet shamanism, because she finds the attempts to 'artificially' revive traditional 'shamanism' to be a 'deformed' version of the latter. I do not find it possible, as an outsider, to establish who is a *real* shaman or not, in the way Kharitonova (2006: 231 f.) does on the basis of external and internal qualities in relation to the tradition; that is to say how well the individual follows concrete ritual traditions of the past and has certain 'supersensitive-extrasensorical abilities' (*supersensitivno-ekstrasensornye sposobnosti*). To this end the historical sources are much too imperfect. However, I do not for a second doubt that many 'shamans' of yesterday (as well as shamans of today) were creative personalities that possessed the (quite human) abilities to experience inner visions—which is the main conclusion drawn from the psychological and neurophysiological investigations referred to by Kharitionova (2006: 27–40). But the question still is what do these creative personalities create? Do they all create the same thing? Just as with the very wide category of 'artists', they may use highly variable forms of expression, produce quite different world-views and represent completely contrasting ideologies.

In the following I will try to give some details of how 'shamanism' came to be adopted as shamanism and what its expressions are.

The cultural-national renaissance

Already by the time of perestroika in the 1980s, but with increasing intensity after 1991, the so-called cultural-national renaissance, or awakening (*kul'turno-natsional'noe vozrozhdenie*) swept the former Soviet Union. 'National' is in this case to be understood primarily as 'ethnic', rather than as relating to ideas of state-belonging and autonomy (even if such notions have been present in parts of the awakening). In short, the renaissance was about restoring and recapturing the ethnic minority cultures that were perceived to have been repressed under Communism, at the expense of a common Soviet culture.[14] The Russian ethnographer Aleksandr Pika (1999) has coined the expression 'neo-traditionalism' to capture this striving for regaining and re-adapting pre-modern traditions of one's own ethnic group to contemporary society.

The ethnicity policy of the Soviet Communist Party was in many ways ambiguous. On the one hand 'ethnicity' was a category that Marxist-Leninist politics tried to overcome—'social class' was, of course, the main category in political analysis and strivings. The policy was therefore directed toward instilling a sense of internationalism (*mezhdunarodnost'*) instead of nationalism. People were supposed to be Soviet citizens in the first place and only secondly belonging to a specific ethnic group. At the same time these attempts at 'Sovietisation' of the citizens' minds were often perceived as Russification by the minority groups, because of the apparent Russian-European traits in the modernisation that was carried through. On the other hand there were sincere attempts to strengthen the position of minority cultures and develop them within the framework of Soviet ideology. Through so-called native (*tuzemnye sovety*) or village councils (*sel'skye sovety*) even the 'small-numbered peoples of the North' were given the right to participate in decision-making on issues that concerned them. Traditional ways of sustenance were given some financial support from the government, even if they were also forced into collectivisation just like the Russian farmers. During the 1920s and 1930s great efforts were made to create alphabets and writing systems for several of the indigenous languages. Education was developed at the periphery and the ini-

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14   It serves to mention that a corresponding renaissance has taken place among 'indigenous peoples' in many places of the world over the last three or four decades of the twentieth century. To some extent this makes the Siberian cultural-national renaissance part of a globalised, and typically (post-)modern, phenomenon. However, the awakening of the peoples of the former Soviet Union had its specific prerequisites (cf. Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 319).

tial aim—even if it never came about other than in exceptional cases—was that it was given in the native languages of the pupils. To this end measures were taken to create indigenous intelligentsias which could bring socialism and modernity to their compatriots. These intelligentsias consisted first and foremost of teachers and cultural workers posted at local schools, houses of culture and regional museums—the new infrastructure for the development of local cultures (see further Slezkine 1994: 221 ff.; Sundström 2007: 129–43). The support of the indigenous cultures also included efforts to maintain and develop traditional folkloric features such as handicraft, songs, dances, games and national costume, often displayed during state sponsored festivals. These policies contributed to what Aimar Ventsel (2005: 172) calls the 'canonisation of "tradition"', that is to say, the elevation of selected features from a people's tradition as markers of that particular culture.

The different ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic Soviet Union were, according to Stalin's oft-cited motto, supposed to be 'socialist in content, national in form'.[15] The ideal was, accordingly, that socialist society and ideology should be implemented in genuinely local, indigenous—and thus slightly varying—forms. Concretely the slogan was realised through the formation of folklore groups wearing special folk costumes, manufactured for this purpose, singing to the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments on important Soviet holidays such as the first of May or International Women's Day. However, since these folk costumes and performances had many common traits with, and to a considerable extent had been influenced by, typically Russian folklore dresses and performances, they appeared more as Soviet (or even Russian) even in form, and national perhaps only in colour, so to speak.

When the foundations of the Soviet Union began to shake, many in the local intelligentsias wanted to strengthen the 'traditions' that were believed to be characteristic of the region and its native inhabitants. The 1990s meant a revolution in which many of the Soviet ideals were reversed. Instead of internationalism and the blending of cultures (in favour of the Russian), the particularities of ethnicities were now emphasised. The contours of the ethnicities were already present in the 'canonised traditions' from Soviet times, just as there were local intelligentsias who could lead their renaissance, and an infrastructure with museums and houses of culture where manifestations of traditional and ethnic culture could be displayed. One important element in the 'socialist content' during Soviet times was, of course, atheism. As a con-

15   *Sotsialisticheskie po soderzhaniyu, natsional'nye po forme.*

sequence, when searching for new content to fill the national or ethnic forms, for many it felt natural to look for it in atheism's antithesis, religion.

Religion's recapturing of a place in post-Soviet Russian society after 70 years of repression is evident. It must be added, though, that the only thing that can be reliably verified is the growing number of religious *institutions* and *organisations*, concretely in the form of a number of newly opened places of worship and registered congregations. Whether *religiosity* or *piety* in different forms have become more common, sincere or intensified to the same extent is difficult to say, since these things are much more difficult to study. The frequency of participation in religious services and public religious rituals is still comparatively low in the Russian Federation today, even if it has increased since Soviet times (see e.g. Kääriäinen 1999, Filatov & Lunkin 2006, Belyaev 2010). For the same reasons it is easier to establish that it was religious institutions and organisations that were successfully suppressed in the Soviet Union (Sundström 2007: 77–109). In the case of the indigenous Siberian religions the anti-religious campaigns were first and foremost directed towards the 'shamans'. However, 'shamanism' was in general considered to be extremely difficult to fight against, because it was not institutionalised in the same manner as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam. There were no organisations to prohibit, no temples to shut down and no literature to ban (Sundström 2007: 120).

Shamanism is by no means the only religious movement that has germinated among the indigenous peoples of Siberia in post-Soviet times. There has been, and still is, a competition among several different religions in the different areas concerned. In the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) it has been competing with not only Russian Orthodoxy and Protestant Churches, but also with an indigenous (neo-)pagan movement partly hostile to shamanism (Filatov 2000: 118, 121). In the southern Siberian republics Altai, Khakassia, Buryatia and Tuva the choice has been between shamanism and Buddhism. In Altai (as well as in some parts of Khakassia) both of them have met with competition from the indigenous revivalist movement known as Burchanism, which has its roots back in the beginning of the twentieth century (Halemba 2003; Filatov & Uzzell 2002: 108). In addition, it is not possible to say whether shamanism has won more adherents than, for example, Christian churches. Probably it has not, particularly compared with different Protestant movements from the West. In one sociological survey—referred to by Kharitonova (2006: 193)—a mere 3.6 per cent of the population in Tuva, one of the epicentres of the new shamanism, considered themselves to be adherents of shamanism. But there exists in Russia the time-honoured principle of a connection between cer-

tain religions and certain ethnicities, according to which Russians are presupposed to be Orthodox Christians, while the Central Asian and some North Caucasian peoples are Muslims and so on.

As already mentioned, in the Altai Republic several organisations, devoted to the revival of the indigenous world-view and rituals, appeared. They gathered people for discussions on the mythology of the past and created for this purpose meeting places in houses of culture. Some of those engaged in these movements claimed to have shamanic gifts and be representatives of an age-old shamanism. In general, these organisations propose a life and society in harmony with nature, an ecological world-view and code of conduct which is thought of as the traditional Altaic attitude (Halemba 2003: 174–6). In Sakha we find a corresponding process with organisations for the reawakening of traditional rituals, healing methods, world-views, storytelling, songs, dances, costume and cuisine. One central feature in these movements is shamanism (Filatov 2000; Yamada 2004: 221). These processes are perhaps most conspicuous among the larger indigenous groups in eastern and southern Siberia. But they are also found among the smaller groups, such as the Khanti in northwestern Siberia.[16]

In an attempt to explain why the indigenous religion, together with shamanism, has been the object of revitalisation among the Khanti, the Russian historian Elena Glavatskaya (2004) outlines three elements upon which Khanti identity has been resting: the native language; the specific way of life (the economy based on hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, the traditional clothing, cuisine, types of dwelling etc.); and the religion. During Soviet times all of these were suppressed. From the 1950s the language was set aside in favour of Russian—even though some measures were taken to support the Khanti language(s) in schools and through the publication of literature in one of the main dialects (Kazym Khanti), Russian gradually gained ground. Today some 65–70 per cent of the *ca* 25,000 Khanti speak the native tongue, but this proficiency is split between six main dialects and some thirty local idioms. After the Second World War the Khanti way of life was modernised

16   In the general cultural-national renaissance indigenous religion has also been reconstructed and revived among Finno-Ugric minorities in Russia west of the Urals, such as the Mari (see Toidybekova 1997, Luehrmann 2005) and the Udmurt (see Siikala 2000; Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 291–310). That traditional conceptions and ritual practices have been reconstructed, resurrected or 'recycled' (as Sonja Luehrmann puts is) does, of course, not mean that some of the elements revived completely lack a continuity with pre-to-post-Soviet times, rather the contrary. But forms of expression, and not least, the context have continually changed.

and many of the nomads became settled and urbanised. It is no longer hunting, fishing, reindeer herding or even a rural settlement that unites all the Khanti people. During the 1930s and 1950s the indigenous Khanti religion was fought against by the state under the slogan 'the struggle against shamanism'. However, this struggle did not mean that the religion of the Khanti completely disappeared, at least not in rural areas and among those who continued a traditional livelihood. But it ceased to be public and was assigned to the private sphere, hidden from outsiders (Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 179). Consequently the religion was kept secret from the 'Russians'; it became associated with 100 per cent Khantiness, as well as 100 per cent non or even anti-Russianness. Since the native language proficiency was divided between several dialects, and since the traditional way of life in general had changed beyond recall, religion seemed to be not only the most convenient element to reintroduce, but also the only one that had the potential of uniting all the Khanti people (Glavatskaya 2004: 239–40). The Japanese anthropologist Takako Yamada finds a similar connection between the revival of ethnic identities and the renaissance of the indigenous religion among the Sakha. This was expressed quite explicitly by some Sakha politicians, who strove to re-establish traditional religious festivals in order 'to make Sakha traditional culture the core of people's mentality' (Yamada 1999: 131). However, at a more popular level, religious expressions can still be connected to, and show continuity with, traditional kinship systems and present the same conceptions of the invisible beings and afterlife as a century ago. This has been shown for example on segments of the Khanti population in rural areas (see Glavatskaya 2010: 129–30; Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 196).

Many of the proponents of ethno-political mobilisation and the revival of shamanism and other spiritual traditions belong to the indigenous urban intelligentsias of writers, cultural workers and academics. Quite a few are ethnographers with 'shamanism' and folklore as their special field of study.

That the ritual specialists that were designated earlier, in their own contexts, with words like *tadebya*, *chirta-ku*, *oyuun*, *udagan*, *kam*, *sama* and so on, are increasingly either labelled with the very word *shaman*, or understood as being an equivalent of the category 'shaman' by representatives of the new shamanism, could be interpreted as evidence of the incorporation of the definitions of the colonial power by the colonised. Possibly it could also mean that deep and detailed knowledge about the former 'unique' indigenous traditions has sunk into oblivion and become superficial. In that case, what has been revived in the new shamanism would be a simplified and generalised version of the historical indigenous religions. But we could also interpret the

reawakening as a way to find a common identity and a common heritage, thus transcending ethnic borders that are no longer relevant. Today there are additional grounds for a common identification in the similar experiences of the different indigenous peoples during Russian colonialism and the Soviet period. As colonised peoples, forced into a minority position, the peoples of Siberia are uniting with other ethnic groups, all over the world, who in the same way identify themselves as colonised minorities and who today are defined as 'indigenous'. Significantly, many of these other indigenous peoples have also been ascribed as traditionally practising 'shamanism'.

Shamanism's institutionalisation and religionisation

Post-Soviet shamanism is, of course, a very disparate and complex phenomenon, with many different groups and individuals involved. Among these there are different aims, motivations and interests. There are also competing pretentions between different organisations and persons on representing an authentic 'tradition' (Lindquist 2006). The Russian-Swedish anthropologist Galina Lindquist writes that the new Siberian shamanism is a phenomenon in the making and is to be seen as 'a postmodern, post-colonial, social, and symbolic field' (Lindquist 2005: 265). Within this 'field' there are, however, many common traits, besides the fact that the participants identify their activities as shamanistic.

The Polish anthropologist Agnieszka Halemba contends that there is a distinct tendency towards 'institutionalisation' in the shamanistic renaissance movement in the Altai Republic. This is in contrast to the 'shamanism' of former days, which, unlike institutionalised Buddhism in Altai, was a constantly changing, undogmatic form of religion without a stable mythology (Halemba 2003: 171, 176). I would like to add to this that shamanism, in this process of institutionalisation—relying to a large extent on the organisational structures of Soviet society—has also become 'religionised' in the sense that it has been given forms that emulate well-established *religions* like Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.[17] This institutionalisation and religionisation is mani-

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17   In the Soviet Union it was frequently debated whether 'shamanism' was a 'religion' or not, and if so, in what sense. From the point of view of the authorities and academic research it was eventually concluded that it was a 'religion'. This debate is most interesting and I am preparing an article on this issue. A preliminary observation that deserves to be mentioned here, though, is that the debate shows that the classification of 'shamanism' as a 'religion' was far from self-evident from a Soviet perspective,

fested in, for example, the establishment of organisations and clinics, the publication of a certain kind of literature, the arrangement of sacred places and buildings for rituals and worship, the organisation of public rituals and feasts, and the creation of a network of national and international relations.

Organisations, clinics and literature

The shamanistic movements in the southern Siberian republics are probably the most highly developed and institutionalised. In, for example, Tuva and Buryatia, shamanism has been proclaimed an official traditional religion together with Buddhism and Russian Orthodoxy. The Russian ethnographer Valentina I. Kharitonova (2009: 153–4) argues that people structure their activities in ways they are used to since Soviet times, in organisations with a vertical, hierarchical structure. In Tuva a special kind of certificate is issued for shamans, confirming their right to perform shamanic rituals and to practise shamanic healing all over Tuva, and in parts of Russia and abroad as well. Interestingly enough, these certificates are shaped after the design of the membership cards for the Soviet Communist Party.[18] Certified shamans also have the opportunity to co-operate with the modern healthcare and social services. According to official statistics, in 2005 there were 8 registered shamanic organisations and 57 certified shamans in Tuva (even if the estimated actual number is considered to be several hundred; Kharitonova 2006: 192). In Buryatia the shamanic organisation *Khese khengereg* has in a similar way listed known practising shamans. In Tuva, Buryatia and Sakha, shamanic associations are registered as 'religious' organisations, even while their activities to a large extent consist of individual therapies and cures for clients and participants in the shamanic courses given. But in their capacity as *religious* organisations they are entitled to tax reductions, access to certain public funding and acquire a more favourable visibility compared to other confessions (Lindquist 2005: 269; Pimenova 2009: 161).

