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BOOK REVIEWS

Jerolimov, Dinka Marinović, Siniša Zrinščak, Irena Borowik (eds): *Religion and Patterns of Social Transformation*, Zagreb: Institute for Social Research, 2004, 359 pp., ISBN: 953-6218-16-X

This is an interesting time to be studying religion in Europe because it (and its environment) have changed in the last three decades in ways that few would have anticipated in 1975. Spain, which in the 1960s was one of the bastions of traditional Catholicism, has just extended marriage to include homosexual couples. The secularisation of northern and western Europe has continued to the extent that we can now talk about largely religion-less societies. Enough time has passed since the fall of communism for us to get some good idea how religions, old and new, have made use of the space left by the end of repression. And the wars in the former Yugoslavia have reminded us of the potent mixture that religion and nationalism can form.

Hence any collection of empirical studies of religion in Europe is to be welcomed and these essays offer a great deal of evidence to chew over and some thoughtful reflections on central debates about the nature of religion, the relationship between religion and spirituality, and secularisation.

There are too many contributions to discuss them all and I should stress that this selection reflects my interests rather than the quality of the ones I must pass over.

Eileen Barker reports on responses to questions about spirituality in a cross-national survey. We know that secularisation owes far more to indifference to previously hegemonic religion than to self-conscious rationalism or aggressive atheism and Barker's results show that many people who reject the designation of 'religious' nonetheless regard themselves as 'spiritual'. But she notes that, in any one country, a large-scale survey may not be the best way of finding out just what people mean by 'spiritual'; a cross-national survey, with its translation problems, is especially difficult. Although her results raise more questions than they answer, her introductory clarification of what she means by religious and spiritual is extremely helpful and should inspire others.

There are a number of interesting essays on the role of the Catholic Church since the fall of communism. Irene Borowik discusses the Church in Poland. There its self-interested and self-aggrandising behaviour is

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reducing its communist-era popularity. It no longer speaks for the nation but is seen as a special interest and people on the left and the right seemed agreed that its political influence should be reduced. Erno Pace, in discussing the Church's search for a role in civil society in Italy, usefully reminds us that the collapse of the Soviet Union radically changed the political landscape not only of the communist bloc countries but also of other societies which, since 1946, had been deeply divided between left and right. Interestingly Pace suggests that the Church is trying to find a role as an integrative force in a country no longer split right and left but dividing into regions.

An essay which raises important technical issues in the comparative study of religiosity is Kati Niemalä's report on Finland. The Nordic countries generally share a paradoxical attitude to organised religion which is well illustrated here. Personal piety is rare but the state Lutheran churches, which generally attract people through their doors only for rites of passage services, remain popular and respected, largely for their social service work and (more strongly in Finland with its once-hostile Orthodox neighbour to the East than in other Nordic countries) for their role in national identity. My impression is that Niemalä rather disguises the most interesting feature of Finnish religion by over-looking just how important church attendance is for Protestant Christianity. Although collective worship does not have the sacramental status that it does for Catholic and Orthodox Christians, even the most reformed Protestant traditions require that believers gather together to learn, re-affirm and strengthen their faith and to glorify God. She takes assent to very weak survey measures (such as self-labelling as religious and saying that one prays) as warrant to classify many Finns as 'really religious' and then (like an indulgent parent over-looking a child's delinquency) describes them as 'passive in attending religious services' (107). We would never say of people who never go to football matches that 'they are passive in attending football matches'.

Personal religiosity is also, I would argue, inflated by the decision to treat all respondents to a survey question about belief in God except those who picked the outright atheistic choice ('I do not believe in the existence of God') as 'believers'. It is not entirely clear from this report but it seems that alternatives such as 'I believe in some sort of higher power or life force' and 'There is something there' (options which are now chosen by half of Britons) were either not offered or have been rolled up into the 'I believe in God' category. The net result is that the most fascinating questions about Nordic religion are not highlighted:. If most Finns are really 'believers' but cannot be bothered to take part in the services of the church to which almost all of them notionally belong, what is it they 'believe'? And if it is the case that self-description as religious is a residue of a time when people were more actively involved (and that would fit the

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strong correlations between age and measures of religiosity) how long can it continue when so few people are socialised into any form of shared knowledge about what it means to 'believe in God'.

One of the most important questions regarding religion in central and eastern Europe is how effective is state repression. Even those of us who subscribe to the classic secularisation approach expected some sort of (albeit limited) religious 'revival' in the former communist bloc as those people who had remained religious despite communism were allowed to express their faith and as the churches as organisations became free once again to teach and proselytise. The data reported in essays by Miklós Tomka and Olaf Muller show little or no sign of 'bounce back'. By and large the pan-European patterns conform to the secularisation expectations. There is a clear negative correlation between measures of modernisation (GDP per person, levels of industrialisation and education, for example) and indices of religiosity. Growth in the Christian churches post-1989 has been limited. And despite the petty and irritating restrictions that some post-communist governments place on 'cults' (which usually means anything other than the once-hegemonic religion) there is now space for new religious movements but their growth has been nothing like as fast as it would need to be to support the general notion that people have a fundamental need for religion. The lack of any great religious resurgence raises a fascinating question: what has undermined the demand for religion? Did communist repression actually work? Or is it just that the general secularising forces that produced Niemalä's 'passive believers' in Finland have had similar effects in the Czech Republic?

