

POSSIBILITIES AND RISKS OF TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL SPIRITUALITY IN CYBERSPACE

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Based on authors such as Karl Kraus and Günther Anders, in his earlier lecture in Slovakia at the 1st Slovak Philosophical Congress, W. Welsch pointed to the ontological power of the media. Both of these authors used the Prologue of St. John with the words, “In the beginning was the Word ...” (Jn 1:1)¹, as a reference to individual forms of media. Karl Kraus, in the pre-electronic age wrote: “In the beginning was the printing press and then the world appeared”. Günther Anders used the words of St. John in reference to television: “In the beginning was television broadcasting, for because of it everything in the world happens.” With these quotations, Welsch points out that the statements of Kraus and Anders can also be applied in the present digital age. We can modify these quotations once again and say that “In the beginning was the Internet, and then the world appeared.” In terms of the present age, we can extend Welsch’s point of view to embrace also other creations of the modern world, such as social networks, metaverse, artificial intelligence and other.

It can be concluded that the ontic world today “begins,” especially for the young generation, with the Internet – the paradigmatic medium of the modern so-called digital age. The young generation often spends more time in cyberspace than outside it.

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¹ Quotes taken from: *Písmo Sväté – Nový Zákon*, Spolok svätého Vojtecha: Trnava 1986.

We enter cyberspace as a new lifeworld on a daily basis. We work in it, communicate, entertain ourselves... It becomes in this context our new existential dimension. People can therefore also be defined as *homo medialis* or *homo digitalis*. This is one of his newest characteristics of human beings, alongside such well-known definitions as *homo sapiens*, *homo symbolicus*, *homo ludens*, or even *homo religiosus*. In view of this, we can say that both media and religion belong equally to the essential characteristics of human beings. If this is the case, then, in our opinion, we can ask how these two dimensions interact, or in what way they interpenetrate one another. It is also possible to ask: How does the contemporary digital media actually affect religion? Are they changing it in any way? Are they changing its spirituality? Alternatively, are they creating new forms of religion and spirituality?

In our view, these questions can merge into one main question that corresponds with the title of the article: What are the possibilities and risks of traditional and non-traditional spirituality in the cyberspace of digital media? Clarification and identification of these possibilities and risks of traditional and non-traditional spirituality in the cyberspace of digital media is also the aim of this paper. To achieve this goal, we use a hermeneutic method, namely the interpretation of particular concepts with the aim of understanding. In addition, in this paper, we use an analysis of important concepts such as, spirituality, which we finally compare in terms of traditional and non-traditional “online” religion. We synthesize the findings into individual divisions in the concluding part of this paper.

RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND CYBERSPACE – ON THE FUNDAMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

Regarding the concept of religion, in the first (synchronic) approach it is usually understood as something “external”, visible, and spirituality as something “internal”, invisible. It is usually understood as a set of doctrines (beliefs) and rituals that are implemented in a community, and that also have a founder². The concept of spirituality is understood as a personal experience of religion, or religious acts, that, unlike other everyday experiences, have the character of sacred and transcendent. The relationship between religion and spirituality can be both very close, but also loose, or there might even be no ties to a particular religion, as is in the case of New Age spirituality.

In the second (diachronic) approach, it is a good idea to start with clarifying the very etymology of words. In the case of religion, the Latin term *religio* has a strong position in the European cultural tradition. Its etymology is diverse in nature. J. Komorovsky speaks of four origins of the term *religio*. The first meaning is derived from Cicero’s treatise *De natura deorum*, in which the Latin term *relegere* means ‘to go through in observing.’ In a broader sense, it means vigorous observation and contemplation in relation to the gods. Sabinus, in turn, argued that the term *religio* comes from the word *relinquere* and describes what is excluded from ordinary life.

² Every world religion is comprised of more or less these 3 pillars. For example, in Christianity it is the founder Christ, then the dogmatics concentrated mainly in the New Testament and the community of believers (the Church). In Buddhism, it is the founder Buddha, then the law (Dharma) and the community of believers (Sangha).