In the courses offered by the different shamanic associations, the participants are taught traditional knowledge, the shamanic world-view and ideas, and learn the practicalities needed to become a folk healer or shaman. The

but that the categorisations finally agreed upon had thorough-going consequences for how the indigenous world-views and ritual practices were treated.

18   Such a certificate, issued by Mongush Kenin-Lopsan for an *Ulug-Kham* or *Velikiy shaman,* a 'Great Shaman', is reproduced in Kharitonova 2006: 166. Besides authorising the owner to perform rituals and healing, the document also gives him the somewhat indistinct right to 'freely demonstrate the strength and antiquity of Tuvinian shamanism'.

centres where these organisations have established themselves are framed as clinics where clients can consult shamans for physical, mental or spiritual afflictions. The growing interest in traditional knowledge and 'shamanism' has also generated scientific centres where ethnographical studies covering the old 'shamanism' are considered, and the contemporary shamanic practices are examined with modern medical and scientific methods.

Possibly the most well-known and influential personage in the contemporary shamanic movement in Tuva is Mongush Kenin-Lopsan (b. 1925). Already in the 1960s he was a prominent Tuvinian intellectual, writer, poet and playwright, but also a trained ethnographer, educated in Leningrad, where he took a PhD in ethnography with a thesis on Tuvinian 'shamanism'. During Soviet times he was a member of the Communist Party. According to his own statement he belongs to a 'shamanic' family, his grandmother on his mother's side was an *Ulug-Kham*, 'Great Shaman', who for long periods of time was kept under arrest by Soviet authorities for 'anti-Soviet' and 'counter-revolutionary' activities. She is also supposed to have foretold for her grandson a future within 'shamanism'. Despite Kenin-Lopsan's advanced age he still keeps his office in the National Museum of Tuva, as well as his position as the head of the shamanic movement. He was one of the first proponents of a revival of shamanism in Tuva and started to this end the first shamanic organisation, Dungur (The Drum), in 1992. Dungur has later on hived off into sister organisations as well as rivalling groups and clinics. The head office of Dungur in Kyzyl, the capital of Tuva, was housed in a centrally located building, purposely bought by the government to accommodate the shamanic movement. The organisation is hierarchically structured, with Kenin-Lopsan as the president (he is sometimes called The Supreme [*Verkhovnyi*] Shaman of Tuva). As president it has been his ambition to make a record of all practising shamans and issue the organisation's special certificates. Despite the fact that he is training and authorising shamans, as well as practising some shamanic rituals and techniques, he has not taken the step to announce himself as a shaman (Lindquist 2005: 269; Kharitonova 2006: 165 ff.; Znamenski 2007: 350; Pimenova 2009: 169–70).

Lindquist (2005: 269) points out that the newly awakened shamanism in Tuva, for obvious reasons, lacks a literary canon that could compete with those of Christianity and Buddhism. Instead, the rich ethnographic Russian language literature has played the role of sources of knowledge about the indigenous world-view and rituals (cf. also Oshurkov 2009: 197–8). Not least Kenin-Lopsan's renowned scholarly work on the subject has served this function for reawakened shamans and shamanists. In addition, in the 1990s he

started to write what could be defined as dogmatic and liturgical literature with titles such as *Traditsionnaya etika tuvintsev* (Traditional Tuvinian ethics) and *Magiya tuvinskikh shamanov* (The magic of the Tuvinian shamans). The same kind of normative and didactic literature has been published in other areas where post-Soviet shamanism has sprung up. From Buryatia can be mentioned the revealing title *Tainstvo i praktika shamanizma* (The sacrament and practice of shamanism) by B. D. Bazarov. Just as when it comes to Western neo-shamanic literature, it is difficult to establish to what extent this kind of literature represents traditional academic research, creative selections from the global New Age supply, and old or new local traditions. Since many authors of these books and pamphlets are on the one hand trained academics, and on the other influenced by the new spirituality flourishing in Russia, as well as actively engaged in the cultural-national renaissance movement, these categories are easily blurred and merged.

One genre that at times comes close to the above-mentioned literature is that of the new textbooks intended for state schools in different areas of Siberia, and within which pupils are offered the opportunity to learn about their cultural heritage (see e.g. Popov & Tsymbalistenko 2001, which covers Nenets and Khanti mythology in the Yamal peninsula). In some cases the timetabling of curricula in indigenous traditions have met with criticism for not keeping within the boundaries of the ideal for education in a secular state. During the 1990s the Ministry of Education in Sakha launched a syllabus in 'spiritual education' (Balzer 2005: 62) and it also happened that shamans visited schools to teach both adults and children the traditional Sakha 'mentality' and world-view (Yamada 2004: 225). Sergei Filatov (2000: 119) also mentions that in some schools in Sakha a kind of 'pagan chapel' was set up and that in many of the houses of culture that were established in villages and small towns all over the republic during Soviet times, traditional prayers, rituals and ceremonies are now taught to the local people. Seen as examples of shamanism's 'religionisation', one could interpret these literary and educational measures as attempts at missionising the shamanic faith. However, the former president of the Sakha republic, Mikhail Nikolaev (ethnically Sakha), emphasised that all teaching of the indigenous spiritual traditions was strictly secular, merely aimed at rebuilding and reclaiming the national identity of the republic (Filatov 2000: 115).

Even if Nikolaev, in his capacity as president from the late 1980s and for most of the 1990s, emphasised the secular state (and, it seems, privately preferred the Russian Orthodox Church) he still actively supported the cultural, ethnic and spiritual renaissance along traditional Sakha lines. A national

foundation, *Vozrozhdenie* ('Revival' or 'Rebirth'), was founded in 1991 with the purpose of re-instituting indigenous rituals and ceremonies, traditional healing and world-views, Sakha narratives, songs, dances, costume and cuisine. This was supposed to be done among all ethnic minorities in the republic, that is to say beyond the dominant Sakha, also the Evenk, the Even and the Yukaghir (Yamada 2004: 221). In 1996 the president also created the *Akademiya dukhovnosti* (Academy of spirituality) in which were represented scholars, writers, artists and other intellectuals, including the Russian Orthodox Bishop of Sakha. The assignment for the Academy was to re-awaken and develop spirituality amongst the multi-ethnic population, to maintain and enrich its cultural heritage, as well as raising the intellectual potential of the area. There were schisms within the Academy between those who considered the assignment to be a secular project and those who conceived it more in religious terms. As a result of this, political zealots of indigenous Sakha religion formed an independent organisation, *Kut-Syur*,[19] as well as a nationalist political party, *Sakha Kaskele*. These two were far more radical than the president's initiatives, both in their religious and their nationalist attitudes. Even if the political powers at first encouraged them, by the end of the 1990s the regime found them much too radical and sought to marginalise them (Filatov 2000: 116–20; Yamada 1999: 94–5).

The founder and leader of Kut-Syur, the linguist Lazar' Afanasi'ev, also wrote a book, which was to function as a guide to the indigenous Sakha religion. The title of the book, *Aiyy uorete*,[20] can, in Afanasi'ev's usage, be translated approximately as 'Divine Teaching', but the concept is the same as the 'spiritual education' proposed by the Ministry of Education. *Aiyylar* (sg. *aiyy*), in the traditional Sakha world-view, is a term referring to benign, invisible beings belonging in the ninth, most remote, layer of heaven. In the eastern part of the ninth heaven, the supreme *aiyy*, Urung Aiyy Toyon, was supposed to reign. Urung Aiyy Toyon is traditionally identified with the sun. In his book Afanasi'ev describes a monotheistic mythology where the supreme

19   Kut-Syur can be translated as 'Soul-Power', a concept which, according to one contemporary urban shaman (*udagan*), 'signifies in general the ability to realise the potential that the human soul has' (Yamada 1999: 108). According to the founder of the organisation, Lazar' Afanasi'ev, this power is derived from the high god Aiyy. Thus, *Kut-Syur* also represents the divine that is inherent in every human being (Filatov 2000: 118). At the beginning of the 1990s another organisation, *Sakha Omuk* (The Sakha people) was founded. It had an agenda similar to that of Kut-Syur (Balzer 1993: 245).

20   The book is written in the Sakha language and has, to my knowledge, not been translated into any other language.

aiyy—naming him Aiyy—is declared as a creator god who gives soul and life to all living beings. Interestingly, in his systematised doctrine, Afanasi'ev also dissociates himself from the 'shamanism' that was prevalent among the Sakha at the beginning of the twentieth century. This type of 'shamanism' dealt only with the curing of illnesses and the warding off of malevolent invisible beings, *abassylar*, belonging to the underground. Instead of the *oyuun*, the 'black shaman' of the nineteenth century, he advocates the revival of the *aiyy oyuun*, the 'white shaman', which is mentioned in sources from the seventeenth century. In Afanasi'ev's teaching the *aiyy oyuun* works as the indigenous analogue to the Christian priest. It is worth mentioning, in this context, that in the general shamanic movement in Sakha, not only in Afanasi'ev's branch, the handling of the *abassylar* of the underground, that is 'black' shamanism, is a rare occurrence. It is the 'white' shamanism that has been revived, and although healing is a characteristic trait, this is done mainly through sacrifices and rituals directed toward heavenly powers (Filatov 2000: 114, 118; Yamada 1999: 93, 136).

In *Aiyy uorete* an ethic is outlined; formulated as commandments to respect nature, work hard, further your own potential, speak the truth, attain the truth through study, protect your *kut* (soul), respect the commandments of Aiyy, and not to commit adultery, kill or destroy (Filatov 2000: 118). In the ethics that have been propagated both by the Sakha government and by the new shamans, the traditional Sakha way of life, as well as its religion, is depicted as being in a symbiotic relationship with nature and thus ecologically sound. The core of Sakha culture is considered to be worship of nature (Yamada 2004, 2011).

Religious buildings, sacred places, feasts and rituals

Early on Afanasi'ev's Kut-Syur spoke in favour of the construction of a temple in honour of Aiyy in central Yakutsk, the capital of Sakha. But in place of such an *Aiyy Dieté*, 'House of Aiyy', an *Archie Dieté*, 'House of Purity', was built in 2002. The new 'temple' was not located as centrally as was proposed by Kut-Syur—and perhaps more significantly, it was not placed as close to the new Russian Orthodox cathedral. Mentioned as a shrine, the building is constructed to replicate a traditional dwelling of the Sakha, a *balagan*, and local artists have adorned it with symbols and motifs from Sakha mythology. In this place dances and rituals are regularly performed. Among the most central rituals enacted here are purifying rituals in which the hearth (*kiln*) is the object of focus. It is there that Uot Ichchite, the master of fire, is supposed to reside. By the *kiln* particular prayers (*algys*) are pronounced to other

mythological beings, and courses of study on the old world-view are taught. In the House of Purity naming rituals and weddings are conducted, but no burials or healing rituals. The house in many ways functions as a place where the kind of secular rituals created during Soviet times to replace the life cycle rituals carried out by the church, are performed (Balzer 2005). Similar plans to erect 'temples' or 'shrines' have been voiced in Buryatia and Tuva, none of which have been realised as of today, at least not to my knowledge. However, Kharitonova contends that the centres and clinics run by shamanic organisations in these republics in practice function as sacred places. Yurts or different types of sacrificial mounds where rituals are performed, have been erected in the yards of these urban centres. Local museums have also become sites for collective feasts and rituals (Kharitonova 2009: 156–8).

The traditional round dances (*osuokhai*) that are nowadays performed every Sunday in the House of Purity, were in former days carried out only in summer time, mostly in connection with the traditional midsummer celebration, *ysyyakh*. Since 1991 *ysyyakh* has been a national holiday held in many towns and villages all over Sakha. Occasionally it was also celebrated in Soviet times, but then as a secular festival with a 'socialist content' and involving Soviet symbols. In Yakutsk the House of Purity is responsible for the arrangement of the feast, which is held outside of town (Balzer 2005: 62). *Ysyyakh* has been known from ethnographic and historic literature since the seventeenth century, and there are also even older records suggesting that previously there were two important feasts held among the Sakha; *aiyy ysyyakh* at the summer solstice, and *abassy ysyyakh* in late autumn. During the latter, sacrifices were directed toward the *abassylar*. Formerly the name *ysyyakh* was also used for every major feast, for example weddings, when fermented horse milk, *kumiss*, was consumed and poured out in libations for different kinds of invisible beings (the majority of the Sakha were traditionally horse breeders).

As is the case with many major feasts it is not self-evident what is actually being celebrated. *Ysyyakh* is a New Year festival, since the new year is considered to begin with the arrival of summer. Just as in former days, the feast also serves social functions, strengthening the bonds of the community. In today's celebration you also find several particular rites, derived from the traditional religion: the greeting of the rising sun; the lighting of the fire, which is kept burning during the whole feast and onto which the ceremonial leader pours libations of kumiss to the *aiyylar*; prayers to Urung Aiyy Toyon are offered up, as well as to the 'spirit of the earth'; the round dance *osuokhai* is performed. In olden days there were particular dances where young women and young men were coupled together. In present day *ysyyakh* this rather corresponds

to the modern discotheques arranged for the youth. Just as before there are today also many features that could be classified as secular, such as wrestling competitions, beauty contests and horse racing. Among the modern features we find for example exhibitions of indigenous arts and crafts, fashion shows, rock and folk music concerts. It is generally considered that in the remote past the ceremonial leader of the *ysyyakh* was an *aiyy oyuun*, a 'white shaman', even if the financer and organiser of a particular feast, generally a male elder, at times might perform this function. In contemporary *ysyyakh* celebrations, leading politicians, academics or well-known intellectuals are not uncommonly the ones leading the festivities and giving speeches. But reinstituted also is the white shaman, who leads prayers, lights the ceremonial fire and performs libations. To this end a new white costume has been designed for the *aiyy oyuun* (Yamada 1999: 123–32).

Western neo-shamanism and 'world shamanism'

At the same time as the revival of shamanism began among the indigenous peoples of Siberia, in the 1980s, a form of shamanism also sprang up in Moscow, Leningrad and other big cities in the Soviet Union. The shamanic practices and doctrines that reached Russian and other nationalities in Russian urban areas came from Western Europe and North America, where it had grown out of the multi-faceted New Age environment. The most prominent figure in this movement—most often referred to as neo-shamanism—was, and still is, Michael Harner, an American anthropologist who specialised in the Jivaro and Conibo peoples of the Amazon forests. His book *The Way of the Shaman* (1980) is a guide to how each and every one can practise shamanic techniques to further self-development and find harmony in life. Harner contends that he has accomplished a synthesis of all the 'shamanic' techniques from cultures all over the world, a synthesis he calls 'core shamanism'. The lowest common denominator, the core, of 'shamanism' in general, Harner claims to be a certain altered state of consciousness, the 'shamanic state of consciousness', or trance.[21] Following Harner's practical guide anyone can reach this state through drumming, dancing, singing and meditation techniques. With *The Way of the Shaman* and courses in the specified shamanic techniques, 'drum

21 For a thorough investigation (in Swedish) of Harner, as well as of other prominent figures in western neo-shamanism, see Svanberg 2003, where the neo-shamanic ideology's entanglement with anthropological research is stressed.

journeys' came to be practised not only by seekers from the western middle classes, but also by young people in the Soviet Union during perestroika. In the same way as the indigenous peoples of Siberia tried to fill their lives with a 'spiritual' content, an array of occult and esoteric teachings surfaced among urban intellectuals in Russia when the Communist Party, together with its proclaimed atheism, started to lose authority.

