

EPHEMERAL REALITY

MANY FACES OF CULTURE



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INTRODUCTION

In the picture above, a man is performing one of the most meaningful, most expressive forms of human activity: he is drawing Chinese characters with water on asphalt. Once drawn, the characters slowly evaporate in the sun, readable only for a moment before they disappear.

The man is practicing what is called “water calligraphy”, commonly found in/across China in parks, squares, and streets. The Chinese characters displayed may be syllables carrying mere aesthetic value but may also be poems or quotes from Lao Ce, Confucius, even Mao Ce Tung.

For me, this represents the most sensual metaphor of culture, telling more than any definition could say. Culture, much like the fading characters, is there and still not there; absent, yet still present.

Water-written reality is painted by the man with purpose; an effort he makes to create, to bring into existence a visible, tangible reality, some reality of experience. The small water pot and the brush he works with are products of his material culture. The syllables, poems, thoughts, political phrases, though not conceivable, enclose concrete meanings of a reality known to everyone, and convey those meanings to the people walking in the park. The activity of the man writing with water is hardly separable from his socio-cultural environment.

The ‘how’, ‘when’ and ‘why’ of whatever he does, the motivation behind – may that be a physical exercise, health maintenance practice, leisure time amusement or selfless contribution to the aesthetic joy of the passersby, a renewal, patriotic cultivation, and (re) presentation of Chinese tradition or perhaps the combination of all the above – are encoded in the words written with water. The passersby in the park understand the man’s action through/along similar constructions. The transient characters on the asphalt are invisibly entwined with the web of cultural meanings, symbols, social patterns, systems and identity components.

Culture, even if it does not (or does only for moments) become “visible”, is there with us, inherent in us. And the solemn anthropologist, while observing a man in a Shanghai park, tries to catch him in a freeze-frame moment, capturing what is by nature invisible. This makes it is such a beautiful, imperfect, fragile and indispensable challenge to understand and describe culture.



1 Pony on a spit

How is Man to be defined? Can this fascinating, yet at times disappointing being truly be understood? Is there any noticeable pattern in what we *are*, what we *do*, *say* or *think*, and why, in whatever we tend to find beautiful or meaningful? Are there any constant and unchangeable rules, strict and predictable principles in human history, society and culture? How can we understand people – their behavior, their activities, their sense of belonging and their personalities?

William A. Haviland in his book *Cultural Anthropology* quotes an article from the *Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 1983 issue:

Salt Lake City – Police called it a cross-cultural misunderstanding. When a man showed up to buy the Shetland pony advertised for sale, the owner asked what he intended to do with the animal. “For my son’s birthday”, he replied, and the deal was closed. The buyer thereupon clubbed the pony to death with a two-by-four, dumped the carcass in his pickup truck and drove away. The horrified seller called the police, who tracked down the buyer. At his house they found a birthday party in progress. The pony was trussed and roasting on a *luau pit*. “We don’t ride horses, we eat them”, explained the buyer, a recent immigrant from Tonga. (HAVILAND 1990: 32)

Can a man be judged whether he sees a pet in a pony or a delicious festive dinner instead? Posing the question from a different perspective: can a man be understood if we are unfamiliar with his culture? How does the way/process of defining our culture tell of our life and our personality?

The science of anthropology seeks to understand men, the general human behavior of man, by attempting to get a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of mankind. Cultural anthropology is a sphere of anthropological cognition that focuses on the patterns and cultural significances of life and the practices of societies. (HAVILAND 1990: 5–10)

The most expressive definition of culture was formulated by Lajos Boglár. In the interpretation of Professor Boglár, culture is

in the general sense, the total social heritage of man, while the concrete meaning of it is the learned tradition and lifestyle of a particular group of people in which the members of the group partake. This cultural understanding [...] is probably the main contribution of anthropology to getting to know man. The essence of the concept is that human behavior is not instinctive and not inherited by genetic mechanisms but acquired and learned behavior that has been communicated from generation to generation. (BOGLÁR 1995: 5)

The following lecture notes are based on my notes to the university course titled “Faces of Culture”, conceived by Professor Boglár, and on related interpretations.

In the light of what has been described, the examples of this paper allow us to look at these phenomena as things that we carry with us, and most of us treat them as unquestionable evidence or universal facts, since they stem from the shared cultural knowledge of mankind. I might as well use the word “think” instead of “treat”, but perhaps the most important content of these “issues” is that instead of thinking about them, we know they “are” – everywhere and alike.