Lactantius, in his *Institutiones divinae*, derived the term *religio* from *religare*, which means “to re-establish” a relationship with the divine. Augustine, in his *De civitate dei*, derived the term *religio* from the term *reeligere*, which means “to choose God again”³. These insights into the term religion suggest its principal meanings, from which we can derive a deeper and more systematic concept of religion. Thus, we can say that the concept of religion contains the meaning of re-establishing a relationship with the absolute, i.e. God, divinity, transcendence, etc. This desire to re-establish a relationship with something transcending and absolute stems from the human nature that is limited by mortality. Humans have always been aware of the sense of finiteness and mortality and it is religion that allows for this deeper and broader integration. Religions have accompanied the life of humans throughout time, and many anthropologists and religious scholars therefore refer to humans as religious beings (*homo religiosus*). R. Leakey argues that “since the moment when reflective consciousness clearly «started burning» in the human mind, mythology and religion have always been part of the history of mankind”⁴. Thus, religion is quite natural to humans, and as H. Bergson notes: “...religion is a defensive reaction of nature against the knowledge that death is inevitable”⁵.

As for the etymology of the term *spirituality*, it comes from the Latin word *spiritus* (soul, spirit, courage, vigour, breath) and is related to the Latin term *spirare* (to breathe). In the late 4th century Latin translation of the New Testament, the Latin term *spiritus* is used to translate the Greek *pneuma* and the Hebrew *ruach*. The etymology of the term spirituality suggests that it is linked to an intense inner process, literally “breathing” and “oxygenating” of religion⁶. According to M. Eliade, the basic structural element of this experience is the sense of the sacred (*sacrum*) as opposed to the profane (*profanum*). According to M. Eliade, the transition from the profane to the sacred takes place through the inner transformation in humans. For example, the patriarch Jacob, who fell asleep on the road and dreamt a dream of angels descending and ascending a ladder, called the place terrible and made an altar out of the stone on which he had been sleeping. The sacred, according to Eliade, is characterized by non-transferability to another phenomenon (it can only be investigated in its originality),

³ J. Komorovský, *Religionistika. Veda o náboženstvách sveta a jej pomocné disciplíny*, Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave: Bratislava 2000, p. 5 – 6.

⁴ R. Leakey, *Pôvod ľudstva*, Archa: Bratislava 1996, p. 155.

⁵ H. Bergson, *Filozofické eseje*, Slovenský spisovateľ: Bratislava 1970, p. 283.

⁶ In abstract form, the concept of spirituality (Latin *spiritualis*) appears in the patristic era in the Pseudo-Hieronymous letters dating to the first two decades of the 5th century, the actual author of which is Pelagius or one of his disciples. The author encourages continuous development: *Age, ut on spiritualitate proficias*. In later centuries the term underwent an evolution in meaning. By the end of the 11th century it had a religious sense and meant spiritual life. Spirituality was understood as a reality and activity that did not come from nature, but from grace, from the Holy Spirit. St Thomas Aquinas gave the term an entirely ascetic sense, understanding spirituality as the opposite of corporeality. The magazine “La Vie Spirituelle” contributed to the spread of the term and the understanding of Christian spirituality in modern times. See: M. Chmielewski, *Duchowość*, in: *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej*, ed. M. Chmielewski, Lublin – Kraków 2002, pp. 226-232; A.K. Jastrzębski, *The challenging task of defining spirituality*, „Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health” 24/2(2022), pp. 113-131.

timelessness, and a sense of the sacred (*sensus numinis*)⁷. The second structural element of the sacred is transcendence, which is also directly implied in Jacob's experiences, because the ladder from heaven and the angel's voice exceeds one's ordinary experience. The element of transcendence in the sacred is an extremely important differentiating element to distinguish it from fascinating (*fascinans*), yet relatively ordinary experiences such as the fascination of a new, well-crafted film. Both the sacred and transcendent, implicitly contain the humans' transformation that we know as the archetypal matrix: *life – death – resurrection*⁸. In the Christian spiritual tradition, this matrix refers to the death and resurrection of Christ, which for Christians, as followers of Christ, means the situation of the death of the old human and the rebirth of the new, spiritual human⁹.

The third important concept is cyberspace. The etymology of the term comes from the English language, namely from the term “cybernetic”. This space is not an actual physical, three-dimensional space, but an auditory-visual version of the space of digital media with which one can “enter” and interact. S. Gáliková Tolnaiová defines the concept of cyberspace as follows: “The concept of cyberspace can be understood as a “place” or “space” where human consciousness and the computer system meet, or in other words, a meeting point of digital information and human perception. Thus, it refers to the information interface between computers and humans”¹⁰. There are also terms that carry similar meanings, such as “virtual” space, or “online space”, etc. Though there may be a slight difference in the meanings of these terms, they are largely synonymous. It must be said however that what is important and what gives these terms their actual meaning, is the very everyday use of cyberspace, into which contemporary humans “enter” with the help of new digital technologies and where they manifest their virtual selves, their virtual identities, live their “virtual” lives, or realise their virtual existence.

TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL SPIRITUALITY IN CYBERSPACE: POSSIBILITIES AND RISKS

The cyberspace of digital media brings various communication, information and evangelization opportunities for traditional religion and traditional spirituality, for example, also Christianity. It is used for information sharing, education, or streaming

⁷ M. Eliade, *Dejiny náboženských predstáv a ideí I*, Agora: Bratislava 1995, p. 18 – 19.

⁸ M. Eliade, *Dejiny náboženských predstáv a ideí II*, Agora: Bratislava 1997, p. 216.

⁹ P. Ricoeur, *Essays on biblical interpretation*, 1980, p. 46, in: *Religion-Online* [on-line], <https://www.religion-online.org/book/essays-on-biblical-interpretation/> (access: 20.07.2023). Ricoeur basically interprets many of Paul's declarations, for example: “For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him” (Rim 6, 8). We can see a radical form of this transformation, especially in mysticism. In Christian mysticism, for example, in St. Teresa of Avila, we can read a description of spiritual transformation in which she uses the archetypal image of the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly (Teresa of Avila, *The interior castle or the mansions*, Thomas Baker: London 1921, p. 58). He of this transformation as of “death” that is a prerequisite for the higher spiritual life.

¹⁰ S. Gáliková Tolnaiová, *Cyberspace of digital games as a “living space” of human and experiential product (on characteristic and value of (cyber) experience)*, “Marketing Identity” 3/1(2015), p. 460.

of worship services. Believers can meet online and share their views and experiences. On Christian communities' websites, one can find various types of useful information about events in the parish, the celebration of Mass, conditions for receiving the sacraments, etc. In a broader sense, it is also possible to evangelize. For example, John Paul II, in his message to the 36th World Communications Day (24 January, 2002), called "A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel" saw a great opportunity for spreading the gospel through the Internet: "The Church approaches this new medium with realism and confidence. Like other communications media, it is a means, not an end in itself. The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses... It is important, therefore, that the Christian community think of very practical ways of helping those who first make contact through the Internet to move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of the Christian community"¹¹.

Let us note that traditional religions with their spirituality have been shaped to a large extent by media such as word, or speech and writing. These media were very closely linked, for example, specifically with Christianity, but also with other monotheistic religions of the book, such as Judaism and Islam. The Word of God was proclaimed in human words and writing. Education, whether religious or secular, used speech and writing and in over 2 thousand years created what we call European culture. However, new digital technologies are disrupting the form of these old media. Digital communication media are dominated by images, which supports human cognitive abilities other than words and writing. G. Sartori argues that we do not have to think about images and, in contrast to texts, we can cognitively process the message easily. He even says that in anthropogenesis we are moving from *homo sapiens* to *homo videns*¹². A. Martinengo summarises today's trends as a "turn to images", which represents yet another Copernican revolution¹³. For example, the top modern communication social networks are full of images and videos, and it is safe to say that these networks wouldn't even make sense without them.

As N. Postman points out, visual media as such both weaken cognitive abilities such as memory and concentration and promote distraction and never-ending entertainment.¹⁴ It can be noted in this context that the new media, or cyberspace with its images, videos, and entertainment, are influencing traditional religions and their very spirituality, most of which, including Christianity, grew up on words and books. What does this mean for their traditional spirituality and specifically, for Christianity? It turns out that traditional spirituality is conservative, compared to the contemporary

¹¹ John Paul II, *Message for the 36th World Communications Day «Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel»* 12.05.2002, in: *The Holy See* [on-line], https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20020122_world-communications-day.html (access: 20.08.2023).

¹² G. Sartori, *Homo videns: La sociedad teledirigida*, Taurus: Buenos Aires 1998, p. 40. See also: S. Gálik & R. Cenká, *Twilight of Christianity in tele-view of the world: from homo religiousus to homo videns*, "European Journal of Science and Theology" 9/5(2013), p. 230.

¹³ A. Martinengo, *From the Linguistic Turn to the Pictorial Turn — Hermeneutics Facing the 'Third Copernican Revolution'*, "Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics" 5(2013), p. 309.