Tadeusz Doktór tries to assess the growth of 'New Age' spirituality and reports a conclusion that is the reverse of what we find in detailed studies of social class correlates in Britain: that New Age beliefs are more popular in the least developed countries of Europe. The explanation is almost certainly a technical one. Scholars in Britain and America use some version of the idea of 'seeing the self as divine' and 'discovering divine power within oneself' as the constitutive feature of New Age spirituality and, not surprisingly, find most of it among prosperous well-educated people. Doktór has used interest in the occult and forms of divination, which is a rather different matter and might sensibly be expected among those who feel themselves somewhat powerless. Doktór may be wrong to present his results as contradicting expectations derived from the work of Thomas Luckmann; he may just be talking about something different.

Which brings us back to the conclusion of Barker's essay. Defining concepts and creating operational measures is never easy in any field of social science. Especially with the somewhat abstract matters that concern sociologists of religion, it is easy to get lost in translation. In the field of social class and social mobility, analysts argue over theory but have a

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considerable consensus around research instruments, scales and measures. It would be nice to think that many of the problems of research design, data analysis and interpretation to which many essayists in this collection refer are a feature of the relative novelty of the field. I hope the authors of these essays continue to talk to each other, to share data, and to work towards greater uniformity of technique. Data-based comparative analysis is not easy but it is essential.

Steve Bruce, Aberdeen, UK

Bien, Walter and Alois Weidacher (eds): *Leben neben der Wohlstandsgesellschaft. Familien in prekärern Lebenslagen. Schriften des Deutschen Jugendinstituts: Familien-Survey*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004, 255 pp., ISBN 3-8100-4096-7

English Title: *Life Beside Welfare Society. Families in Precarious Life Situations*

On the horizon of scientific cosmos sometimes scientific notions suddenly appear – without preceding its analytical conceptualisation. Precariousness is such a notion, today it belongs to scientific language but nevertheless its conceptualisation has not really proceeded. The reason is quite simple: it is because reality is faster than science. In the discourse of political and public life the notion was already present before there was really a sociological discussion about it. Therefore, precariousness could be read as an expression of recent social change. Its linguistic use reflects that life has become insecure. Even if there is something normative in its signification it identifies appearances of big sociological relevance. The study of precariousness leads directly to the heart of sociology, it touches reflections about social integration and therefore the possibility of society. In Germany, a research group around Walter Bien chose precarious life circumstances (dt. prekäre Lebenslagen) as their research focus. Because this study is a mandate of the Federal Ministry of Families there is a strong application-orientated approach with the aim to find out more about the question of how the phenomenon of precariousness is constituted as well as how and which measures of effective prevention could work against the risk of impoverishment.

In this book the results of the research, based on data of the family survey, are published. It offers the possibility to come closer to an analytical understanding of precarious life situations. In his introduction, the project leader Walter Bien says that those circumstances could but must not be expressed as actual financial distress (7). They can be

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understood as the gap between the secure positions of welfare state and poverty. Meanwhile, the research project recognises that there is not automatically a direct relation between income and life situation, between living standard and needs. This relation is connected to the different social factors that influence the perception and handling of those life situations.

From that perspective it is evident that due to the possibility of daily life strategies there should be other indicators of resources other than only income. Therefore, the researchers included not only materialistic resources into their considerations but humane and social ones too. On the basis of the family survey in Germany they also acquired the needs of families in their daily life, in regard to it different personal and social functions as reproduction, education of children, personal development and social life. Referring to these empirical data, the question should be answered which characteristics could be identified in relation to those insecure and precarious economic situations. This was the first aim of the project as the project leader clearly states (8). A related question is what the reasons of those precarious situations are. Due to the current discussions, there are different possibilities as for instance economic structural transformation, generally labelled by the term ‘globalisation’, and social change within national institutions, as well as the disintegration of traditionally fixed structures as ‘milieus’ and social groups.

The research group wanted to know if those global tendencies are expressed and could be proven on the level of specific family situations and experiences. The book includes several articles all referring to this research project and treating particular aspects of it. Thus, the volume offers a good illustration of different approaches around the subject. Such aspects are the role of human skills and qualifications, the personal net of social relations, health and health attitudes, and the financial management of households. As mentioned before, the methodological and empirical base is always the same: the German family survey of the year 2000. It consists of a survey of persons who live in families and who are between 18 and 55 years old. The study relies mainly on a partial sample of parents with children who are under 18 years old. This partial sample accounted for 41 per cent of the total of the family survey (n = 8091). In other words, 3328 households are included. 2247 persons living in a household with a low income have been chosen for a second interview, accomplished by telephone. At least 1453 interviews could be done successfully.