It is not easy to tell to what degree the neo-traditional movement working for a cultural-national renaissance among the peoples of Siberia would have picked up on their own shamanism without the inspiration from Western neo-shamanism. In any case, those who have headed post-Soviet shamanism in Siberia have studied not only Russian and Soviet ethnographies on their own cultures, and listened to recollections of peoples from the older generation remembering past and withered traditions. They have also learned from American and European New Age literature. Therefore, in many contemporary Siberian shamans' vocabulary we often find terms like *energies*, *aura*, *chakra*, *karma*, which are well-known from Western New Age terminology (Znamenski 2007: 353–61; Kharitonova 2009: 153).

Today there is a symbiosis between Western neo-shamanism and the neo-traditional shamans of Siberia. From Moscow and St Petersburg seekers travel to the Siberian shamans to both learn and teach. Harner's organisation, the Foundation for Shamanic Studies has arranged conferences, seminars and courses in Siberia, notably in Tuva. It has also financially supported Tuvinian shamanic organisations. In 1994 Mongush Kenin-Lopsan was awarded the honorific title Living Treasure of Shamanism, together with a smaller life-term stipend, by Harner and his foundation. But it is not only Westerners who are travelling to Siberia to seek contact with indigenous shamans. Siberian shamans are travelling to Europe and America to give seminars and perform their art. In 1998 four of the most prominent Tuvinian shamanic practitioners, among them Kenin-Lopsan, were invited to California to teach students taking courses at the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. One of the participants of the course, Susan Grimaldi, remembers Kenin-Lopsan saying in his introductory speech and addressing Harner:

> We think that we'll learn from each other: you from us and us from you.
> Together we'll work, so that world Shamanism will have progress and
> all of us will prosper together. I think that your Shamanism and Tuvan
> Shamanism together is what is called "world" Shamanism. . . .When we

join forces we will become much more powerful, and together we will
move Shamanism forward all over the world.[22]

To what extent Kenin-Lopsan paraphrased 'world religion', 'world Com-
munism' or 'world' as it is used in, for example, 'world music' when speak-
ing about world shamanism is hard to tell. But without doubt he has joined
Harner in the notion that shamanism is not only a religion for the Tuvinians,
but a concern for all of humanity.

The election of a Supreme Shaman of Russia

In spring 2009 the Moscow based internet journal *Shamanstvo* (www.
shamanstvo.ru) arranged 'the first popular election of a Supreme Shaman of
Russia' (*pervye narodnye vybory Verkhovnogo Shamana Rossii*), an election
that was open to every internet user between May and October of that year.
In the list of eligible candidates were 188 names of practising shamans from
the Siberian countryside as well as from the Russian metropolises. On the
website were published short biographies explaining to what extent each and
every nominee had shamanic descent or possessed other qualities that could
be of merit for a representative of all shamans in the Russian Federation. The
person who had organised the election, Olard Dikson (known also under his
shaman name El'vil, 'The Wild Reindeer') was also nominated. Dikson has
a long history in Moscow's New Age and neo-shamanic circles, and is the
author of a whole range of practical guides in shamanism (written in the spirit
of Harner). He has also co-operated with many shamans from the indigenous
peoples of Siberia.[23]

The announcement of the election obviously met with a lot of negative
response. Tuvinian and Altaic shamans criticised the arrangement for being a
political act with the aim of controlling practising shamans. Tos Deer in Tuva,
a sister organisation of Dungur, declared, according to the new agency TASS-
Sibir', that a shaman is neither a 'president' nor a 'governor', nor a 'supreme re-
ligious office' to be elected. The organisation *Belaya Vera* (The White Faith) of
the Altai Republic argued that shamanism is not a religion, but a completely
individual practice.

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22   http://www.susangrimaldi.com/docs/tuvamerica.pdf (accessed on 20 May 2011); see
      also Znamenski 2007: 354.
23   See www.indrikgrad.ru/praktiki/olard/ (accessed on 19 May 2011).

Dikson defended himself by pointing out that many shamanic associations, including Tos Deer, are official religious organisations with registered shamans and elected representatives exercising authority over their members. In Tuva we already find a recognised 'president' for Tuvinian shamans (Kenin-Lopsan), and in addition several shamans have reached positions in the republic's government and authorities. The White Faith organises around 60 shamans, a fact which, to Dikson, does not look like pronounced individualism.[24]

One of the nominees, the Buryat 'celebrity shaman' Valentin Khagdaev—who, by the way, is sometimes called the 'Supreme Shaman of Olkhon Island' in Lake Baikal—protested in the press against his nomination and the whole procedure. In an interview he repudiates the idea of lumping all shamans together and imposing a hierarchy among them:

> Each of the peoples [*narodnost'*] of Russia have their own shamans, with particular ancient traditions from their [respective] forebears, that are not mutually similar cultures. All shamans are different, and that's good. It is more interesting to live that way. There is no such concept as a supreme shaman of Russia. A shaman can have authority and be respected, [so] each of the peoples of Russia ought to have their own supreme shaman.[25]

Khagdaev also contends that you must differentiate between the 'traditional shamanism' among the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the 'new Russian neo-shamanism'. The latter is a new invention, while the former is a centuries old religion and way of life that has never been forced upon anyone. To neo-shamans shamanism is just a hobby and entertainment. 'How can they lay claim to the title Supreme Shaman of Russia? They have no authority over us us. We will never accept them. They are alien people to us.'[26]

Despite these statements by Khagdaev, it is interesting to note that he also seems to understand shamanism in a way that corresponds both to Harner's and other neo-traditionalist practitioners' characterisation of it, as the mother of all religions and as the *Urphilosophie* of mankind:

> Shamanism is an ancient human system of knowledge which developed more than 10,000 years ago. It is the basis of all philosophical, mystical

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24   www.shamanstvo.ru/news_shaman/2009/news-30.htm (accessed on 19 May 2011).
25   http://pressa.irk.ru/friday/2009/20/009001.html (accessed on 19 May 2011).
26   http://pressa.irk.ru/friday/2009/20/009001.html (accessed on 19 May 2011).

and religious ideas, since it preceded as well as influenced all of these to a greater or less degree. All of the peoples of the Earth, independent of where they live today or to which confession they belong, were shamanists, and some of them remain such to this day.[27]

In the end the election was cancelled, officially because of electoral rigging and attempts to arrange a competing election.[28] Possibly the failed attempt at an election and the reactions it met with indicate that the Siberian shamanic movement will begin to emphasise particularity and differences between the indigenous traditions, as well as differentiate itself more from the 'European' neo-shamanism. Some scholars have also noted tendencies in recent years toward what Kharitonova labels 'de-shamanisation', that is that the interest in shamanism has decreased and several practitioners have either ceased their practices altogether or taken up other kinds of therapeutic methods (Kharitonova 2009: 160; cf. also Znamenski 2007: 352). At all events, the debate on the Supreme Shaman of Russia has given proof of variety and disunity within shamanism in Siberia and Russia.

The varieties of contemporary shamanism and the question of authenticity

Despite the tendencies toward institutionalisation and religionisation, as well as the uniformity that is reflected in the fact that the practitioners all conceptualise their activities as *shamanism*, this shamanism is expressed in many different ways and the concepts involved are also the subject of internal disagreements. In his studies of a contemporary Evenk shaman in the Buryat countryside, M. N. Oshurkov (2009: 201) finds that this shaman's activities are not, as opposed to the 'shamans' of former days, restricted to his own clan, and today he does not serve the function of unifying a certain group of people. In contrast to the old days, this shaman is in the service of anyone who looks him up—he runs a private practice where he cures individual clients. On the other hand, one could say that a shaman attracts larger and more heterogeneous groups of people. Lindquist (2005; 2006) accounts for her own participation in a 'scientific-practical' expedition to Southern Siberia, which attracted

27   http://pressa.irk.ru/friday/2009/20/009001.html (accessed on 19 May 2011).
28   http://www.shamanstvo.ru/news_shaman/2009/news-35.htm (accessed on 20 May 2011). The announcement was written and published by Dikson's wife, Khakassian born Shonchalai Khovenmei.

a multi-faceted group of researchers: scholars of various disciplines, psychologists, Russian and foreign representatives of different New Age therapies, members of indigenous peoples interested in their spiritual cultural heritage, and tourists. All of these participants had their own particular interest in shamanism, just as the performing (and at the same time studied) shamans had theirs. Many of these interests might seem trivial, such as consuming experiences of the exotic or earning money from performing colourful rituals. However, this does not exclude the possibility of sincere spiritual interests being present among all the involved, or that the new shamanism cannot create a sense of belonging and identity in both individuals and groups.

Besides the more organised expressions of shamanism, which have been described in this article, shamanism also exists as a more general theme in much of today's Siberian folklore, literature, art and craft; things that constitute important sources of income for many members of the indigenous peoples. In itself these folklore performances and arts can be interpreted as ways of ritually re-creating and manifesting ethnic identity. The practitioners do not necessarily invest more meaning in these performances and expressions than a desire to protect and develop their cultural heritage—tangible and intangible.

Contemporary Nanai handicraft, reproductions of amulets (middle) and figurines of the 'protectors of the family' (left and right) sold as souvenirs in the city of Khabarovsk. Photo by the author.

In her account of the debate on the establishment of the House of Purity in Yakutsk, the American anthropologist Marjorie M. Balzer (2005) shows how controversial the new shamanism can be. In Sakha there are groups that she describes as 'fundamentalists' (e.g. some representatives of Kut-Syur), who claim that one should keep to the original teachings and practices (supposedly codified in the old ethnography). In opposition to these she finds the more politically pragmatically inclined, who strive to reinstitute a rather vague and openly defined cultural heritage, and those who consider all religious and nationalist motives for a renaissance of shamanism as a threat to the secular state.

There is also a general scepticism toward the practitioners of post-Soviet shamanism. These doubts are found among researchers, but perhaps more so among the older members of the indigenous peoples—those who have personal memories of the 'shamans' of former days or perhaps even in their youth practised the religion now said to be revived. In this debate questions about what or who is an 'authentic' shaman have arisen. As 'authentic shamans' are considered to be those who stand in an unbroken tradition, have learned the mythology and rituals directly from predecessors and have inherited an ascribed gift either by belonging to a 'shaman family' or can show certain signs of being 'chosen by the spirits'. Such 'authentic shamans' are at times supposed to exist in remote areas where traditional life, untouched by modernity, is still present (Lindquist & Höjdestrand 2003: 131; Znamenski 2007: 357–8; Glavatskaya 2010; Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 176 ff.). Folk medicine and popular conceptions and rites probably exist in certain places in a more or less unbroken tradition, just as in other parts of the world, even if this is studied to a lesser degree than the shamanism that has entered the urban and political scene. Possibly there is also a greater general acceptance for such ideas and practices in post-Soviet times. But it is questionable whether these popular traditions are conceptualised as shamanism in the indigenous communities concerned.

The new shamans are well aware of the traditional demands of being able to show signs of being a 'chosen one'. Oftentimes they also refer to relatives that are supposed to have been 'shamans' in the past, but who were repressed and purged during the Stalin era. In the personal biographies of today's shamans you often find narratives about the crisis that became the turning point in their lives and that led to their present role. These crises are meant to correspond to the 'initiation diseases' the old 'shamans' went through, only the themes of the crises belong to the modern world, and include events such as car accidents, unemployment, or divorces (see e.g. Pimenova 2009). There

Contemporary artistic performance of Evenk shamanic dance during the folklore and art festival *Zhivaya nit' vremen* (The living thread of the ages) in Khabarovsk, August 2010. Photo by the author.

are also examples of those who can show physical signs of being chosen, such as the above mentioned Khagdaev, who has a thumb divided in two.

From an outsider's perspective it is not possible to decide upon such claims to authenticity, unless one accepts the premises of the world-view in question. If you do not share the conviction that the purported 'spirits' exist and have the capacity to influence people and events, it is just as impossible to accept or deny the claims of the shamans as it is to draw conclusions from a purported state of trance. Therefore, as an outsider you are confined to try to understand the external social, political and other expressions of shamanism. Looking at these expressions there is no doubt that present-day shamanism is in this regard just as authentic as ever the 'shamanisms' of yesterday. Shamanism today is framed by the historical, social, political, geographical and ecological situation of individuals and groups, and it functions as an attempt—good or bad—to handle this situation.

Concluding remarks

The title of this article is a question. As may be obvious, the wording—'is the shaman indeed risen in post-Soviet Siberia?'—is borrowed from the Christian Easter liturgy. By the end of the Russian Orthodox Easter vigil, when the doors of the iconostasis are opened, the priest turns to the congregation and utters *Khristos voskrese!* (Christ is risen!), and the crowd replies *Voistinu voskrese!* (Indeed he is risen!). This is also the common Easter greeting among Christians in Russia, as well as in most parts of the world. But since the 1990s, with the fall of the Soviet Union, when the Church was regaining a position in Russian society, the phrase 'Indeed he is risen!' was lent additional meaning and weight among many Orthodox believers in Russia. With these words not only the resurrection of Christ was saluted, but also the return of priests, sanctuaries and Christianity itself after 70 years of atheist repression.

I would say that the answer to the question as to whether the shaman and shamanism are risen in today's Siberia is yes. But I would not say that they have been resurrected in the sense that the Christian wording may imply. The birth of shamanism as a practised religion, common to the indigenous peoples of northern Russia, Siberia and the Far East—as well as to other peoples on the globe—took place in the 1980s and 1990s. Like all other religions it has, of course, its prehistory, as well as its internal controversies and differences. With a creative reformulation of a supposed tradition to fit present day conditions, Siberian shamanism has come into existence.

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TEEMU TAIRA

Atheist spirituality

A follow on from New Atheism?

Books about well-being, self-improvement, life management and spirituality have been popular for many years. It is not news to anybody that such topics sell. However, books on atheism have never become bestsellers until the early years of the twenty-first century. Now the so-called New Atheist books have altogether sold millions. It may sound surprising, but atheism sells. It may have been the idea of a publishers' marketing department to put the two selling points together, but in recent years a number of books about atheist spirituality, spiritual atheism and atheist self-help have been published. That has been one aspect of the increased visibility of atheism and spirituality in public discourse.