¹⁴ N. Postman, *Ubavit se k smrti. Veřejná komunikace ve věku zábavy (Amusing Ourselves to Death. Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness)*, Mladá fronta: Praha, 2010, p. 105.

cultural and media changes, and may seem alienated and incomprehensible to the younger generation. In this context, should, for example, the Church utilise the current trends? To what extent? Should priests perhaps be active on social media, record new videos every day and share them with believers? Should they become influencers? Would the traditional religion not change in this context? The question is – How much can it adapt to the influence of digital media and their use? Is it possible to preserve the essence of its identity, its traditional spirituality, to which the profound transformation in the sense of the matrix *life – death – resurrection* is linked?

We believe that a certain degree of adaptation of traditional spirituality is both possible and necessary, however, there are also limits. These limits are in the means of the human body and physical proximity of the community of believers. The limits of human physicality cannot be overcome in online communication. Pope Benedict XVI draws attention to this fundamental difference in the context of the Mass in the Catholic Church when he says: “...when we speak about the value of presence at a Mass that is broadcast by the mass media, then someone who does it must know that doing this is normally not taken as fulfilment of the mandatory involvement on a feast day. Though the visual representation may show the event, it does not bring it”¹⁵. In the case of traditional spirituality, for example in Christianity, which is associated with the administration of the sacraments, the body is literally *conditio sine qua non* of the ceremony of reception of the sacraments such as baptism, the sacrament of the altar, confirmation, and the anointing of the sick. Without the existence of body and without bodily contact (e.g., pouring water on the head in baptism, receiving the sacrament of the altar, anointing the forehead with chrism, etc.), the sacrament could not even be performed. Also, these acts bring a profound spiritual experience for the believer¹⁶. A very important physical or bodily correlate and support for spirituality is the physical proximity in a community of believers, as this has a certain aura and can therefore create a positive spiritual atmosphere. In the Russian philosophical tradition (Khomyakov, Solovyov, Lossky and others), the community of believers is called *sobornost*¹⁷, and means something more than just a group of individuals, thus it represents a new organic and spiritual unity. Such an understanding of the unity of believers probably has its origin in the words of Christ, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

As far as non-traditional spirituality is concerned, as pointed out earlier, we understand it as spirituality that is not based on or has no background in traditional

¹⁵ Benedikt XVI, *Posynodálna apoštolská exhortácia “Sacramentum caritatis”, SVV: Trnava 2007, p. 72. See also: S. Gálik, Media and Religion: possibilities and limits, “Studia Elbląskie” 21(2020), p. 410.*

¹⁶ See also: S. Gálik, *Media and Religion*, p. 412.

¹⁷ N.M. Zernov claims: “In Khomyakov’s system the key term was sobornost, a word with a number of broad translations, among them “togetherness” and “symphony”. This word, in the Slavonic version of the Nicene Creed, corresponds to “catholic”. It does not, however, mean “universal” but denotes a perfect organic fellowship of redeemed people united by faith and love. Khomyakov believed that a person could best achieve spiritual and intellectual maturity in an organic community that respected the liberty of its members and that true progress would depend not on competition (as in the West) but on cooperation“. See: N.M. Zernov, *Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov Russian poet and theologian*, in: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [on-line], <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aleksey-Stepanovich-Khomyakov#ref29360> (access: 20.08.2023).

spirituality, but is created in the cyberspace of digital media, especially in the form of videogames¹⁸. There are many games like these nowadays, and new ones are added all the time, which shows that there is a great interest in this phenomenon. Some experts say that online or digital spirituality is on the rise and may be on a par with traditional spirituality. T. Rucpic, for example, argues that currently “videogames take on such proportions that they can be perceived as facilitators of expressing spirituality or as a commentary on religious concepts”¹⁹. She even claims that the interaction between religion and cyberspace is the way for the spiritual progress of human kind²⁰.

Authors such as Robert M. Geraci and J. Vallikatt, who examined the videogame World of Warcraft from a religious-spiritual perspective, are even clearer. Robert M. Geraci says “World of Warcraft offers its players many traditionally religious opportunities, including a community, a moral compass, a sense of identity and meaningful purpose, and transcendent experiences. With millions of users receiving these sacraments from World of Warcraft rather than a traditional religious institution, there can be doubt about the seriousness of the game’s religious implications”²¹. J. Vallikatt similarly notices “World of Warcraft might fulfil the religious functions of creating worldviews, finding meaning, and exploring identity through an analysis of the game’s mythic content, ritual practices and online communities... WoW could be called ‘extraordinary religion,’ because it helps people move beyond their everyday culture and concerns”²².