In the last chapter, Walter Bien and Richard Rathgeber present the most important results in the form of an overview. They conclude that employment is still the most important indicator of affiliation to precarious situation or poverty (230). They categorised precarious situation in two different groups. Both relate to the level of income (median) and the criteria given by the especially developed index of life

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circumstances (dt. Lebenslagenindex). The first group of families has such a low income that they would be entitled to receive social welfare without seizing this opportunity (17.7 per cent of the families). In this group, too, there are persons with an equal income level but without right to social welfare. The second group of precarious life situations has in fact a higher income (19.5 per cent) but shows a life index that lies apparently under the average. All those who live on social welfare are identified as part of 'struggled poverty' (dt. bekämpfte Armut) (4.6 per cent).

One of the first conclusions from the research is that every exceptional charge for families in precarious situations could signify the beginning of deprivations and poverty (231 ff.). Their situation can be described as an extra and ongoing risk of poverty. Other results are that families with many children and lonely parents are much more often in precarious situations, non-German families are concerned by this phenomenon over average but can handle it better than German ones, families in precarious situations are affected by higher health risks, and last but not least are integrated in smaller networks and get less support than families with higher income.

A second issue to which the volume contributes is the actual debate on the measurement of poverty. Accordingly, the authors distinguish between different types of poverty definitions, especially in regard to its measure. According to the definition of the United Nations, poverty is measured along the minimum level of living. In contrast, the relative measure of poverty is related to the actual living standard. As mentioned before, the study worked with an index of life situation for the differentiation of the two groups of precarious circumstances of family life. Ralf Dorau explains how this index was created (59 ff.). The aim was to have a theoretically founded index that could be validated in different fields. Therefore, the test persons were asked which goods they have or cannot have and by how many people one specific good is owned. Another question was whether a specific good is regarded as an important one by the interviewee or if it is judged as dispensable. From this examination the index of living standard or life situation was built.

The results of working with the distinction along this index are striking because they show that regarding some specific aspects the groups in precarious situations have more restrictions in their daily life than those living on social welfare, for example regarding medical treatment, heating, and clothes (77). The official poor have much more seldomly a garden or a balcony than the other groups. Very big differences can be stated regarding financial reserves. Seventeen per cent of all interviewed persons have no reserves at all. Logically, this is the case for 60 per cent of welfare recipients, but also for 24.5 per cent of the first group of precarious situation and 12.7 per cent of the second (average: 10.1 per cent). There

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are relatively high percentages of households that have neither computer nor access to the internet (computer: welfare recipients: 35 per cent, precarious situation I: 17.9 per cent, precarious situation II: 11.2 per cent, average: 5 per cent). In another chapter Dorau presents the most important factors of precarious situations on the basis of a multivariate analysis. He concludes that these are structural criteria like the number of children under 18 years, the number of wage earners in one household, eastern or western Germany, foreigners and the life-circumstances of women – single-parent or not (158).

With the focus more on the economic and social risks the writer of another chapter, Alois Weidacher, states that there are three complexes by which poverty and precarious economic situations are constituted (33). Firstly, there are prevented or limited possibilities of occupation, caused by deficits of qualification, age or illness. Secondly, unemployment or failure of occupation (dt. Verzicht auf Erwerbstätigkeit) in favour of family care and thirdly, a lack of skills in daily life like working techniques and regarding consumption. But there is quite an important number of families in precarious situations with both parents working. Low income can be the result of occupation in jobs with low qualifications. According to the fact that one reason of precariousness could be that one part of the parents does not work, it is not really evident why the author, Alois Weidacher, on page 219 suggests an increase of household productivity as a possible option to ameliorate the life situation. In other words: instead of consuming products offered by the market the latter could be produced by the families themselves. Along his reflections this would lead to more stability of family relations and savings. But would not exactly this lead to failures of wages which could be earned by women, too? Time is a resource that has its limits, too.

This contradiction draws the attention to the role of family care. Due to the question of family work and occupation, it is interesting what Hedwig Spegel found out about support by relatives and friends (115). Most frequently it occurred in child care (72 per cent), in case of illness (67 per cent), and in household and renovation (67 per cent). In general, there are no differences between the two groups in precarious situations. But with the increase of the economic level of the family there is more help for child care. It is not clear if there is a bigger demand. Therefore, as the author writes, for proving this special data are needed. Maybe the discussed observation relates to the fact that women in families in better conditions are more often occupied. As we learned from Weidacher, one reason of precariousness is the failure of occupation in favour of family cares. Compared to all this it is interesting that there are no differences related to the economic situation regarding complaints about childcare. More important than the economic situation is the family situation. Single

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parents have more problems than married couples in finding necessary childcare. But in general, the percentage of parents who are not satisfied with childcare is relatively small, as Alois Weidacher says (220): '64.9 per cent of the interviewees never have problems, 26.1 per cent sometimes and 9 per cent relatively often'.