Atheist discourse which is combined with 'spirituality' might be called 'post-secular' as it does not fit easily into the neat binary classification between religious and non-religious secular. Whether we choose to use the term or not, this is something that will be reflected on later in this chapter. At this point it is enough to say that there is a large area of the current atheist discourse which is not easy to map neatly onto the binary opposition between religion and the non-religious secular. Therefore, I shall examine this hybrid area in atheist discourse in relation to three aspects: monotheism, spirituality and meditation. I shall argue that atheist discourse situates itself against monotheism, but that some spokespersons combine atheism with spirituality and meditation. This works as an example of a wider and recent trend in society where a blurring of the earlier normative boundaries between religion and non-religion has become fairly common, not necessarily in terms of beliefs, but of practices. Even though there is a long tradition of non-theistic and atheistic readings of Buddhism, for example, they have rarely been combined with an explicit criticism of monotheistic traditions and atheist consciousness-raising.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First I shall describe and analyse the ways in which spirituality is dealt with in the recent atheist bestsellers. Then I shall focus on less well known books which could be labelled as books about

atheist spirituality. After that I shall summarise my understanding of the approaches to aforementioned aspects in the atheist discourse. Finally, I shall end my presentation with two general conclusions, one analytical and the other critical.

Uneasiness about spirituality in New Atheism

The backbone of the so-called New Atheist discourse consists of five key authors and their books, which were published between 2004 and 2009. There are many differences and disagreements among these, and therefore placing a selection of heterogeneous authors under one term is not fully accurate, but there are similarities to be noted. One of the obvious similarities in their message is that they are all arguing against monotheism from the perspectives of natural science and scientific rationality. They consider religion to be based on wrong and harmful propositional beliefs (i.e. religious statements are understood to be false knowledge-claims about the world). Their main targets are Christian creationists and Islamic fundamentalists, but their negative evaluation is extended to all religious institutions and moderate religiosity. Furthermore, they have praised each other and four of them have participated in recorded round-table discussions in September 2007 which ran under the title 'The Four Horsemen'. Regarding spirituality, the New Atheists are divided into two camps.

The God Delusion by the British evolutionary biologist and popular science author Richard Dawkins was published in 2006. It was an instant bestseller that ridiculed religious beliefs. There is no spirituality or meditation in the index of the book. *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* by the journalist Christopher Hitchens, who grew up in Britain and later emigrated to the United States, was published in 2007. There is no spirituality or meditation in the index of this bestseller either. Both Dawkins and Hitchens are explicitly anti-religious, but they mostly deal with monotheistic traditions and their understanding of religion is rooted in the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam). Still, it is safe to assume that they are not particularly sympathetic towards non-theistic spirituality or meditation. In his book *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, published in 2006, the Darwinian philosopher Daniel Dennett, who works in the United States, writes about spirituality, but only in order to analyse why 'spirituality' has a

positive association for many. He is not advocating it.[1] Meditation is not a word found in the index of his book.

These three well-known atheists who have not expressed any sympathy towards spirituality are now excluded from what I explore here. However, Sam Harris, whose bestseller, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, was published in 2004 when the author was doing his PhD in neuroscience in the United States, differs from Dawkins, Hitchens and Dennett when it comes to 'spirituality'. Since then Harris has published two more books—*Letter to a Christian Nation* (2007) and *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (2010), based on his PhD, in 2010, but from the point of view of spirituality *The End of Faith* is the most important of these.

Harris is known for his positive approach to spirituality and eastern thought, even though he does not accept any supernatural elements. It is also known that after college he travelled in India and Nepal and studied with Hindu and Buddhist teachers (Miller 2010). What he means by spiritual (and mystical) are rare, significant and personally transformative experiences. These are, according to him, worth seeking, and the results of what he calls spiritual practices are 'genuinely desirable', but at the same time he emphasises that spirituality is 'deeply rational' and 'universal'; something that binds people together, whereas religious irrationality separates people. (Harris 2006: 40, 45.)

Even though the word meditation is not in the index of *The End of Faith*, there actually is a subheading with that name, just after subheading 'The Wisdom of the East'. Harris suggests that the West is standing on the shoulder of dwarfs as opposed to the spiritual giants of the east, such as the Buddha, Nagarjuna and others (p. 215), and continues to write positively about meditation. The aim of meditation, according to Harris, is to get rid of the duality of subject and object, to get rid of the self and its identification with thoughts in order to 'recognize the condition in which thoughts themselves arise' (p. 217). The end result should then be a positive one, whereas religious practices

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1   Dennett suggests that materialism as a philosophical standpoint is confused with the meaning of materialism in everyday language, in which it refers to senseless, uncaring and empty consumerism and hedonism. Therefore, if one wants to differentiate him/herself from a 'materialist' in the everyday sense, it is best to be 'spiritual', which is associated with moral goodness and other positive attributes. (Dennett 2007: 302–7.) I agree with Dennett, but here it is more important that as a self-identified materialist Dennett is not interested in evaluating whether spirituality or the practices related to it are good or bad things.

are seen as having a negative impact, simply because they are irrational, according to Harris (p. 221).[2]

An emeritus professor of physics and astronomy, Victor J. Stenger, who considers himself as the fifth horseman, published a book called *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* in 2009. Stenger, who made a career as a scientist in the United States and who has also become a well-known critic of religion, judges monotheistic religions as being incapable of accounting for the suffering of the world. He goes on to claim that Christianity and Islam are the most popular religions in the world, because they 'appeal to our most selfish instincts with the promise of eternal life', reinforcing the negative attitude towards Abrahamic religions. However, he continues that Buddhist and other eastern teachings are still applicable today. Then he nods to Harris, maintaining that they both think that the practices of the eastern traditions, including meditation, have the same positive force, even when they are stripped of any supernatural baggage. (Stenger 2009: 15–16.) Stenger (p. 222) says that he has never seriously practised meditation, but he clearly deems it as a positive practice. He thinks Zen might be difficult for a beginner and therefore it might be better to start with Transcendental Meditation or Yoga, but Stenger also warns about the spiritual and mystical baggage that may come with them. Finally, he suggests that we need a fully materialistic method of meditation.

This positive approach to spirituality and meditation has received an ambiguous response among fellow-atheists. For instance, the journalist and atheist Johann Hari (2005) who regularly contributes to the English newspaper *The Independent* criticised Harris in an otherwise positive review for advocating spirituality and giving up a rational atheist case. According to Hari the book

> takes another strange turn. Having savaged the idea of religion for over a hundred pages, Harris suddenly announces that he wants to craft an atheist brand of "spirituality". He praises "the great philosopher mystics of the East" including the Buddha – and says that "spiritual experience is clearly a natural propensity of the human mind." At this point – as somebody

2   The emphasis on spirituality and eastern traditions is further evidenced in the following detail: the German translation of *The End of Faith* was published by the spirituality / new age publishing house *Spuren*, arguably because of the author's interest in Buddhism and spirituality. I would like to thank Thomas Zenk for pointing this out.

who feels no hunger for a "spiritual" dimension to my life at all – I began to choke. (Hari 2005.)

Hari continues that Harris 'flirts with the idea that we can connect with non-material realms (at one point, he eccentrically claims there is evidence for "psychic phenomena") – which hardly seems to be a rational atheist case' (Hari 2005). What seems to be at stake in the issue of spirituality in atheist discourse is rationality itself, which in addition to the natural sciences, is the foundation so-called New Atheists believe they stand on. Harris and Stenger, who support spirituality and meditation, emphasise their rational nature, while others see spirituality as verging on the supposed non-rationality of monotheistic religions.

Versions of atheist spirituality

After the publication of the New Atheist bestsellers there has been a new twist in the current (predominantly Anglophone) atheist discourse. I will explore three examples of recently published books which can be understood as following on from the so-called New Atheist publications. These are books written by Steve Antinoff, André Comte-Sponville and Eric Maisel. Even though they do not comment much on the new atheists, they have obviously landed onto a market which is already filled with atheist books which have been focusing on criticising religion instead of telling like-minded people how they could or should live. The idea that these books are to some extent follow ons from the new atheist bestsellers becomes clear by having a look at the blurbs and praises for these books:

> Continuing where writers such as Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris left off. . . (Back cover of Antinoff).

> A book that takes the current atheist/believer debate to a much higher level (Thomas Cathcart & Daniel Klein of Comte-Sponville).

> . . .Maisel does what none of the New Atheists have succeeded in doing: elaborating what atheists *do* believe (Hemant Mehta).

> . . .more witty than Hitchens, more polished and articulate than Harris, and more informative and entertaining than Dawkins. . . (David Mills of Maisel).

> . . .a giant leap beyond where the New Atheist authors have gone before
> (Donna Druchnas of Maisel).

On the one hand it is obvious to regard these books as following on from New Atheism, because that is how they are located in the current discourse. They are trying to answer the questions that remain unanswered by the New Atheist bestsellers in which the main focus was criticism rather than constructions of a positive, atheistic standpoint. On the other hand, the ideas presented in these books are not completely absent in the books written by Harris and Stenger, as has become clear. I shall now turn to these follow ons and I shall describe their views briefly.

My first example is a book by Steve Antinoff. *Spiritual Atheism* was published in 2009 and its author has studied and practiced Zen Buddhism and meditation extensively. Antinoff's spirituality is mainly a Zen Buddhist approach on how to live a happy and satisfying life, with reminders that this is an atheist standpoint. He even argues that Zen is one of the historical manifestations of spiritual atheism.

Antinoff suggests that a need for the spiritual remains in atheism and proposes meditation as a main tool for the evasion of I. He writes that 'the appeal of eastern thought is the prospect of the realization of the infinite, of oneself as infinite, without recourse to God' (2009: 67). According to Antinoff, our experience of ourselves and our world leaves us ultimately disappointed. This feeling is intolerable, but because there is no god, different solutions must be sought (p. 9). In his words, it does not matter whether you are an atheist, you will still have an ineradicable spiritual longing (p. 19), and the aim of the book is to help you in coping with that. The approach is focused on the individual, not society, and therefore it is also understandable that of all the eastern traditions he leaves Confucianism aside as uninteresting. Extensive quotes from Zen masters, combined with suggestions for meditation practices are the main advice given by the author, who is convinced that mundane human experiences, such as sexual love, artistic creativity and social vocations will fail to satisfy us. Therefore, Antinoff suggests, we need spirituality and meditation in order to satisfy our atheistic condition. However, the author has very little to say about atheism beyond his note that there is no god. Hence it is hard to imagine any other reasons than marketing ones for putting the word 'atheism' in the title, but as such it challenges the neat distinction between the religious and non-religious secular.

The second example is a book by André Comte-Sponville, a well-known French philosopher. *L'Esprit de l'athéisme : Introduction à une spiritualité sans*

Dieu was published in French language in 2006 and translated into English in the following year. It is available with two different titles, *The Little Book on Atheist Spirituality* and *The Book of Atheist Spirituality*.

The author argues that 'spirituality' is far too important to be left to fundamentalists and that it remains the task of atheists to reinvent spirituality. It is something that is situated between fanaticism and nihilism. (Comte-Sponville 2007: x.) His definitions are highly abstract, formulated in ways such as 'spirituality is life of a spirit', a capacity to act, immaterial substance that thinks, loves, remembers, contemplates, mocks and jokes (p. 135). Generally Comte-Sponville presents himself as a defender of the Enlightenment, freedom, humanity and tolerance. He sees spirituality and mysticism as being concomitant with this framework and opposed to religious beliefs. He goes on to describe atheist spirituality as a godless standpoint, which brings with it experiences of an oceanic feeling; mystery, plenitude, serenity, the unity of life and the 'immanensity' of nature (as opposed to its transcendence). In addition to references to the western philosophical tradition, he glances at Taoist writings and Krishnamurti, but, contrary to Antinoff, he is not keen on highlighting these resources and he does not write extensively on meditation. Meditation is a fairly positive practice, but it refers more to general contemplation and silent thinking than any specific technique (p. 143).

Comte-Sponville thinks that organised religion, even a monotheistic one, can be a useful resource for an individual. He means that the need for rituals at key moments of life persists, and because non-religious rituals have not developed satisfactorily enough, he sees no problem in participating in Christian rituals if that is part of the tradition in marking important passages of life and binding people together. However, these are practices which do not include an acceptance of religious beliefs. Furthermore, he would like to see emotionally satisfying non-religious rituals developing in the future and replacing the religious ones. (Comte-Sponville 2007: 7–11.) The use of 'spirituality' in this discourse has a vague connection to eastern traditions, but it is also a term that helps him to differentiate his position from nihilism and meaninglessness. Furthermore, it works here in arguing that you can be both an atheist and a sensitive person at the same time, that to be an atheist does not mean living life with zero intensity. However, it is difficult not to draw the conclusion that the function of putting two catch-words in the title—atheism and spirituality—is to make it a more tempting choice in the bookshop. Even so it is an example of a discourse which challenges the meaning system that is based on a strict distinction between religion and non-religious secular.

The third example is a book by Eric Maisel. *The Atheist's Way: Living Well without Gods* was published in 2009 and its author is a psychotherapist and a creativity coach who works in the United States. Maisel is convinced that religions—including Paganism, Astrology and I Ching—interfere with people's ability to live well. He even thinks that religions may pose a threat to the survival of the human species, although this is simply assumed and not argued on the basis of evidence.

Maisel differs from Antinoff and Comte-Sponville in his approach to the use of the term 'spirituality'. He suggests that keeping the word 'spirituality' in the atheist vocabulary is a grave mistake. He suspects that many atheists want to use the term to describe their oceanic feelings, or sense of something mystical. Maisel supports practices such as meditation, but maintains that there is nothing spiritual in it—meditation is just an ordinary human activity (2009: 155). Maisel thinks that the search for special experiences may be important, but they should not be elevated above the experience of having a cheese sandwich with your daughter (and this is where Maisel differs from Harris). Meditation, climbing the mountain and having a cup of tea can all be part of meaning-making.

Instead of spirituality Maisel writes about 'passionate *meaning-making*' and a construction of meaning as an atheist. He wants people to 'replace superstitions with natural beauty' and assures us that 'each life can have meaning'. The prototypical examples of meaning-making are poetry, painting and music. This search for meaning is also visible in blurbs and compliments by other authors (all printed in the book):

> . . .how do you bravely face the world as it is and create meaning for yourself. . . (John Allen Poulos).

> . . .we don't find meaning – we make meaning (Dan Barker).

> . . .The Atheist's Way offers a meaningful approach to life. . . (Phil Zuckerman).

> . . .provides a foundation for making meaning and living purposefully. . . (Donna Druchnas).

Maisel's book focuses on individual well-being. It is a guidebook for a happy and meaningful life, given that you are already living a middle-class life in which you have succeeded in having a good share of scarce resources and you

can afford the luxury of making meaning by enjoying and exploring poetry, painting and music. Furthermore, it is tempting to raise the question: why it is so important to put the word atheism in the title and define his approach as the atheist's way? Why is it not just like all the other books in which the main question is how to live a meaningful life? To some extent it is like any other book. It seems to me that the main reason for putting atheism in the title is the recognition that there is a market for books about atheism. Furthermore, he tries to construct atheism as 'a complete worldview' and tradition. This is surprising as the so-called atheistic tradition is built on random references to heterogeneous thinkers. In addition, it is unclear why there is a need for a complete worldview if atheist meaning-making is 'private, personal, individual and subjective'? Maisel goes on to say that 'every argument for the objectivity of meaning is merely someone's attempt to elevate her subjective experience and her opinions above yours and mine' (2009: 50). However, soon after that he contradicts this by stating an objective example of failed meaning-making: 'How can you smoke two packs of cigarettes a day and also claim to be making meaning?. . .You can't – and you know it.' (Maisel 2009: 73.) Here my intention is not to deconstruct Maisel's or anyone else's project, but examples like this underline the fact that Maisel is giving more direct suggestions than Antinoff or Comte-Sponville. Furthermore, he contrasts meaning-making to religious traditions and therefore appears more anti-religious than the others.