The fundamental question, in our view, is whether the spiritual experience of a videogame can be equivalent to the spiritual experience of traditional religion. There are some new possibilities, but also limits and risks in spirituality in the cyberspace of digital media, or online spirituality. Not only the above-mentioned authors, but also many other authors, believe that new digital media, and videogames in particular, can saturate the religious needs of contemporary postmodern and secularized humans. However, we see two problems in these approaches to online spirituality: 1. lack of understanding of the depth of the concept of spirituality; 2. underestimation of the human body and the community of believers.

1. Original spiritual experience in traditional religion (as we have already indicated in the introduction) is characterized by the sacred (with the category of fascination) and transcendent. It is the experience of transcendence that exceeds the ordinary frameworks of life and creates the transcending depth. In the example of patriarch Jacob, we can see transcendence in the form of experiencing an unknown

¹⁸ The most famous videogames that feature religious themes are Manchester Cathedral, Resistance: Fall of Man, Age of Empires, or various apocalyptic videogames, such as Cyberpunk2077 and Death Stranding or the great MMORPG videogame (Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) World of Warcraft.

¹⁹ T. Rucpic, *Techno-Religion and Cyberspace Spirituality in Dystopian Video Games*, “Religions” 14/247(2023), p. 4, [on-line], <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020247> (access: 20.08.2023).

²⁰ The same source, p. 4.

²¹ R.M. Geraci, *Virtually Sacred. Myth and Meaning in World of Warcraft and Second Life*, Oxford University Press: New York 2014, p. 32.

²² J. Vallikatt, *Virtually Religious: Myth, Ritual and Community in World of Warcraft*, RMIT University: Melbourne 2014, p. 200 [online], <https://researchrepository.rmit.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/Virtually-religious-myth-ritual-and-community/9921861399301341> (access: 29.08.2023).

angelic world with the voice of the Lord, an experience that shook and changed him. Transcendence is also often associated with something terrible, for an absolute otherness scares a person. This is how patriarch James described the experience in the place where he was sleeping: “How terrible this place is” (Gen 28, 17). The category of transcendence with its transformative effect, within the *life – death – resurrection* matrix, is absent in digital spirituality. Though it is indeed possible to enter various virtual worlds in a videogame and also experience fascination or even fear, we still know that it is only a game, created by a human being with the help of digital technologies, we know we can quit it. We find it hard to believe that these digital experiences would transform a person so profoundly or substantially that they would begin to live spiritually outside videogames. In terms of traditional spirituality, this would be idolatry, that is, a belief in human creations, specifically images and stories in videogames. Perhaps the most extreme would be, in this context, techno-shamanism, which through visual and auditory means establishes a state of ecstasy similar to the one in traditional shamanism²³. However, it is important to note that even in this case, technology is only a means of supporting physiological and cognitive changes, and the essential experience happens in the consciousness of the person. However, human consciousness cannot be understood as a Cartesian *cogito* isolated from the body, but rather comprehensively in its connection with human physiology and somatics. Here we already encounter the second problem that concerns the phenomenon of human corporeality.

2. The human body constitutes yet another important pillar for spirituality. In our opinion, this is quite underestimated in digital spirituality. Even though there is, to a certain extent, a cognitive and physiological, i.e. bodily, connection through audiovisual religious stories in online spirituality, this type of connection can, as we believe, be rather counterproductive to the real spirituality. Here, religious images, stories and rituals are created by humans, with the help of technology, therefore they are artificial. They are not authentic and original in their nature and thus incompatible with the deeper levels of the human psyche and the cultural and religious background of the human being. Furthermore, true spirituality requires silence, concentration, prayer, meditation, and yet intense involvement of the body in spiritual activity. This is perhaps more evident in Eastern religions, as these emphasize controlled breathing, bodily postures, and movements as one of the conditions for experiencing deeper spiritual states. In this case, the human body is completely irreplaceable, and digital technologies can – in certain cases – create at most an audiovisual support for it. The digital ecosystem as such, with its (already mentioned) essence and nature, more or less interferes with silent spirituality, focused prayer or meditation.

²³ L. Martinková, *Computer Mediated Religious Life of Technoshamans and Cybershamans: Is there any Virtuality?*, “Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet” 3(2008), p. 48.