As we can see, there are some considerations about institutional aspects, too. But what is underexposed is the world of labour and its development although the situation of occupation is identified as decisive for the social situation. But starting from the questioning, this aspect seems only to be a question of individual behaviour or attitude – a question of qualification and availability for the labour market. The same effect must be observed in the article on health. For health risks the following is defined: smoking, lack of physical movement, excess of weight, alcohol and alimentation. Work conditions or unemployment are not regarded as health risks. From this point of view it is not astonishing that Weidacher and Bien only conclude that there is a much bigger probability of health risks for families with lower income, but it is not possible to show coherence on their empirical data (237). It would have been enlightening if there had been some questions regarding health situation at the workplace. From this individualistic point of view the prevention of impoverishment consists only of measures that should change individual behaviour and consciousness instead of recognising structural and institutional problems, too. Such an issue results from a too close application-orientated and standardised research. There is obviously not enough space for discussing and analysing political arrangements. Somehow, there is the danger of social scientists becoming social workers. At the end of the study the authors recommend more prevention and more support of self aid.

This reflection about the causes of health leads us to a methodological problem. As shown there, it is not possible to say how the causes and impacts of health risks and life circumstances are. Quite often the authors encourage more research because their indicators would not be suitable to prove supposed coherences. Methodological problems are discussed in the article by Daniela Klaus. She suggests a longitudinal study that would answer the question if there will be a stabilisation of precarious circumstances (190). Interesting, too, is her observation that the interviewees are often ignorant in relation to the monthly family income. This is a good illustration of the complications by asking the parameters of particular life situations when the interviewees are not enough informed about those decisive facts. This observation reflects the limits of the validity of the index of life circumstances. But those complications could be meanwhile read as one expression of the phenomenon itself because income becomes more and more unsteady. To sum up, if there are some limits, the study is an important contribution for a better understanding.

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Without doubt there are a lot of helpful suggestions for further research, too.

Chantal Magnin, Bern, Switzerland

Faist, Thomas and Eyüp Özveren (eds): *Transnational Social Spaces. Agents, Networks, Institutions*, UK/USA: Ashgate, 2004, 237 pp., ISBN 7546-3291-1

The concept of *transnational migration* has come a long way from its initial studies in the early 90s that focused on new migration patterns in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean. Scholars argued that these new migration patterns are not unilinear as in earlier days, when most migrants left one place to move to another for good. Empirical studies showed that a (supposedly growing) number of migrants moves back and forth between different places and inhabit life-worlds that span across national boundaries. It was argued, that these new migration patterns ask for new theories and research methods.

Since then, a lot has been written in favour of the new paradigm, conducting ever more case studies of *transmigrants*. Furthermore, several scholars have taken up the task of developing coherent theoretical concepts of transnational migration. Not surprisingly, the new paradigm has also triggered much criticism within the field of migration research. A central critique has ever since been the question, whether the described phenomena were really so new. Many claimed that maybe the concepts and focus of *description* changed rather than the *phenomenon* itself. Furthermore, a lack of sound theoretical underpinnings and a problematic dominance of qualitative case studies, delivering merely low range theories was identified by critics. As for the European context, doubts were cast whether the transnational paradigm, developed elsewhere, could legitimately be applied to describe current migration processes.

In presenting analysis of contemporary social spaces that stretch from Germany to Turkey, the book *Transnational Social Spaces* tackles all of the above mentioned criticism. Jointly edited by Thomas Faist and Eyüp Özveren with contributions of doctoral students from Germany and Turkey, the book itself is the outcome of a transnational enterprise.

In an introductory chapter by the renowned theorist of transnational migration Thomas Faist, he presents 'concepts, questions and topics' to study transnational social spaces. It serves as the theoretical framework for the nine case studies conducted by doctoral students that make up the rest of the book. These case studies are grouped in three thematic fields: 'Rights and Struggles', 'Entrepreneurship and Management' and finally

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two studies that are grouped under the somewhat fuzzy header of: 'Culture, Media and Everyday Social Life'.

In the preface the editors claim that the book 'represents a further step towards an operationalisation' of transnational social spaces. Unfortunately, most of the theoretical ideas are confined to the introductory chapter of Faist. Here, theoretical and methodological guidelines for studying 'transboundary social and symbolic ties' are presented. Whereas earlier studies in the field have focused on transmigrants' pluri-local life worlds, the focus of this book is on 'transboundary exchanges and transactions in networks, [non-state] organisations and communities'. The focus is thus changed from transmigrants to processes of institutionalisation of interaction across state boundaries.