Because Maisel discredits the term spirituality it is not fair to describe his approach as being fully part of the 'atheist spirituality' discourse. However, there is a common area: in addition to having 'atheism' in their titles and being opposed to a belief in God, these are all self-help books which have fairly positive attitudes towards the meditation practices which have arisen from traditions that people tend to classify as religious. Furthermore, Maisel's aims are mainly the same as Antinoff's and Comte-Sponville's. Namely, he wants to show how atheists can pursue happiness and a satisfying life without believing in God.

Atheist spirituality versus monotheism

One of the main aspects characterising atheist spirituality is that the use of the word 'atheism' is an attempt to differentiate itself from monotheistic religions, but not always from spirituality or meditation practices. The following figure shows the area of atheist spirituality by plus signs (+) which indicate a positive

	Monotheism	Spirituality	Meditation
Dawkins	–	–	–
Hitchens	–	–	–
Dennett	–	–	–
Harris	–	+	+
Stenger	–	+	+
Antinoff	–	+	+
Comte-Sponville	–	+	(+)
Maisel	–	–	(+)

Monotheism, spirituality and meditation in contemporary atheist discourse

approach to selected variables, whereas minus (–) indicates either a negative or an indifferent attitude.

Antinoff's approach is a clearest example of atheist spirituality, but Harris and Stenger also share his approach, although I would imagine that Harris and Stenger would not want to be associated or grouped with Antinoff. Furthermore, Comte-Sponville and Maisel share this position to some extent: Comte-Sponville is arguing for spirituality while Maisel drops the word. However, both have slightly positive attitude towards meditation. There are other examples not mentioned earlier in this chapter. For instance, the British atheist and popular science author Susan Blackmore, who has been a defender of the meme theory of Dawkins and Dennett, is well-known for her interest in Zen and meditation practices, even though she explicitly denies being a Buddhist.[3] In addition, one of the best-known public intellectuals representing scientific rationality and critical attitudes towards religions in Finland, Esko Valtaoja, who is Professor of Astronomy at the University of Turku, has stated that even though he is not Buddhist, Zen Buddhism speaks of existence and its meaning in a language he understands (Pihkala & Valtaoja 2010: 241). What is more, surveys confirm the wider extent of this position, also showing that atheist spirituality follows on from New Atheism from the perspective of public discourse and the book publishing industry, but not in people's everyday beliefs and practices. More precisely, being a self-identified atheist does not mean that you do not have any beliefs that might be labelled religious or spiritual. For instance, a significant proportion of self-identified

3 See her personal website: http://www.susanblackmore.co.uk/Zen/intro.htm (accessed on 2 June 2011).

atheists in Finland believe in spirit or a life force and reincarnation (13.5 % and 13.3 % respectively according to 2005 and 2000 World Values Surveys)[4]. In other words, avowed atheists distinguish themselves from monotheistic religions (especially Christianity), but a considerable minority hold beliefs that are associated with a variety of eastern traditions. These patterns are not limited to Finland; there is also evidence from other European countries and North America. In the United States 21 per cent of atheists claim to believe in God or a universal spirit (Micklethwait & Wooldridge 2009: 133). On the scale from 0 to 8 (0 meaning not at all and 8 meaning very much), 1.6 of avowed atheists who are active in Humanist groups in the United States are spiritual (and religious 0.81) (Pasquale 2007: 53), suggesting that some atheist/Humanist activists even consider themselves to be 'spiritual'.[5] There is also evidence that belief in God has increased in France among young people who declare themselves to be convinced atheists (Caron 2007: 120). Taken together, these examples suggest that the boundaries between religion and non-religion, religion and atheism, spirituality and atheism are porous, even though popular atheists are unanimous in criticising the propositional beliefs of monotheistic religious traditions.

Conclusions: analytical and critical

By examining popular atheist books I have shown that spirituality and meditation is seen as an important part of atheism by many. Even when the word 'spirituality' is not supported, as in the case of Maisel, meditation practices are defended. I draw two main conclusions from this. One is analytical and the other is critical.

First of all, the uses of spirituality in atheist writings are examples of blurring the discursive boundaries of what is typically classified as religious and as secular (non-religious). It is not unusual for our times, when the normative place of religion in society is gradually changing and when there is a widen-

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4   WVS material is available in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD2118: World Values Survey 2005, Finland; FSD0154: World Values Survey 2000, Finland).

5   Even though Frank Pasquale himself assumes that their 'spirituality' is immanent and non-religious, other evidence from the same north western area gives good reasons to doubt his opinion (O'Connell Killen 2007: 74–6). Some of Pasquale's interviewees are perfect examples of the kind of atheistic spirituality I am addressing here, as they are vehemently 'atheist' and 'anti-religious' with regard to supernatural ideas and beliefs, but participate in Buddhist group meditation (Pasquale 2007: 55).

ing gap between religious beliefs and practices. In other words, the norm that religion should be a matter of private and non-political beliefs which take visible form mainly in worship practices is gradually changing as some people use religious services, or participate in practices while explicitly denying the doctrines and belief-systems related to them. This, however, does not necessarily indicate that the beliefs and practices are somehow incoherent, or that people's beliefs and practices should form a coherent whole, but it has been a dominant assumption in deciding what counts as 'religion' (most obvious in legal definitions of religion). It simply means that people can meditate and participate in rituals for pragmatic reasons without buying into the theological doctrines attached to them. Therefore, the follow on from the New Atheism in contemporary public discourse is an atheism that comes very close to certain religious practices, even though it remains atheist in most stated beliefs. Atheist spirituality is an emerging discourse. It has not replaced the popularity of the New Atheists and the books I have introduced have not been as successful as the bestselling ones written by Dawkins, Dennett, Harris and Hitchens. However, it is a discourse that has emerged in public after the rise of New Atheism. It is hard not to think that authors and publishers ride on the success of the New Atheists by putting 'atheism' in the titles of their publications because it sells at the moment. A book about spirituality or meaning-making without reference to atheism would be part of saturated market of books about self-help and well-being, but 'atheist spirituality' gets the attention of those who are interested in the recently increased visibility of atheism in the media, while making the boundary between religious and non-religious less clear at the same time.

Is this 'atheist spirituality', then, an example of 'post-secular'? I have some reservations on the usefulness of the term. The main one relates to its normative uses, which are sometimes mixed with empirical descriptions of the changes in society. It is fairly often used by scholars who explicitly or implicitly argue that the post-secular is a good thing, especially if it refers to an increasing presence of religion in the public life and the challenge from a 'religious' standpoint to 'secular' politics. So far I have not found an example of a scholar who is saying that 'there is something like a post-secular society, but it is an unfortunate development'. Those who oppose that development argue that there is no such thing as a post-secular society (or condition)—only a secular society. Rather than taking 'post-secular' as an unproblematic analytical category, it is good to be cautious and keep in mind the ideological baggage that was already evident in the early uses of secular and secularisation in public discourse.

There are at least three less problematic uses of the term 'post-secular'. First would be a case when it refers to a situation when the normative distinction between private-religious and the public-secular has been questioned—for example when a government integrates religious communities into political decision-making and practices. The integration of religious communities into British politics is a useful example. During Tony Blair's Labour government religious communities were conceptualised as 'partners' in politics rather than insisting on the distinction between private faith and public politics (Beckford 2010). This integration of religious communities has continued in the coalition government's idea of 'the Big Society' in which the activities that have previously been understood as being the province of the state have been delegated to religious communities and other civil associations, who are assumed to take care of such tasks for a lower price, thus making it possible for the government to make cuts in public spending. A second, less problematic usage would be to understand 'post' not as 'after' but as querying (cf. post-colonialism and poststructuralism). Then post-secular would refer to querying and challenging the legacy of the secular and it would not be a descriptive term for what comes after the secular period of modernity. A third possible use would be a case when it becomes difficult to classify groups and their practices if the available options are religious and secular. Then 'post-secular' could mean simply the situation where boundaries between religion and the (non-religious) secular have become porous.

It may be possible to call this blurring of the discursive boundaries 'post-secular', but I still find it more comfortable to follow the vocabulary I used in my book *Notkea uskonto* (Liquid religion, Taira 2006). The main argument in the book was that after the classification system of what Zygmunt Bauman calls solid modernity—including a normative distinction between religion and politics, religion and the secular, private and public and so on—the boundaries are becoming more difficult to keep up and justify, and that this 'liquefaction' is manifest in people distancing themselves from doctrinal religious beliefs while at the same time being interested in religious or spiritual practices. In addition to my study, the term 'liquid religion' has been used recently by Bryan S. Turner (2011: ix) when describing the blossoming of a post-institutional, hybrid and post-orthodox spirituality. A similar argument is to be found in the works of other scholars. For example, Ulrich Beck (2010: 68) has argued that in what he calls second modernity (equivalent of Bauman's liquid modernity), the boundaries between religion and non-religion are becoming blurred and porous, leading from the logic of either/or to the more ambiguous model of both/and. If modernity in its solid phase had a

'dream of order' (Bauman 1991) with the separation of differentiated spheres, such as religion and non-religion, private and public, religion and politics, the boundaries between culture, economy, science, politics and religion are collapsing and leading towards 'de-differentiation' (Lash 1990: 11). This does not mean the disappearance of boundaries—and in many ways the boundaries are the focal points of struggles, as in the case of New Atheism—but that it has become very difficult to maintain the 'dream of order'.

If the New Atheists have attempted to put the boundaries back into their usual places, that is to say, to make a strict separation between scientific rationality and religion by using narrow conceptions of scientific rationality and religion, then the spiritual atheists make a move that liquefies the boundaries and blurs them again. It is typical that this happens by insisting on atheism when it comes to beliefs, but accepting practices which arise from 'religious' and 'spiritual' traditions and are not considered to be fully secular, irreligious or atheistic.

Secondly, the uses of spirituality in atheist writings continue the trend whereby atheism is separated from revolutionary thinking and critical analyses of society. Sources of atheist spirituality are not based on the critical studies of the 'academic Left', that is to say critical theory, continental philosophy, Marxism and cultural theory. In atheist spirituality the key sources are eastern wisdom, Zen, even some Christian theologians (especially Paul Tillich) and existential psychotherapy. This indifferent, or in some cases negative, approach to critical cultural theory holds true also for the New Atheists as their key sources are a theory of evolution, the natural sciences and Anglo-American analytical philosophy.[6] Atheist spirituality—at least in the examples examined here—is leaning on an individualistic approach to well-being, rather than on exploring and addressing social injustices. This emphasis reveals that the intended reader belongs to the middle-class and is eager to improve its own quality of life with a modicum of meditation and other spiritual practices without drifting away from an otherwise non-religious lifestyle and set of beliefs. This critical note has been pointed out in the analysis of the discourse on capitalist spirituality by Jeremy R. Carrette and Richard King (2005; see also Taira 2009), for instance, and here my conclusion is that when

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6   A good example is Richard Dawkins (2007: 388) who refers to ideas represented by scholars such as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva as 'haute francophonyism'. This is part of the New Atheist rhetoric where 'irrational scholars'—sometimes labelled imprecisely as 'postmodern relativists' and 'social constructionists'—are lumped together with 'irrational believers' in order to highlight their own rationality and the superiority of natural science over cultural theory.

'atheism' is combined with spirituality, it makes no difference in changing the emphasis from decontextualised individual well-being towards critical analyses of social structures, the organisation of society and socially more burning issues of exploitation, inequality and injustice. Whether focusing on these issues rather than decontextualising the individual from society would help individuals more in the long run is not a question addressed in the books on atheist spirituality examined here (or in the New Atheist bestsellers).

Despite the criticism directed at religious institutions, the current discourse on atheism, whether it be the New Atheism or a spiritual form, is about accepting the status quo in other respects. This means that despite the increased visibility of atheism in public life, the discourse on atheism has become fairly narrow in its sources, references and political standpoints. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask, where are atheists who would insist on a revolution, or on social justice, or even on a slight improvement of the situation of those who are not so well-off? Where is there an atheism which offers us an analysis of the structural and systemic problems of society, rather than insisting on narrow and often superficial criticisms of monotheistic religions? If someone says that it is not the primary aim of atheists to analyse the whole of society, then my advice would be to go back to Nietzsche, Marx, Sartre and their followers, who were atheists, but whose atheism was strongly intertwined with a radical social criticism and whose analyses were never limited to religion only.

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CLAUS TIREL

Two ways to get an Integral Theory

Ken Wilber's method of integration

Introduction

Ken Wilber is at times deemed to be one of the most prominent and intellectual integral thinkers of our time. The website of his corporation 'Integral Life' even presents him as being 'widely regarded as one of the greatest philosophers alive today' (Integral Life 2009).

His so-called 'Integral Theory' shows up with no minor claims: it alleges to have succeeded in integrating most of the insights elaborated by contemporary natural sciences such as biology and physics, together with those of the social sciences and humanities, especially with the deep truths found in religion as well as in philosophy from the ancient Greeks until today.

Wilber started developing his theory in the late 1970s. From then on he revised and elaborated it, publishing it in more than 20 books. He himself distinguishes between five different phases, between which major shifts and enhancements concerning his theory took place. Today, he presents his theory as a framework that claims to provide no less than a place for everything that exists, including the various scientific disciplines and approaches. The theory seems to provide a proper place for everything. That place is defined first of all by its level of development and its specific perspective, from which it perceives and describes the world. This makes Wilber praise his theory as a downright 'theory of everything' (Wilber 2000a), being able to provide the long needed integration of the manifold and fragmented bodies of knowledge in our post-modern world. From his holistic theory Wilber derives practical suggestions for a more integral life, an integral practice which consists of meditation, physical exercises and social commitment.

In this article I will examine in particular the method that Wilber applies in making up his theory. The main focus, thus, lays on the question how it realises the integration, that became *the* core concept and main label under which his theory is traded today. Therefore I will start with a short overview of his theory, which for reasons of brevity needs to remain schematic and simplified.

405

The Integral Theory

Holons

A good starting point is the general concept that Wilber uses in order to name the elements of the universe: holons. According to Wilber, reality is made up of 'holons', which are wholes, that are—at the same time—parts of other wholes. Since they are parts of other wholes and themselves contain other wholes, reality is a nested entity, invariably made up of these wholes/parts, in short: holons.

Vertical axis

Each holon enfolds—according to Wilber—other holons, which form its sub-holons, and is itself enfolded by other holons, its superholons. Thus, holons can be ranked according to their level of enfoldment, which equals their level of development, since evolution—in the eyes of Wilber—is the continuing process of enfoldment. When holons develop, they transcend themselves, embrace and integrate their own prior being, getting thereby to a higher level. These levels of development form the vertical axis of Wilber's framework.