CONCLUSION

The cyberspace of digital media is now becoming the new lifeworld and existential dimension of contemporary humans. It can be stated that, in addition to the possibilities, it also poses some subtle risks and limits for traditional and non-traditional religions and their spirituality.

The new digital media and their cyberspace have some impact on traditional religion and spirituality that is largely shaped by the old media such as speech and writing. They disrupt the form of these media and, as a result, inevitably change their nature. In this context, we assume that some degree of adaptation to the new media-cultural ecosystem is both possible and inevitable. The question in this context is how traditional spirituality can adapt to the new digital media to such an extent that its essence or identity is preserved. As we see it, it is necessary in this process to revive the spirituality depth, most evident in mysticism. The profound aspect of transcendence and subsequent spiritual transformation in the sense of the *life – death – resurrection* matrix, which involves vigorous involvement of the physical body in the world of spiritual activity, is essential in it. This is what constitutes the very essence or identity of traditional spirituality.

As far as non-traditional online or digital spiritualities are concerned, it can be stated that they do not fulfil (at the level of videogames) the profound aspect of transcendence and spiritual transformation. They remain on the surface of ordinary, though often fascinating, experiences. This type of experience, which, we know to be “artificial” and therefore personally inauthentic, cannot bring about a deeper and lasting spiritual change in a person. This kind of change is the product of an authentic, deep, personal spirituality, or mysticism in which the human physical body, is an irreplaceable element. However, in non-traditional spiritualities (at the level of cognition), the connection with the human body remains relatively weak.

In our opinion, the new digital media, their cyberspace, saturate the needs of the postmodern and secularized person living in the digital world – whether in the context of traditional or non-traditional spirituality – only relatively. We believe that the interaction between religion and cyberspace offers only a limited possibility in the sense of the spiritual progress of humanity. The limits lie in the intense involvement of the body and its senses in spiritual activity, which is an essential requirement. In this respect, the new digital media or audiovisual technologies can at most provide only some help in the means of true spirituality and its development, but not authentic personal spirituality itself. Moreover, the digital ecosystem as such, by its very nature and character, more or less disrupts the silent, focused spirituality and the attainment of its mystical depth. As such, non-traditional spirituality cannot then be fully equivalent to traditional “offline” spirituality.

We can finally conclude that presently there is a slowing down of the pace in traditional spirituality, triggered by the paradigm shift in culture that is brought by new digital media, while non-traditional online (or digital) spirituality is on the rise. This, we believe, presents a big challenge for all traditional religions, including Christianity, which needs a renewal of spirituality through intensification of mysticism. As we can see in the examples of mystics and saints of the past, this quality can revive and restore the true, authentic spirituality. A great Christian theologian, Karl Rahner, once

said, “A Christian of the third millennium will either be a mystic, or will not exist”. We believe that this thought of Rahner’s could more or less be applied also to other traditional spiritualities that are now interfering with the new digital media and the changing culture.

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IN CYBERSPACE**

SUMMARY

The cyberspace of digital media is now becoming a new lifeworld, a new existential dimension of human beings. Many activities, including work, education, sport, entertainment or, even religious-spiritual activities, are moving into it. On the one hand, traditional religions use this cyberspace for spreading information, education, or streaming of worship services. On the other hand, new non-traditional forms of religion and spirituality are being created in virtual cyberspace, especially in new forms of media, for example in videogames.

Traditional religions with their spirituality have been shaped to a large extent by the media such as speech and writing. However, new digital media are disrupting these forms of old media. It can be concluded that the cyberspace of digital media as such influences traditional religions and their spirituality. The authors of this paper believe that a certain degree of adaptation is both possible and inevitable. In this context, the question of, to what extent traditional spirituality can adapt to the new digital media arises. Essential in this process is the renewal of the depth of spirituality that is most evident in mysticism and that represents its own identity.

Even though some authors argue that non-traditional religions and spirituality saturate the needs of the postmodern and secularized human living in a digital virtual world, the authors of this paper believe that the new digital media or audiovisual technologies can at most provide some support for true spirituality and its development, but not spirituality itself. These non-traditional spiritualities underestimate the fact that the body or the physicality of humans, constitutes an irreplaceable correlate of spirituality.