In talking about transnational social spaces, the very concept of 'space' transcends a traditional geographical understanding of a localised set of physical features. In the book 'space denotes cultural, economic and political practices of individual and collective actors within territories or places'. By recurring symbolic and social interaction, transnational 'links' between actors are created. Building on these assumptions, Faist develops the overarching definition of transnational social spaces as understood in the book as being 'relatively stable and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states'.

In order to conceptually and empirically grasp transnational spaces, Faist proposes to study their main dimensions, namely the 'time-space compression' of ties and the organisation of ties that make up a certain transnational social space.

Following this conceptualisation, the time-space compression of ties can be analysed by studying their 'extensity' – the location of activities, the actors involved and the social fields affected by the ties – and the 'intensity' of social ties, described as the number and frequency of connections as well as the speed of transactions.

According to Faist, the organisation of ties should be studied by analysing the infrastructure at disposal within a certain transnational space as well as the informal and formal regulation of ties by law, policies, hierarchies, etc. Furthermore, a strong case is made for studying the historical evolution of transnational social spaces.

Thus the reader is presented with some analytical tools, applicable for studying social phenomena that are, by definition complex and hard to grasp with traditional research strategies. Strengths and possible weaknesses of analyses borne by the application of these tools can be found in the case studies presented in the book.

In the group of 'Rights and Struggles', the case study by Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu deals with the topic of transnational social movements. A transnational campaign against a multinational gold-mining company in

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Turkey is analysed using qualitative research methods. Interviews with local Turkish peasants as well as environmental experts and activists in Germany and Turkey are used to describe the structure of the transnational space and to explain why it was so effective.

Quite contrary to this, the second case study in the book by Hanife Aliefendioğlu shows how few ties could so far be developed between women's NGOs in Germany and Turkey in order to strengthen the situation of Turkish migrant women in Germany. She also presents ideas on what should be done in order to foster transnational ties between these NGOs.

The 'other side', namely German migrants in Turkey are the focus of Bianca Kaiser's case study. She discusses the merits of German groups in Turkey in improving the life of Germans living there. Activities of the most important of these groups – 'die Brücke' – are analysed in depth. In forging ties between Germany, Turkey and the EU, the group has opened up political space for activities in the sectors like education or citizenship laws.

The final contribution within the thematic group is Emre Arslan's analysis of a Turkish ultra-nationalist group in Germany. He describes how these activists resolve their contradictory situation of being Turkish nationalists outside Turkey, how ideological currents are 'imported' from Turkey and how, in spite of everything, these activists become more and more part of the social life in Germany.

Two case studies are presented dealing with the realm of transnational entrepreneurship and management. In his study of the small Anatolian city of Çorum, Cem Dişbudak investigates the role of return migrants and their transnational social spaces in the economic boom of the city. On a more socio-psychological level, Marita Lintfert studies problems of intercultural interaction and communication in Turkish-German joint ventures.

Within the final thematic cluster, Kira Kostnick studies the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' of Turkish migrant broadcasting in Berlin. In her analysis of different programmes run by Turkish migrants on the 'Open Channel Berlin', her analysis focuses on differing concepts of migrant identities underlying these programmes. She argues that the supposedly 'bad guys' such as Turkish and Kurdish nationalists combine local and transnational topics and create transnational (media) spaces. These are denounced as hindering integration by simplistic views of the 'good guys' on air.

The final chapter deals with a topic rarely discussed within transnational studies – the children of migrants. By means of statistical and qualitative analysis of marriage patterns of second generation Turks in Germany, Gaby Straßburger tries to track changes in the nature of transnational social spaces over generations. She argues that 'old' personal

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transnational ties to kin and community of origin lose relevance for the young women and men. But parallel to this, 'new' transnational ties that are built on a more voluntary basis to friends in Turkey gain importance. Alongside this, new forms of solidarity come to play a role in the development and maintenance of transnational ties of the second generation.

Most of the case studies presented are good examples of how complex phenomena such as transnational social spaces can be studied. As the majority of them stick to the central features of the guidelines developed by Faist, they serve as good indicators of what we can expect when applying the guidelines. We see that the specific form of analysis can grasp relevant aspects of the described transnational social spaces. But while the case studies are proper analyses, little more than the cases themselves are presented in most of them. Theoretical analyses that go beyond the already-known are seldom in the book and the application of Faist's guidelines might be a reason for that.

To sum up, Faist's guidelines presented in the book can be valuable tools for scholars of transnational phenomena and the case studies reveal some interesting stories. But scholars who stick to Faist's guidelines too rigorously might end up with analyses of rather little groundbreaking potential.

Paul Scheibelhofer, Vienna, Austria

Religion (Spirituality) is Dead! Long Live Spirituality (Religion)!

Heelas, Paul and Linda Woodhead (with Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski and Karin Tusting), *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005

Roy, Olivier, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, London: Hurst and Company, 2004

Sutcliffe, Steven J., *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003

Standard theories of religion have largely failed to account for the surprising contemporaneous varieties of religiosity that inhabit the West today. Whilst mainstream Christian churches, in the view of many commentators, 'bleed to death' through a haemorrhaging of believers that shows little sign of abating, some of their congregations and other churches are growing in membership and developing their repertoires.