Evolution takes place along this vertical axis of his theory: that's why on this axis we find the different stages of development, as discovered by Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, James Fowler and others. Wilber's proprium is the placement of spiritual levels, described by mystics such as Meister Eckhart, Theresa of Avila and a number of eastern mystics, on top of those levels of development (cf. Wilber 2007; see Figure 1). Since in his theory they form stages situated beyond the rational stage, Wilber calls them 'transrational' or 'transpersonal' stages. On top of this vertical axis resides—according to Wilber—Spirit, God, the ever-present Ground towards whom each holon is striving (cf. Wilber 2002a: footnote 26).
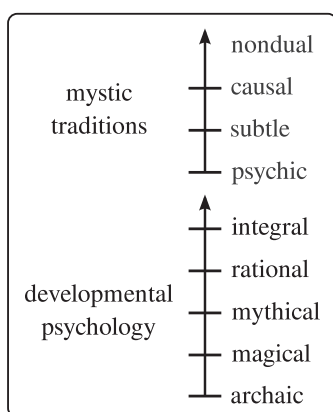
This doctrine of the different levels of development is the major and almost only topic of Wilber's early works and it remains an essential part of his current theory. Obviously a lot more could be said about it, but we'll leave it with that short sketch.

With the so-called fourth phase of his theory ('Wilber-IV') he extended it by what can be regarded as the horizontal axes of

Figure 1. Levels of development.

mystic traditions

- nondual
- causal
- subtle
- psychic

developmental psychology

- integral
- rational
- mythical
- magical
- archaic

his theory. They form the second major focus of Wilber's current Integral Theory.

Horizontal axes

Wilber's 'Kosmos' refers to, as well as the physical realm (physiosphere), which is what is normally meant when talking of the cosmos, also the realm of the living (biosphere); of the spirit (noosphere) and of God (theosphere). To mark the difference of this concept to what is normally called the 'cosmos', he uses the Greek spelling 'Kosmos' (cf. Wilber 2000b: 45). Within this Kosmos, there are not only holons above and beneath one another, but also holons next to each other: that is to say holons on the same level. On that horizontal plane of Wilber's theory one concept plays a major role: the concept of quadrants.

The idea behind quadrants may quickly be explained. It is founded on two tenets:

1) There are things in the singular and things in the plural. This distinction focusses on the fact that individual entities need to be distinguished from sets, groups or systems of that entity.
2) Things have an interior and an exterior. So when looking at something, you can either look at its interior or the exterior aspect. The interior aspect of something is everything that has do to with consciousness, awareness, meaning, feelings, values and what in philosophy we call the *qualia*, phenomenal qualities. It constitutes the subjective world. The exterior aspect however denotes the objective world, the empirical or material part of something, everything that has a quantity (cf. Wilber 2001: 4–8). So brainwaves, for example, are exterior, for they can be measured, while the cognitive content of the person whose brainwaves are measured is situated on the interior (cf. Wilber 2001: 10).

Now, since these two aspects may be distinguished both within individuals as well as within groups of entities, the two distinctions may be crossed over, so that we again get two axes, which are both on a horizontal scale and result in four quadrants (see Figure 2).

Wilber maps a whole bunch of distinctions onto these four quadrants. For example phenomenology and introspection lie in the interior-singular quadrant; hermeneutics in the interior-plural quadrant; empiricism and behaviourism in the exterior-singular quadrant and ecology, functionalism and systems theory in the exterior-plural quadrant (cf. Wilber 2002d).
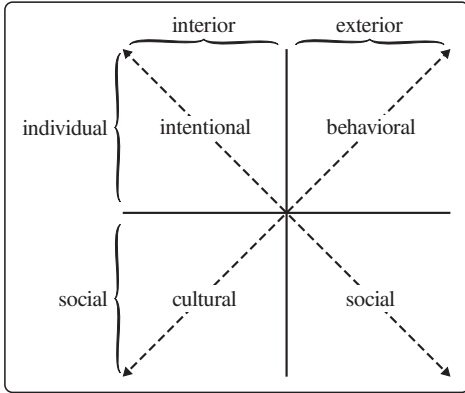
Figure 2. The four quadrants.

Often he groups together the two quadrants on the right, which results in a distinction Wilber calls 'The Big Three'. Other distinctions are mapped onto those: first of all the personal pronouns 'I', 'we' and 'it', which for him are the first, the second and the third person, since he regards the 'we' as the second person. For Wilber the distinction in 'Art', 'Morals' and 'Science' or the transcendentals 'The Beautiful', 'The Good' and 'The True' also fit into this schema. The Big Three are also the place where the insights of the humanities (interior-singular), social sciences (interior-plural) and natural sciences (exterior) come into play and are integrated, as mentioned before in the introduction (see Figure 3).

Wilber spends a lot of time in his current work spelling out how, in his view, these quadrants emerged, how they are connected, what they mean, what distinctions can be mapped onto them and so forth. We don't need to go into details here, but leave it with that very brief outline, which is enough for this article's purpose.
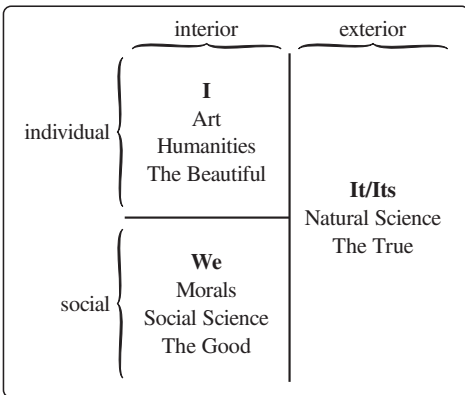

Figure 3. The 'Big Three'.

The distinctions of singular and plural (or as Wilber also says of 'individual' and 'social', or 'communal' holons), and of the interior and exterior, form in a sense the two horizontal axes of Wilber's framework. If you add the vertical axis of stages of development you thus get a three-dimensional framework (see Figure 4), which is at the core of the Integral Theory.[1]

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1   For the sake of brevity, I leave out lines of development, states and types.

Applied method of integration

Two places of integration

This makes me come to the third and main point; the methodological question of how Wilber achieves the integration of the disparate bodies of knowledge mentioned before, the integration that is the signature feature of his theory. The answer to this question is twofold, for there are (at least) two places to be determined where such an integration takes place.

The first place is the theory itself. The theory combines elements mainly of systems theory, ontology/metaphysics, hermeneutics, psychology, religion and biology. So the theory itself is made up of parts of insights of different scientific disciplines, which it brings together in order to form the framework just presented.

The second place is the aforementioned integration of different bodies of knowledge by giving them a specific address, that is to say by naming their specific level of development as well as the specific perspective from which they perceive the world.

The fabric of the theory

Let us start with the theory itself. I choose to make my point by means of the concept of holons for two reasons:

1) Holons constitute the basic components of Wilber's Kosmos. What can be examined here is thus of relevance for his entire theory.
2) Holons allow me to illustrate the point I want to make quickly. This point could indeed be made for each and every one of the crucial points of his theory, but would need more time to be shown.

Let us put the concept of holons under the microscope: what actually are holons? When you start to put together the definitions Wilber gives for holons, you won't find one definition, but a bunch of them. That alone would not necessarily pose a problem, as long as these definitions are more or less equivalent. Let us see whether this is the case here.
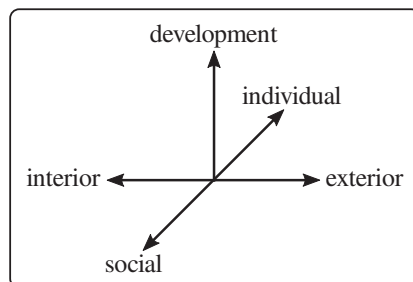

Figure 4. The three dimensions of the Integral Theory.

The context-based definition of holons

Wilber explains that his expression 'holon' originates from the native Hungarian author Arthur Koestler, who coined it 'to refer to that which, being a *whole,* in one context, is simultaneously a *part* in another' (Wilber 2000b: 26; cf. Wilber 2001: 36).

I want to call this definition the *context-based definition* of holons. Applying it, there is virtually nothing that would not match it, or—as Wilber himself puts it—'there is nothing, that isn't a holon, a context within a context forever' (Wilber 2000b: 77).
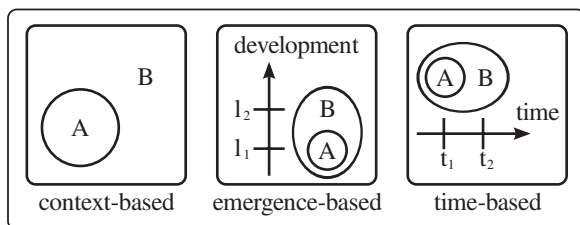
The emergence-based definition of holons

A second definition determines holons by means of a hierarchical relation between the parts and their wholes: wholes are on a higher level of development than the parts that they embrace. These wholes are, according to Wilber, more than just their parts. They are emergent with regard to their parts (cf. Wilber 2000b: 54, 56, 59), and thus are on a higher level than their mere components. This *emergence-based definition* differs from the context-based definition insofar as a context doesn't need to be on a higher level of development. It could indeed be on any level compared to the object which is placed into it.

The emergence-based definition is a crucial part of Wilber's theory and is constitutive of the hierarchical (in Wilber's terminology also dubbed 'holarchical') development which pervades it.

The time-based definition of holons

Especially in the excerpts of Wilber's latest phase of work ('Wilber-V') one finds a third definition of holons, in which neither a new context, nor an emergence constitutes the difference between wholes or parts, but time. Thus I will call it the *time-based definition* of holons. He writes:

> [T]he previous moment is now a *part* of the *whole* of this moment (i.e., the whole of one moment becomes a part of the whole of the next, which is why moment-to-moment existence is a holarchy of holons—and that is prehensive unification: each moment is

Figure 5. Three different definitions of holons.

410

a holon that transcends and includes its predecessors) (Wilber 2002b; cf. Wilber 2002c).

A comparison of these definitions
As one can easily see, all three definitions are quite disparate. Figure 5 shows a graphic comparison of the respective underlying concepts, marking each holon as A and its superholon as B (or each holon as B and its subholon as A).

Each definition gives a different answer to the following questions:

1) What are the criteria by which entities count as holons?
2) What constitutes the difference between the whole and the part of a holon?
3) What are the properties of holons?
4) What belongs to a holon?

Ad 1: While an entity needs to have a context in order to count as a holon according to the context-based definition, this is not required for holons according to the two other definitions. While an entity needs to have components out of which it itself emerged according to the emergence-based definition, this is not required for holons according to the two other definitions. And while an entity needs to exist through time for the time-based definition of holons, this is not required for holons according to the two other definitions.

Ad 2: What the emergence-based and the time-based definitions of holons have in common is an asymmetrical relationship between the whole and the parts. Yet, this asymmetry has in both cases completely different causes: in the case of the emergence-based definition of holons it results from an irreversibility of the hierarchy of levels, whereas it results from the irreversibility of the arrow of time in the case of the time-based definition of holons. The context-based definition doesn't seem to necessarily require an asymmetrical relationship between the whole and its parts. The definition allows that one entity constitutes the context of another one, while the latter constitutes the context of the first one. There seems to be no clear hierarchy of contexts. Contexts don't seem to be arranged on a scale with a strict total order as is the case for different moments in time, or entities emerging from other ones.

Ad 3: One can derive the relations between a holon and its subholon from the respective definition whose criteria they fullfill. This relationship is either contextual, a relationship of emergence, or it is temporal, depending on the applied definition. As a result, context-based defined holons don't exist where

no other context exists, whereas differently defined holons do. Emergence-based defined holons don't exist where no emergent properties can be located, whereas differently defined holons do. And time-based defined holons don't exist at one single moment in time alone, whereas differently defined holons do.

Only the superholons of holons, according to the emergence-based definition, must be at a higher level of development. The superholons of holons according to the time-based definition, that is to say their being in the next moment, may well be at exactly the same level of development, yes even at a lower one in the case of a regression. The same is the case for holons according to the context-based definition: the greater context may be at the same, at a higher, or at a lower level of development—if the concept of level of development can be applied to it at all.

For the reason that contexts are not lined up on one scale with a strict total order one can also imagine a bunch of different contexts of one and the same holon, that fullfil the context-based definition at one and the same moment in time. Thus an entity could, according to the context-based definition, be an actual subholon of many different superholons located at one and the same level at the same time. This is not possible for holons according to one of the other definitions (on the assumption that there is only one arrow of time).

Ad 4: While holons according to the context-based definition range over different contexts, those according to the emergence-based definition range over different levels of development, and those according to the time-based definition range over different instants of time. So according to the context-based definition, a holon is made up of an entity and different nested contexts. It is thus itself a hermeneutical or contextual entity. According to the emergence-based definition, a holon is made up of an entity and the elements from which it emerged. It is thus itself an entity composed of elements and their emergent properties. According to the time-based definition, a holon is made up of an entity and its past, its being at a prior instant of time. It is thus itself a temporal being.

Methodological inferences
As already mentioned before: what can be said with regard to the concept of holons is true with regard to all the crucial points of Wilber's theory. If you look at the crucial points, the places where his own intellectual contribution is most at stake, you will find an equivocation, that is a central term with several different meanings.

Equivocation turns out to be not a negligible or forgivable definitional carelessness, but the very method of integration with regard to the fabric of the framework. Wilber coins and uses equivocal terms, which in fact contain several different concepts. The result is a cognitive artifact, an artifical term, that is equipped with the sum of those different, partly incoherent and sometimes even contradictory properties. As such they form the glue with which he connects different ideas, different theories. They are the doors, the connections, the bridges between disparate areas, topics and scientific disciplines. As shown in the context of holons, each of the different concepts, lumped together under the equivocal term, has a different extension, points towards different sets of entities, with very different properties, that allow very different inferences. Once the reader has adopted his equivocal terms, Wilber is in the luxurious position not only of combining disparate topics, but also of using whatever property he needs for his argument in the respective context, deriving it from the definition which fits. As in the case of holons: any time he talks about holons, he can go in at least three different directions. If he needs emergence, he derives it from the emergence-based definition of holons. Where there is no emergent property, or where he finds no further emergence, he can easily switch to context, or—depending on his argumentational need—the holon's being in time. At least one of the three should always match.

This may be illustrated by the following passage:

> [R]eality is fundamentally composed—not of particles, quarks, dimensionless points, strings, or membranes—but of *holons*. A holon is a whole that is simultaneously a part of other wholes. For example, a whole quark is part of a whole proton; a whole proton is part of a whole atom; a whole atom is part of a whole molecule; a whole molecule is part of a whole cell, which is part of a whole organism, which is part of the whole Kosmos. . . (Wilber 2000a: 143.)

This sequence starting from subatomic particles and leading via atoms, molecules and cells to organisms and from there to the Kosmos is a very common enumeration of Wilber, used to illustrate his idea of a development proceeding in steps and occasions of emergence (cf. Wilber 2001: 67; Wilber 2000b: 69, 94). Leaving aside the extremely difficult passage from being an individual living organism to being the whole Kosmos, one could assume that having arrived at the Kosmos, Wilber would have trouble continuing the sequence. For what could still be added to the Kosmos? Yet, if the Kosmos itself is perceived as a holon, it should be a part of another whole. Here the equivocal coinage

'holon' can demonstrate its power of an argumentational passe-partout. Using it, Wilber has no problem to continue the passage saying:

> . . .which is part of the whole of the Kosmos of the next moment, and so ad infinitum. . .What *all* of those entities are, before they are anything else, are holons—they are all whole/parts. The Kosmos is made of holons . . .[E]ach higher level of holons has emergent qualities that cannot be derived from, nor totally reduced to its junior levels—and this gives us the Kosmos, not merely the cosmos. (Wilber 2000a: 143.)