**MÖGLICHKEITEN UND RISIKEN
TRADITIONELLER UND NICHT-TRADITIONELLER SPIRITUALITÄT
IM CYBERSPACE**

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Cyberspace der digitalen Medien wird nun zu einer neuen Lebenswelt, einer neuen existenziellen Dimension des Menschen. Viele Aktivitäten, darunter Arbeit, Bildung, Sport, Unterhaltung oder auch religiös-spirituelle Aktivitäten, ziehen darin ein. Einerseits nutzen traditionelle Religionen diesen Cyberspace zur Informationsverbreitung, Bildung oder zum

Streamen von Gottesdiensten. Andererseits entstehen im virtuellen Cyberspace neue, nicht-traditionelle Formen von Religion und Spiritualität, insbesondere in neuen Medienformen, beispielsweise in Videospielen.

Traditionelle Religionen mit ihrer Spiritualität wurden zu einem großen Teil durch Medien wie Sprache und Schrift geprägt. Neue digitale Medien stören jedoch diese Formen der alten Medien. Daraus lässt sich schließen, dass der Cyberspace der digitalen Medien als solcher Einfluss auf traditionelle Religionen und deren Spiritualität hat. Die Autoren dieser Arbeit glauben, dass ein gewisses Maß an Anpassung sowohl möglich als auch unvermeidlich ist. In diesem Zusammenhang stellt sich die Frage, inwieweit sich traditionelle Spiritualität an die neuen digitalen Medien anpassen kann. Wesentlich in diesem Prozess ist die Erneuerung der Tiefe der Spiritualität, die in der Mystik am deutlichsten zum Ausdruck kommt und ihre eigene Identität repräsentiert.

Auch wenn einige Autoren argumentieren, dass nicht-traditionelle Religionen und Spiritualität die Bedürfnisse des postmodernen und säkularisierten Menschen, der in einer digitalen virtuellen Welt lebt, sättigen, glauben die Autoren dieses Artikels, dass die neuen digitalen Medien oder audiovisuellen Technologien allenfalls eine gewisse Unterstützung für die wahre Realität bieten können Spiritualität und ihre Entwicklung, nicht aber die Spiritualität selbst. Diese nicht-traditionellen Spiritualitäten unterschätzen die Tatsache, dass der Körper oder die Körperlichkeit des Menschen ein unersetzliches Korrelat der Spiritualität darstellt.

MOŻLIWOŚCI I ZAGROŻENIA ZWIĄZANE Z TRADYCYJNĄ I NIETRADYCYJNĄ DUCHOWOŚCIĄ W CYBERPRZESTRZENI

STRESZCZENIE

Cyberprzestrzeń mediów cyfrowych staje się obecnie nowym światem życia, nowym egzystencjalnym wymiarem człowieka. Wiele działań, w tym praca, edukacja, sport, rozrywka, a nawet działania religijno-duchowe, przenosi się do niej. Z jednej strony tradycyjne religie wykorzystują cyberprzestrzeń do rozpowszechniania informacji, edukacji lub transmisji nabożeństw. Z drugiej strony, nowe nietradycyjne formy religii i duchowości są tworzone w wirtualnej cyberprzestrzeni, zwłaszcza w nowych formach mediów, na przykład w grach wideo.

Tradycyjne religie z ich duchowością zostały w dużej mierze ukształtowane przez media, takie jak mowa i pismo. Jednak nowe media cyfrowe zakłócają wskazane tu formy starych mediów. Można twierdzić, że cyberprzestrzeń mediów cyfrowych jako taka wpływa na tradycyjne religie i ich duchowość. Autorzy tego artykułu uważają, że pewien stopień adaptacji jest zarówno możliwy, jak i nieunikniony. W tym kontekście pojawia się pytanie, w jakim stopniu tradycyjna duchowość może dostosować się do nowych mediów cyfrowych. Istotne w tym procesie jest odnowienie głębi duchowości, która jest najbardziej widoczna w mistycyzmie i która reprezentuje jego własną tożsamość.

Chociaż niektórzy autorzy twierdzą, że nietradycyjne religie i duchowość nasycają potrzeby postmodernistycznego i zsekularyzowanego człowieka żyjącego w cyfrowym wirtualnym świecie, autorzy tego artykułu uważają, że nowe media cyfrowe lub technologie audiowizualne mogą co najwyżej zapewnić pewne wsparcie dla prawdziwej duchowości i jej rozwoju,

ale nie dla samej duchowości. Te nietradycyjne duchowości nie doceniają faktu, że ciało lub fizyczność człowieka stanowi niezastąpiony korelat duchowości.

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