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The involvement of ethnic minorities is a factor here, as also in the expansion of other faiths, notably Islam. This differentiated picture of decline and growth is complicated by the role that religious organisations are assuming in the public sphere, in terms of representing 'faith communities' and partnering local to transnational polities. If we are living in a secularised age, religion seems peculiarly 'in our face'. Yet this situation is even more complex if we take into consideration the influence of privatised religious beliefs and practices on increasing numbers of individuals' lives and on wider society. The confusions of this picture are reflected in the plethora of ill-defined and ephemeral terms currently proliferating in the sociology of religion: 'New Age', 'spirituality', 'subjective religion', 're-sacralisation' and so on. In order to make sense of this fascinating but sociologically problematic situation, rigorous empirical research is needed, but that has been sadly lacking in the sub-discipline, which for too long has been tied to textual rather than contextual analysis. These three books, however, offer hope that this may be beginning to change. In their own ways, each addresses issues of authority, organisation and the place of the individual in society – issues that are of crucial importance for commenting upon the field of religion in the contemporary West. In this review, I will look at the arguments and some limitations of each book, before turning to issues of authority and the self that lie at the crux of these matters.

In building upon his previous studies of political Islam, Olivier Roy's *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, explores the shift from fundamentalism to what he calls 'neofundamentalism'. The latter is characterised by a deterritorialised approach to Islam and politics, in contrast to the state-fixated orientation of the former. Roy believes that this deterritorialisation has resulted from processes of westernisation, globalisation and secularisation, in particular the 'crisis of authority' (34) that results from these. As a consequence, the form that neofundamentalism takes is significantly different from the local bodies of believers, led by *ulama* (religious teachers) trained in traditional *madrasas* (religious schools), that typifies fundamentalist Islam. This form of traditional religion, in which legitimate authority is public and carefully bounded, increasingly has been replaced by charismatic authority characterised by learning at private *madrasas* and the imagination of a global body of believers (a global *ummah*). For Roy, this is an individualised form of religion in which these 'post-Islamists' – which include such movements, at least in some of their manifestations, as the Taliban, Tablighi Jama'at, Wahhabis and Hizb ut-Tahrir – seek to construct their own Islamic lifestyles in social contexts that have been set adrift from the certainties of the past. Although he focuses on second and subsequent generation Muslims in the West, Roy also stresses that this is a crisis affecting Muslim

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societies across the world. In the internet, such individuals have a powerful tool by which to develop their own authorities and communities, as well as being able to seek answers to questions regarding how to live and thus to contribute to the development of *sharia* law as applicable to their diverse contemporary societies.

What has resulted, therefore, is a qualitatively new form of Islam that is severed from 'pristine' cultures and ethnicities, operating instead with a direct connection between the individual and the imagined global *ummah*, that is, as a decultured 'neo-ethnicity' as 'Muslim'. According to Roy, 'What is evolving is not religion but religiosity – that is, the way in which believers build and live their relationship with religion' (120). The result is a 'New Age religiosity' that emphasises the agency of the self in constructing the individual's faith and creed and their performance. This does 'not express the dilution of the self into the collective, but on the contrary mark[s] an exacerbation of the self' (178).

Roy explains how this situation presents difficulties for sociological research, since traditional lines of enquiry through organisations and gatekeepers are irrelevant or limited. He therefore focuses on web-based research, developing his argument in part on the basis of testimonies, pronouncements and discussions in popular personal web pages. In this way, he attempts to capture the 'floating discourses' produced by 'floating social categories' of neofundamentalists (7). Theoretically, Roy draws on the French tradition of rethinking secularisation, such as the work of the sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger, who argues that contemporary Western society is particularly conducive to the reconstruction of sectarian communities of believers. Roy explains, for example, how the westernisation of Islam has not led to its reformation or liberalisation, but tends to favour conservatism since the boundaries of the religious are sharpened in a secularised and multicultural society.

These methodological and theoretical approaches are not without their difficulties, however. There clearly is scope for more traditional sociological methods, given that neofundamentalists do not live exclusively virtual lives. Roy writes throughout of the influence of neofundamentalists in certain neighbourhoods, mosques and prisons, and of the friendship-based networks that arise, including at universities. It is likely that investigation through these settings would provide different results, since they may enact formations of community, leadership and organisation at local levels that are not apparent in the virtual world of the internet. Indeed, internet writings may, by their nature, be directed towards an imagined global constituency, which represents only one aspect of the phenomenon in which Roy is interested. His characterisation of neofundamentalism in terms of deterritorialisation may therefore be questioned.