It is obvious that to try to show that equivocation is to be found at each crucial point of Wilber's theory would be a much too ambitious enterprise, which needs to be carried out elsewhere.[2] The sceptics among the readers should at least be chastened by the fact that holons constitute the bricks of the Kosmos according to his theory. Finding diverse definitions being used in a mixed up fashion is a fatal discovery. Only to accept that this central term is used equivocally within his theory should oblige the reader to check for each usage of the term holon, which concept Wilber actually applies, to subsequently test if his argumentation fits with that specific concept or not, and to reflect what, given the various different concepts of 'holon', in the end it can reasonably mean to say that the Kosmos is made up of holons.

The elements located within his theory

I come to the last point, which is the second place where integration can be found. It consists of all the entities that Wilber's framework is able to address. These entities are not inferred from the theory, but the theory is somehow able to offer a place for them, indeed for virtually everything that exists: to locate it, to name its level, its specific quadrant, in which it is located and so forth. Wilber praises this capacity of his theory as an enormous achievement, of even historical significance:

> An IOS [which is just a synonym for the Integral Theory] can be used to help index any activity—from art to dance to business to psychology to politics to ecology to spirituality—it allows each of those domains to

2   On a list of equivocally defined terms, that are at the same time central for the Integral Theory, one will find at least the entries: 'holon', 'matter', 'depth', 'infinity', 'self'/'Self', 'identity', 'transcendence', 'the One'/'Nondual'/'Deity'/'Spirit', 'quadrant' and 'integral'.

talk to the others. Using IOS, business has the terminology with which to communicate fully with ecology, which can communicate with poetry and education and medicine and spirituality. In the history of humankind, this has never really happened before. (Wilber 2007: 3.)

How does Wilber achieve this integration? If it is true that his theory is able to provide a place for everything that exists—and we will assume that it is true—that integrative power ought to be based on the three axes of his framework: they would have to reflect the ascribed integrative power by ranging over virtually everything. So let us one more time have a brief and last look at the different axes.

Vertical axis

On the vertical axis Wilber arranges everything according to its level of development. The integrative power thus lies in the fact that everything can be arranged on a certain scale, especially if that scale starts at zero and is open-ended, or if it's open-ended at both sides. In the same way we could easily arrange all the objects of a given universe on a scale, listing, for example, the number of their corners, the amount of batteries that they contain, or the number of laptops they possess. Nothing really changes if instead we take a scale that is open-ended at both sides, be it a time-scale, a scale of debit and credit, or a scale of the production and consumption of CO_2. As long as we choose a somehow quantifiable property as the order criterion, all entities of a given universe may be mapped on them—including entities that don't possess that property, as long as a tick mark for zero exists.

Horizontal axes

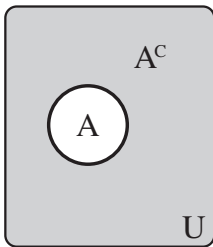What about the horizontal axes? Why are they able to encompass everything? The answer here is not too complicated either: The easiest way to point to all the elements of a given universe is to pick some out and take them in the one hand, holding the rest in the other. One could say for example: 'I take these two elements—and the rest.' Expressed in more technical terms, this procedure consists in taking a certain set and its complement. Since the complement of a given set A is defined as those elements of a given universe U, that don't belong to A (i.e. $U = A \cup A^C$), you always get the whole universe, if you take a set and its complement (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. A universe *U* consisting of a set *A* and its complement A^C.

So covering the whole universe requires no mental peak performance at all. We could, for example, take all lively things and all unlively; or all apples and the rest; or we could take—and thereby we come back to the Integral Theory—all interior things and all exterior things, all sets containing only one element and all sets containing more than one element (leaving aside empty sets here).

The highly praised integrative power of Wilber's framework thus turns out to be nothing more than the easiest way to address a given universe. What Wilber's vertical and horizontal axes consist in can be reduced to a common denominator, which in technical terms one might call mutually exclusive and exhaustive distinctions.

Having understood that simple principle, we might off-the-cuff create a concurrent, alternative, three-dimensional framework that *in terms of its integrative capacity* would be equivalent to Wilber's framework. We might choose age as our vertical axis, take 'lively entities' and 'unlively entities' as distinctions of the first horizontal axis and distinguish between those entities having lungs and those without lungs on the other horizontal one. This alternative 'framework' would be equally integral to Wilber's framework.[3] Of course, it would differ in terms of the theories used to make up the framework itself—the part that we have treated in the first place. But in the same sense as is the case for Wilber's theory, everything could be integrated by means of this framework: all that exists, all entities could be captured by it, no matter if you call them 'holons', 'entities' or just 'things'. In the same sense as is the case with Wilber's Integral Theory, you could name their exact address, give their exact coordinates, name their place.

Final remarks

This short reflection aims at disenchanting the hymns sung for the integral capacity of Wilber's and others' integral theories. To create an integral framework in the sense mentioned, is child's play. It is independent of the number of axes used for that framework. The distinction children draw when saying 'you take *X*, I take the rest', is just as exhaustive. Only the identity of the chosen universe might differ, by being, for example, a cake rather than a 'Kosmos'.

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[3] Note that 'integral' is another equivocal term in Wilber's theory. To say that the alternative framework would be equally integral applies only to the sense of being 'exhaustive', in which it has been used in that chapter. A different meaning was mentioned already in the context of the vertical axis, where 'integral' denotes one of the levels of development.

There is a second point. A judgement about the integrative power of a theoretical framework falls short as long as it concentrates on the mere fact of being integral. Integral as well as non-integral theoretical frameworks need to prove their soundness by showing the usefulness, the fruitfulness, the practical utility of the concrete distinctions they draw. Being integral is a possible property of a theoretical framework, but not a value in itself. An integral framework may draw useful distinctions as well as futile or silly ones, as I hope to have shown. The same is true for non-integral frameworks. Thus integral theories as such don't already trump non-integral ones, just because they're integral. Instead their advantages are yet to be shown.

Summary

To put it in a nutshell, the answer to the question 'what is Wilber's method of integration?' is twofold:

1) Concerning the fabric of the framework itself, it is mainly the equivocal use of terms.
2) Concerning the entities sorted into this framework, it is to draw mutually exclusive and exhaustive distinctions.

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LAURA WICKSTRÖM

Contemporary environmentalism as a current of spiritual post-secular practice

Introduction

Today many people, both within and outside of traditional religious structures experience a profound sense of something spiritual and holy existing in the natural world. The outdoors and the wilderness feel sacred for many, whether they define this sacredness as a connection to a transcendent, divine, creative force, or to the immanent reality of ecological interdependence. Many might also describe such an experience as spiritual rather than religious (Bauman *et al.* 2011: 2).

Susan Baker and Robin Morrison (2011) describe spirituality as an inherent component of being human and it is also subjective, intangible, and multidimensional. Spirituality involves an individual's search for meaning in life; for wholeness, peace, individuality, and harmony. Spirituality is culturally conditioned and enriched outside the narrow borders of any one particular religion. But spirituality can also be described as a way of living, as something which can be expressed, for example through personal activities such as meditation. It can also ground social action. A spiritual journey moves through contemplation and reflection to action. When we discuss spirituality or engage in spiritual dialogue, this can provide means for building spiritual community through engagement and action (Baker & Morrison 2011: 63–5).

According to Giselle Vincett and Linda Woodhead (2009) contemporary spirituality often bears the stamp of an eco-discourse. It is characteristic of post-spiritual practices that there is a blurring of the boundaries between the sacred and profane and in this sphere, influenced by the eco-consciousness, nature and the body can be sacralised (Vincett & Woodhead 2009: 333). In this article I will look into environmentalism as a current in spirituality. First I discuss spirituality based on two recent articles by Ulrike Popp-Baier (2010) and Frans Jespers (2011), published in *The Journal for Religion in Europe*. Second follows a section on aspects of contemporary environmentalism, dealing with new social movements, new identity and the main directions of environmentalism. After that I present Susan Baker and Robin Morrison's

(2011) distinction between environmentally motivated spirituality and spiritually motivated environmentalism, based on their article 'Environmental Spirituality: Grounding our Response to Climate Change'. At the end there is a short discussion of post-secular issues concerning environmentalism.

Characteristics of spirituality

Spirituality is an extremely nuanced term and therefore difficult to define, since it is ever changing. Ulrike Popp-Baier argues that the word spirituality is preferred over the word religion in many areas such as the media, health and business (Popp-Baier 2010: 61). According to Frans Jespers (2011: 328), this has to do with the fact that spirituality is such a fluid and contested, but inescapable concept, embracing different meanings in various contexts. Popp-Baier writes that in empirical studies about the religious landscape in the 1990s, the distinction between religion and spirituality has often been described as institutional objective versus personal objective, static versus dynamic, outward versus inward, doctrinal versus experiential, conventional versus unconventional and cognitive versus emotional (Popp-Baier 2010: 45).

In her overview of ways in which spirituality has been defined, Popp-Baier presents Michelle Dillon and Paul Wink's understanding of spirituality as spiritual seeking in contrast to religious dwelling and how Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, who have been inspired by Charles Taylor, describe a change in modern culture. This change has taken place from the 'life-as' view of life as parent, child, student, self-made man and so on, to 'subjective-life', which embraces the view of life as being lived in connection with the experience of one's self-in-relation. The distinction between religion and spirituality can be redefined through the concepts of life-as religion and subjective-life spirituality (Popp-Baier 2010: 46).

Popp-Baier emphasises another trend within research into spirituality. Other researchers, such as Brian Zinnbauer and Kenneth Pergament, have tried to avoid the polarization of setting one thing versus another and have focused on the relationship to, or search for the sacred concerning both spirituality and religiousness. They argue that sacredness is distinctive of religiousness and spirituality, the sacred being the substantive core of both. Ralph Hood has identified spirituality from the view of inwardness, through core elements such as inner psychological processes, inner experiences, or inner capacity. Hood has also described modern spirituality as a form of modern classical mysticism (Popp-Baier 2010: 48–9), a view which is supported

by Antoon Geels, who asserts that the defining characteristics of grassroots spirituality can be recognized in classical mysticism (Geels 2009: 20). Jespers criticises this approach which defines religion and spirituality as the quest for the sacred, but admits that these scholars usually have a more critical position than simply this (Jespers 2011: 338).

One reason for the multiple methods of application and the way spirituality is used is that the concept of spirituality is of recent derivation in the study of religion. In his overview of the occurrence of the word, Jespers concludes that the concept is rarely found in handbooks and run-throughs before 2000. There is a difference between the Anglo-Saxon and European tradition as well. When the American, early understanding of spirituality emerged in the nineteenth century, with a focus on the alternative trends in personal and deeply experienced spirituality, the European understanding of the term spirituality had long been influenced by engaged (Christian) piety. Gradually a new stream of spirituality emerged in Europe as an alternative to mainstream religion, to include a spectrum ranging from individual practices to tightly organised and highly committed paganism. Common for these sectors is that they all have a positive view of self-development, the quest for wisdom and social and ecological commitment (Jespers 2011: 329–32).

New spirituality

According to Jespers, new spirituality is partly an effect of three processes in Western modernisation; namely those of equality, individualisation and colonialism (Jespers 2011: 332). Concerning the religious individualism of contemporary religiosity, the view that an individual does not need an intermediary and that the person themself has the responsibility for his/her own spiritual destiny could be cited as characteristic of this phenomenon. Dominika Motak (2009) refers to Heelas when she describes new spirituality in terms of religion as deregulated and moulded to the individual. Furthermore, when new spirituality is combined with freedom of choice, the result is an intermingled and interfused form of religious life, which cannot be described with the traditional vocabulary and symbols more commonly used in religion (Motak 2009: 152).

Furthermore, the new spirituality is often influenced by similar late modern existential movements such as feminism, occultism, romanticism and environmentalism, and these new spiritual movements became popular after 1990. Jespers lists additional problems to the use of the term spirituality,

which mainly stem from an unclear use of the term and a lack of clear concepts. Jespers explains these difficulties in terms of the diversity of ways in which the term is used and that some spiritual practices are called religious. What contributes to the confusion is that if spiritual practices are called religious, then non-religious practices should logically be called secular. The subtle use of the terms religious, secular, spiritual and so on, is more than vague. Another difficulty lies in the fact that the adherents or supporters of spirituality do not represent a unified group, but a diverse range of ideas. As opposed to mainstream religion where ethical rules, doctrines and texts are central, practices such as meditation, healing, worship and therapy seem to be primary in new spiritual movements (Jespers 2011: 330–5). Most of these practices include the body as a means of connecting to the sacred. Through embodiment the person and the environment are interwoven into a holistic unity.

Popp-Baier pays attention to the fact that the terms spirituality and religion have often been used in different ways and therefore a clarification of the concept of spirituality would require a clarification of terms such as religion and religiousness as well. She adds that it is important to discover what people in fact mean when they answer surveys identifying or describing themselves as spiritual, religious, both or neither (Popp-Baier 2010: 42–4, 45).

Regardless of all the attempts at defining spirituality, Popp-Baier highlights three problematic areas: 1) such definitions conflict with the historical use of the term; 2) they do not agree with the self-perceptions of those people who explicitly see themselves as neither religious nor spiritual; and 3), the definitions are too inclusive for people to search for existential meaning at a conceptual level in order to recognise or distinguish between various ways. To identify and reconstruct the contemporary meanings of terms such as spirituality in the way they are used by different people in various contexts are included, according to Popp-Baier, in the task of the social scientists (Popp-Baier 2010: 51–2). Scholars such as Richard Carrette and Richard King have explicitly stated that it is impossible to define either religion or spirituality (Jespers 2011: 338).

Self-controlled religiosity

If spirituality is considered to be a relatively new modern religious phenomenon, this view, combined with a disunity of opinion as to whether spirituality can be called religious activity/ideology or not, has led to a sort of contradic-

tion. Analyses of these societal patterns, explicitly by scholars who consider spirituality as a modern phenomenon, have led to cultural macro-theories, or grand explanations (Jespers 2011: 337–9). Popp-Baier has criticised the theory of grand explanations by pointing out the weaknesses in the form of a lack of empirical understanding. She has developed and introduced the concept of self-controlled religiosity, which is a combination of critique, consumption and accommodation and might even include commitment concerning religion (Popp-Baier 2010: 59).

Popp-Baier has recognized elements that people consider to be religious, or examples of how people currently use religion. They are, among other things, ways of coping with problems, or of constructing individual philosophies and substance for self-enhancement and to improve subjective well-being. The fact that people are better informed about other religious belief systems than in previous times does not mean that people have the capacity or willingness to embrace them fully, but more often they select parts from these different belief systems to fit their personal needs and interests (Popp-Baier 2010: 59–60).

Different elements are often combined into syntheses of individual religiosity, which may change and evolve during life. The same people might regard themselves as rational agents, but at the same time accept that life also has irrational and uncontrollable elements and therefore includes a transcendental aspect. Popp-Baier stresses that it is in relation to this transcendental aspect that processes of reflection, evaluation, comparison and decision are crucial (Popp-Baier 2010: 60). According to Jespers, Popp-Baier misses the issues of critical observation and methodology (Jespers 2011: 350).

As we have seen above, recent decades have brought changes both in the social form of religion/spirituality and in individual religiosity/spirituality. According to Motak, both of the social and individual forms have become more subjective and spiritual. Motak asserts that the return of the sacred is present, but is taking a different form. In the new world-view there is a presupposition of the presence of the divine in humans and in the world and an essential oneness of the microcosm and macrocosm. The central notion is the idea of the immanence and the sacredness of life, nature and the universe (Motak 2009: 149). This type of spirituality takes various forms of expression and next I will explore some aspects of one of its trends; namely, contemporary environmentalism.

Aspects of contemporary environmentalism

Environmental movements, together with others such as feminism and the gay movement, are often considered to belong to the new social movements. Peter Beyer (1994: 98) indicates the long silence concerning religion as an important factor in the study of these new social movements, although religious actors and organisations are often directly involved with each other.

These movements are producing new forms of belonging, with participants searching for another kind of relationship with themselves. This new social movement paradigm, presented by Alexander Koensler and Cristina Papa (2011), who have been influenced among others by Alberto Melucci and Alain Touraine, raises the issue that in contrast to the 'old' movements which mobilised primarily in order to access resources; these 'new' movements are distinctive in their creation of new identities and concepts of belonging (Koensler & Papa 2011: 13). The new social movements represent a liberal religious option as well. Conservative religious movements have traditionally stressed religio-political emphasis and from the benefits of industrial society there has been, according to Beyer, a shift of emphasis onto more cultural concerns with the quality of life and the idea of a good society. More liberally oriented adherents seem to favour the aims and methods of the latter in the form of new social movements (Beyer 1997: 98).

Ingrid Hoofd (2009) uses the term 'speed elitism' to describe certain sites of power in contemporary societies. Concurrently with the social stratification of societies, the access to new technologies and geographical mobility increases. Simultaneously speed, politics and power are increasingly linked. Hoofd argues that new social movements, in order to mobilise, often rely on 'the fantasy of an authentic "voice" from an oppressed group', which according to Hoofd takes the form of 'the people' or 'the multitude' (Hoofd 2009: 209). The general acceleration of life through communication technologies enables and encourages this faith in the possibility of advancing social justice through connectivity, international mobility and the overcoming of boundaries. Yet, rather than representing a move away from neo-liberal logic, this acceleration is itself an expression of that logic. The highly technologically and globally connected spaces, in which many of the activists of the emergent 'speed elite' operate, are precisely the products of the advancement of neo-liberal practices and values (Koensler & Papa 2011: 14–15).

Contemporary environmentalism is an example of how new social movements can create a new form of identity and belonging which is not connected to institutionalized religiosity, but offers a way of creating one's own outlook

on life. Concern about the state of the environment we live in can motivate and give significance to spiritual activity, as a response to the blurring of the boundaries between the sacred and profane. Whether the environment is seen as purely functional, or sacred in itself, contemporary environmentalism often includes a spiritual dimension.

There are various internal groupings within contemporary environmentalism, but the three best known are eco-spirituality, eco-justice and eco-traditionalism. The differences between them are more a matter of emphasis than of fundamentally opposing views, but the adherents of the different views do clash occasionally. Adherents of eco-justice have criticised adherents of eco-spirituality as being irresponsible 'tree-huggers' while children starve and for eco-spiritualists the other two groups are not spiritual enough. The main dividing line between the environmentalists is in the end, though, between liberal and conservative opinions. Eco-traditionalists seek to revitalise the tradition my means of reforming traditional religious texts in the light of ecological issues, while eco-spiritualists often advocate a new religion, even though they often use already existing religious symbolism. Unlike eco-traditionalism and eco-spirituality, which focus more on religious function, eco-justice focuses more often on pragmatic compromises. The different views mirror rather various relations between religious function and performance, which has consequences of public influence (Beyer 1997: 219–21).

Baker and Morrison (2011) have created a distinction between environmentally motivated spirituality and spiritually motivated environmentalism, which I will follow in this article. The former instance, environmentally motivated spirituality, refers to people whose experiences in nature transcend the scientific, material environment. The latter, spiritually motivated environmentalism, is where spirituality provides guidance and motivation in work on environmental causes.

Environmentally motivated spirituality

In environmentally motivated spirituality nature may be thought of in different ways, such as in terms of wilderness as opposed to countryside or garden, or in terms of urban environments and the global environment. The notion of wilderness is often linked with either the idea that there is a pure, real nature 'out there', or with the notion of a return to an original, pure nature, even if this return is only for a short period. The countryside or garden represents a more domesticated view of nature, often associated with a sense of cultural identity,

such as the English countryside, or with past times or even with political projects, such as the neo-rural movement of the late twentieth century. The focus on the idea of the urban environment stems from a growing awareness that, for the vast majority of people now and even more so in the future, their encounters with nature will primarily be within the urban setting. Attempts to capture or recreate the 'natural' environment have been made by developing city farms and inner city wildflower parks (Baker & Morrison 2011: 65–6).

At present, we tend to understand nature as that which is apart from an urban setting, something that we have to bring into the city for its inhabitants to experience and enjoy. The view of the global environment owes much to earlier works on the Gaia hypothesis by James Lovelock. Climate change in particular has focused attention on nature as being a set of ecosystems, as seen from a planetary perspective. Here nature is seen as being under threat and this has given rise to a politics of anxiety: fear for our future, distrust in the political system, including international environmental governance regimes such as the United Nations (UN), to actually solve our collective problem and ensure our collective future (Baker & Morrison 2011: 65–6).

This anxiety is also reflected in our feeling of security. Security is not just something states provide for their citizens. Individuals can become insecure if their fields are subject to erosion, if their forests are being used faster than they can regenerate, their climate is becoming drier because of global warming, or if their animal's manure is all needed for fuel and is no longer available to fertilize the rice-fields. As the resource base disappears and people are no longer able to support themselves and their families, one consequence that we already have started to see are environmental refugees. When adding all these tiny individual losses of security together there is a major national or regional, or even a global security problem. Security is something that can be created and destroyed at every level—from the private household all the way up through firms, to nation states and regional groupings of states to international regimes (Thompson 1997: 1–2).

Moreover these different views of nature also involve different sets of views about human beings and their relationship to nature, that is to say, the anthropocentric and the ecocentric views. Implicit in Western thought there is an idea that human beings are outside, or even above nature. From this point of view nature is given only a utilitarian value, that is, nature is valued only in terms of the uses that it can have for human beings. By this reasoning the term nature is often replaced with the term 'natural resource base'. Human progress has come to be understood in terms of increased domination over nature and the use of resources solely for the benefit of humankind. This

view was not only confined to business or politics, but was also the dominant view in Western environmental movements in the 1970s and 1980s, where the major concern of the movement at that time was with pollution and resource depletion. Pollution was a concern specifically because of its impact on human health and resource depletion was of concern because of its potential to undermine further economic development (Baker & Morrison 2011: 66).

The anthropocentric approach can be contrasted with an ecocentric view of nature and of the position of human beings in the natural world. This view emphasises the value that nature has over and above its usefulness to humans. In the ecocentric view, human beings are seen as being an inherent part of nature and there is a particular set of beliefs about how environmental resources are used. In contrast with the anthropocentric position, the ecocentric position allows nature to set the parameters of economic behaviour (Baker & Morrison 2011: 67).

The social, economic, environmental, political and/or ethical notions of de-growth have assumed an increasingly high profile within political discourse and social action over the last decade. Drawing on prominent environmental concerns, such as limits to growth, climate change and peak oil, and related social anxieties over the increasing globalisation of the economy and the normalisation of excessive consumption, de-growth raises important questions for those concerned with the composition of environmental values in the twenty-first century. While profits have been the principle traditional indicators of economic growth, ecological economists such as Herman Daly, Robert Costanza, Richard Norgaard and Hazel Henderson have developed a new field of study and practice. They have formed an international Society for Ecological Economics and are challenging models of economic growth and development along with conventional methods of costs accounting that disregard the environment (Grim & Tucker 2011: 87).

The anthropocentric and the ecocentric positions each have important ethical implications, in particular in relation to the design and implementation of policies. The ecocentric approach focuses on the community level and espouses small-scale, locally based technology. Its objective is to maintain social and communal wellbeing and the emphasis is on social purpose and values. In contrast, the anthropocentric approach can be distinguished by its optimism over the successful manipulation of nature and its resources in the interests and for the benefit of humankind. My aim is not to create a stance of opposition, but rather to state that depending on which position we choose to follow and implement, there are far-reaching ethical consequences. Many environmentalists who search for an environmentally motivated spirituality

are, perhaps not surprisingly, closer to the ecocentric position than to the anthropocentric position (Baker & Morrison 2011: 67).

Spiritually motivated environmentalism

In order for spiritually motivated environmentalism to be able to provide guidance and motivation to work on environmental causes, a cultural awareness of the interrelationship between the natural environment, humans and the continuity of life need to be embraced.

Tony Watling (2009) argues that what is seen to be needed is a fundamental reorientation of humanity in nature, a view which includes holistic and spiritual knowledge. Beyer recognizes global environmental issues as being part of the question of holism, since all actions are interconnected. Furthermore, since global environmental problems are a result of uneven power relations in the system of globalization, the solution to the problems is to be found in the global society and how to conceive of that society. This is, according to Beyer, an existential question that affects spiritually and religiously motivated people, since 'the meaning of the whole is immanence profiled by positing transcendence' (Beyer 1997: 209).

Watling refers to Max Oelschlaeger, who in 1994 wrote that environmental ethicists should consider that any single mainstream religious denomination alone influences the normative choices of more people than all eco-philosophies put together. Even though times have changed in Western culture, the impact of religious influence worldwide should not be underestimated. In line with the thinking of religious reorientation, religious traditions are being encouraged to engage with environmental issues (Watling 2009: 7). Environmental issues exist in a certain tension of social justice and hence religious or spiritually motivated environmentalism is one of the strongest actors dealing with social justice (Beyer 1997: 112).

Besides the ecocentric aspect, which all religious traditions have, Watling emphasises the importance of acknowledging the anthropocentric aspect. Even the environmentalists need to be aware that the concept of nature is culturally determined and that any static position of what nature is, or how it should be addressed, is limited and can be challenged. Therefore even the dichotomies of modern or ecological notions of nature can be seen as forms of social control through creating a hegemonic environmental norm (Watling 2009: 21–2).

Though much work has been done within academic institutions, the field of religion and ecology also depends on work done within religious institutions. Scientists have for years asked religious communities to play a more active role in environmental issues because they have observed that moral authority has played an important role in many transformations of values and behaviour (Grim & Tucker 2011: 90–1). Secular environmentalists have made the same observation and connection. Even publications by secular environmentalists and environmental organisations often contain at the least indirect religious interpretations and some direct recognition that some traditional religions address environmental issues at the core of their doctrines (Beyer 1997: 209).

After the Second World War public policy makers and academics in Western Europe and North America were heavily influenced by distinct secularisation theory. The role of faith was systemically ignored, since, for example, poverty was perceived of as a matter of material deprivation and its elimination a technical undertaking. This antipathy was frequently reciprocated. Faith leaders often considered themselves to be the defenders of traditional moral values, but emphasised the spiritual and moral dimensions of social problems. Since 1997, however, development organisations have become more conscious of the salience of religion in international politics and its importance for development policy and practice (Clarke 2009: 385–6).

While religions have their problematic dimensions, including intolerance, dogmatism, and fundamentalism, they have also served as sources of wisdom and moral inspiration and as containers of transformative ritual practices (Grim & Tucker 2011: 90–1). One example of this recognition of religions addressing environmental issues is the 25th Anniversary meeting of the World Wildlife Federation (WWF), which took place in Assisi, Italy, in 1986. WWF invited leaders of five major world religions to start and develop a network which has since then grown and published its own periodicals (Beyer 1997: 209). Even in deeply structured international business organisations the recognition of the connection between faith and action can be observed, as when, for example, the former President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, in 1997 launched a small 'Directorate on Faith' within the Bank and created an ongoing discussion with religions around development issues, called World Faith Development Dialogue (Clarke 2009: 385–6).

One example of how environmentalism and spiritual practices are combined is to be found in Eleanor Finnegan's (2011) research on the image of the land among several groups of American Muslims. In Islam the textual tradition concerning land expresses the idea that the land is owned by God and

given as a gift to God's creatures. Therefore, people can use the land for their own benefit as long as it does not harm others. Specifically for various communities of immigrants and convert Sunni Muslims, as well as for the Nation of Islam, farms play an important role in the religious community. For these Muslims, Islamic ideas and practices as well as the experience of farming, have influenced ideas about land. Among these groups, land has often been a place where Muslims can embody their religious and environmental values and are free to create religious communities, institutions, and identities. It has also helped shape environmental and religious ideas and practices (Finnegan 2011: 71) .

Post-secular aspects

The 1990s saw an explosion of organisations, institutions and publications expressing religious environmental activism. One explanation for this is what is called the globalizing process (Berglund 1999: 196; Hoofd 2009: 200). Globalization combined with the discourse of holism, which sees the planet as a single entity, resonates Beyer that opens up possibilities for religious resonance, connections and movements. As he writes, the environmental issues 'concretize the problematic effects of the global societal system more clearly than others' (Beyer 1994: 208). Concerning environmental holism, among other themes, Rosi Braidotti emphasizes the importance of the eco-philosophical dimension in the post-secular turn (Braidotti 2008: 16). Environmental questions and problems related to them bring people together and initiate numerous social movements, some of them religiously-based, which are often outside or beyond current institutional borders. These specific movements, Beyer argues, represent the potential for new religions (Beyer 1994: 97).

The slogan 'think globally, act locally' reflects in environmental discourse the ways in which universal and particular environmental awareness are simultaneously intertwined. Roland Robertson (1995) uses the term 'glocalization' to describe this mutual interconnection between local and global. The local is often constructed on a trans or super-local basis and one of Robertson's main points is that the notion of separate global homogenization and heterogenization should be left behind. In the current situation it is not a question anymore of either/or, but 'rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late-twentieth-century world' (Robertson 1995: 26–7). Environmentalism is an example of the contemporaneous presence of these seemingly opposite poles.

Environmentalism both promotes the growing awareness of global 'complex connectivity' and advocates a return to being connected to 'place' (Kearns 2007: 306).

These seemingly opposite poles do not seem to be a problem in post-secular spirituality. Popp-Baier's theory of self-controlled religiosity can well be incorporated into the post-secular theme. The main components of self-controlled religiosity such as critique (of institutionalised religion), consumption (speed elitism) and the religious/spiritual dimension are all included and combined. The elements which Popp-Baier recognised as being used to construct religion or spirituality are all of a piece with contemporary environmentalism, in that they are to be used for self-enchantment and to improve subjective wellbeing. Worldviews are, as stated earlier no longer necessarily either religious or secular, but may also combine elements of rational secularity with enchanted spirituality. The blurring of the boundaries between secular and religious views and motives occur, as well as the separation of mind and body, rationality and belief, and human and nature.

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434

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438

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