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These considerations also problematise Roy's view of religiosity as 'New Age', that is, of the primacy of the authority of the self in neofundamentalism. This focus upon the agency of the self is central to the two other books being reviewed here. Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead's *The Spiritual Revolution* sets out empirically whether and why there has been 'a tectonic shift in the sacred landscape' (2) in Britain, in terms of the replacement of religion by spirituality. They do this by interpreting the results of a project that they and the co-authors of their book carried out in Kendal, a small town on the edge of the Lake District National Park in Cumbria with the aim of mapping and characterising the entirety of its 'sacred landscape' in terms of weekly association activities, through ethnography, interviews and questionnaires. With one half of the project focusing on Christian activity (the 'congregational domain') and the other on what they call the 'holistic milieu' (within which the majority of activities are forms of therapy, such as yoga and massage), it builds upon their existing interests in Christianity and post-Christianity (Woodhead) and the New Age Movement (Heelas). Their findings that the holistic milieu is (slowly) growing and that the majority of Christian congregations are (quickly) declining, is explained by them through what they call the subjectivisation of contemporary society: those parts of the sacred landscape that are compatible with this will fare better than those that are not. This process involves a shift 'away from life lived in terms of external or 'objective' roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences (relational as much as individualistic)' (3).

Whilst acknowledging that the 'sacred landscape' in Britain is very small (in Kendal, about 8 per cent of the population are weekly participants at congregations and about 1.6 per cent in the holistic milieu), Heelas and Woodhead distinguish between 'life-as' religion, which predominates in the congregational domain with the partial exception of some groups such as the Society of Friends (Quakers), and 'subjective-life' spirituality, found within the holistic domain. They conclude that whilst a spiritual revolution, in the sense of the replacement of religion by spirituality, has neither occurred in Britain nor is likely to occur in the near future, there are clear signs of tendencies towards this. In particular, they state that 'although the spiritual revolution has not taken place with regard to weekly associational activities, it looks very much as though it has occurred, or is occurring, in significant sectors of the general culture' (72), such as in product purchasing, the media, schools and healthcare. They also show that the holistic domain is attractive to women who grew up in the 1960s, providing them with a means to react against 'life-as' roles. This means that, contrary to those theorists who argue that the

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'New Age' is relatively insignificant, such as Steve Bruce, Britain is currently experiencing both secularisation and sacralisation.

The strength of Heelas and Woodhead's volume lies in its approach to understanding the religious field as a whole, although that may also be its weakness. There are clearly problems with extrapolating pictures and trends from a rural town to Britain, let alone the West, as a whole, yet Heelas and Woodhead attempt this in conjunction with a range of other statistical data. Leaving that issue aside, another difficulty lies in the rather monochrome picture they draw of the holistic milieu. Unlike the congregational domain, which is usefully differentiated into four variations allowing a more complex picture of the mixture of 'life-as' and 'subjective-life', the holistic milieu is taken to be homogenous, despite its variety of settings, organisations and practices. This may well arise from a methodological issue, namely the failing adequately to discuss or present qualitative data regarding participants' experiences, which is problematic given their reliance on a theory of subjectivity.

By using the key of 'subjectivity' to unlock this field, Heelas and Woodhead commit themselves to interpreting complex issues of self and authority. Yet, as regards their qualitative data, they exhibit a strong tendency to rest their analysis upon the texts and discourses of religious leaders, to the detriment of exploring contestations and constructions of meaning, practice and belief. Heelas and Woodhead accept that we all have subjective experiences, but the contention that some lives are lived by reference to them and some are not, rather ignores the issue of how subjectivities are constructed and the role of authorities in this. The theoretical crux of Heelas and Woodhead's argument, therefore, is that there is an opposition between internal (or self) authority and external authority, but this seems to be a metaphysical – almost a *theological* – supposition.

This can be seen in their lack of interest in the contextual meaning that lies behind the views amongst congregations' participants: they too readily *assume* to know what people mean. Discourses that emphasise 'submission to God, Christ, the Bible and congregational instruction' (19) cannot simply be taken as the opposite of 'a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences' (3). Indeed, the evidence they present regarding the holistic milieu paradoxically shows the presence of strong social authorities, moralities and obligations, as in the prescriptive view of the leader of a Tai Chi group that, 'The more you get in touch with your true nature, the more peace and love you have' (26). The fact that these are then discursively represented by participants and leaders as expressions of 'self' could as equally be taken as meaning that external authorities have colonised internal ones, than that the latter predominate over the former. Heelas and Woodhead argue that what they are interested in is what

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people *say* about their religious activities (see n. 5, p. 160), not whether there is such a thing as the 'self' or how it comes into being. Yet, their use of various writers clearly shows that they are tied to a *theory* of the self that goes beyond people's representations (78–82, 95–7).

Whilst Heelas and Woodhead's book shows the difficulties of theorising the self and authority in a comparative setting, Steven Sutcliffe's shows this in a historical one. Sutcliffe focuses on what he calls seekership in social context, through historical and ethnographic study in Scotland at the Findhorn community, spiritual fairs, and a meditation group named the Unit of Service that focuses upon Alice Bailey's writings. Sutcliffe views these in terms of a milieu rather than a movement and in this regard his book concurs with Heelas and Woodhead's, although discussion of the status of the 'New Age Movement' is strangely absent in the latter, given its centrality to Heelas' earlier writings. Sutcliffe draws upon Foucault's genealogical method to criticise New Age Movement studies for their unquestioning adoption of the term 'New Age Movement'. He sees the conceptualisation of a 'movement' as an adoption of a false etic category and that of the 'New Age' as an adoption of an emic agenda, which needs to be replaced by paying attention to the heterogeneous emic discourses found within alternative spirituality. In so doing, he attempts to recover the 'lost history' of 'New Age', by paying attention to texts as a form of 'material culture' which need to be studied in terms of 'their conditions of production and distribution, and the ways in which their audience uses them' (20).

In fact, Sutcliffe identifies a historical shift between two uses of the term 'New Age' by insiders. In the first, prevalent until the 1970s, 'New Age' is used as an *emblem* of apocalypticism, often marked by an ascetic attitude. Here, it was found within a field of occult seekership, including Theosophical Society splinter groups and small groups in the Cold War era. This was transformed from the 1970s by being diluted through a 'polycentric network' (85), resulting in the use of 'New Age' as an *idiom* of self-realisation, accompanying an expressive attitude and found within a proliferation of networks and groups. Sutcliffe places this history within the broader field of 'alternative spirituality', which he sees as a sub-type of popular religion characterised by a discourse of spirituality and networking based around seekership. Seekership is essential to people's actions in this field and Sutcliffe sees seekers as 'virtuosic individualists' (196) of a charismatic nature. He relates the prevalence of seekership to the '"pluralisation of lifeworlds" inherent in postmodernity', in which there is a 'refashion[ing of] the self as an appropriate vessel – organismic, reflexive, relational – for navigating the rapids of contemporary culture' (207–8). Arising in a context whereby social institutions are disembedded

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and class positions are more mobile, the self becomes the dominant religious authority.

Children of the New Age marks a clear advance in the field of New Age studies, exploding many of its myths through its empirical and methodological awareness. It usefully demonstrates the construction of various forms of community in this field of phenomena – in terms of colonies, networks and groups – allowing a more differentiated understanding than pursued in Heelas and Woodhead's book. In particular, the historical reconstruction is excellent, demonstrating an insightful awareness of the social contextualisation of religious practices and beliefs. The ethnographic chapters are rich in detail, but they would have benefited from a deeper contextualisation of religious practices in participants' lives beyond their regular, occasional or one-off attendance at these groups. Instead, these chapters tend to revert to description of written and spoken texts, such that emic discourses again dominate the theoretical understanding that Sutcliffe constructs, whereby these phenomena are seen as spiritualities based on self-authority. His model of a 'self-service cafeteria of contemporary spirituality' (111) is one that too readily adopts such discourses, rather than situating them in structures of social power through which they become constructed and employed. Although successful in critically questioning the folk model of a 'New Age Movement', then, Sutcliffe is rather less so concerning those of 'self-authority' and 'spirituality'.

Despite their quite different fields of enquiry, these three books therefore share a common understanding of contemporary vibrant forms of religion in terms of broader sociological theorisations of self-authority and -reflexivity. These are undoubtedly useful ideas for exploring religiosity, but they become problematic when they are used to polarise forms of religion and when they are constructed by reproducing insiders' descriptions. Roy's study of neofundamentalist Islam, Heelas and Woodhead's study of the holistic domain, and Sutcliffe's study of the idiomatic New Age, then, underplay the crucial issues of the various social authorities and organisations in which people are involved, on the basis that, on the one hand, these people describe themselves as their principal authority and, on the other, their religious organisations are of a different form than those ordinarily studied. This means that their explorations of subjectivities are, in fact, rather misleading.

This has important consequences in their work. For Roy, it means that he tends to downplay the importance of local, especially national, contexts of action and the way in which Islamist networks are situationally rooted. For Sutcliffe and for Heelas and Woodhead, it means that the New Age – or whatever other label is used – continues to be conceptualised as relatively atomistic seekership, rather than in terms of a complex interplay

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of *multiple* authorities that allows space for individual agency. Each therefore posits a spirituality (or, in Roy's term, religiosity) that increasingly thrives at the expense of religion (or, in Sutcliffe's term, an emblem): religion is dead, long live spirituality! Yet this dualism can only be maintained at the expense of inconsistencies in methodology and presuppositions. What they describe on the spirituality side seems to be as much part of religion, and vice-versa; the religion/spirituality divide appears arbitrary and misleading. Whilst extremely welcome additions to empirical studies in the sociology of religion, these books need to be treated with care, lest we lose sight of the commonalities and correspondences across the contemporary religious field.

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