2 “Rationality”, “factuality” and “normality”

Imagine being in Jerusalem. In the narrow streets of the Old Town, groups of pilgrims and tourists blend in the colorful whirl of local Arabs, Armenians and Jews. Suddenly, our attention turns to a man clad in a white sheet, stepping out of the crowd roaring. He claims he is the messenger of Messiah and warns everyone about the coming of the Apocalypse. From time to time, he interrupts his prophecy and predictions by agitated supplications and recitation of quotes from the Bible.

Some tourists curiously watch the man, presumably believing that the act they are seeing is a rite or perhaps some ‘entertainment’ meant for tourists, while others are troubled and hastily move away. The locals only take a hurried look and pass by with indifference. It is no unusual sight for them, for such or similar events happen again and again. The man will soon be discreetly but firmly escorted by paramedics, on to the Jerusalem Psychiatric Clinic.

The frequent phenomenon illustrated above has been diagnosed as ‘Jerusalem syndrome’. ‘Jerusalem Syndrome’ is considered an “acute psychotic symptom”, a “compulsion”, and a “psychological disorder” that needs to be treated in a psychiatric clinic.

However, it is worth considering that if we go back only a few centuries in time, any person producing similar “symptoms” might have had enthusiastic listeners and followers. He might as well have established a movement, a religious community, and even if he was persecuted for his words by the ecclesiastical authorities, his statements would have been taken seriously and he would in no way be considered “psychologically injured”, as we consider it today using the “rationality” of modernity.

So, the question may arise: who is “rational”, “normal” at all? Where is the line between “rationality” and “irrationality”?

In one of the outstanding episodes, “*What’s right? What’s wrong?*” of the American cultural anthropological film series, *Faces of Culture*, we get a glimpse into the last period

of the life of an old Bolivian Aymara person, Alejandro Mamani. Alejandro, the leading man of the village, who tussles with spirits. At times one, other times more spirits move into his body, and do not want to leave, but keep tormenting and fighting (with) him. Having entered the last stage of his life, Alejandro M. now has to hand over his status, his financial heritage to his offsprings, he has to plan his retreat from society and then from life. Meanwhile, the spirits are tormenting him. Doctors cannot help. And while his family also suffers from this, still neither the old man is considered insane, nor are his accounts of spirits thought of as imagination or utterances of irrationality.

That's why Alejandro's son bitterly accounts that the doctor offered them to heal their father for \$5, but – as he says – “the doctor knows nothing about these illnesses. La Paz is full of crazy people. There is a lot of crazies there. If the locals knew how, they would cure their own ones.” Looking from the small Aymara village, the “crazies” are those living in the big city, who would consider their father “crazy” because – due to their routine of directly assigning Alejandro's torments to mental disorder – even their doctors know nothing about Alejandro's illness. This brief example may give us the chance to recognize that universal human experiences, such as illness, ageing, relationship with supernatural beings become interpretable from within different rationalities that/which vary from culture to culture. What is, then, “right” and what is “wrong”? Answers to the question may be different depending on the given culture.

The American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz defines as “common sense” the facts, thoughts, values that people consider evident in a culture. “Common sense” is the “public property” of a community, which/that makes it easy for everyone to understand the “world”, “life” and “ourselves.” According to Geertz, this means that we ‘understand’ what we are doing in our world, and we know how to respond to these events ‘normally’. It is quite evident to us that we will be wet from the rain, we also know that fire can burn us. At the same time, what we consider to be entirely evident, will be recognized differently in other cultures. Cultural anthropologists often encounter this, for they spend longer periods in communities dealing with different lifestyles and evidences other than their own. During their field work, they are not only theoretically dealing with other ways of thinking, but also directly experience how others interpret and live things such as time, love, pain or unforeseen events. Geertz also refers to an example well-known in anthropological circles. The story is about a realization of a renowned anthropologist, Evans-Pritchard, during his fieldwork among the Azande people in South Sudan in the 1930s.

Once the anthropologist talked to an Azande boy who had hit his foot in a log. His wound got infected. The boy was convinced that he certainly and unquestionably knew, this was the consequence of “witchcraft.” Evans-Pritchard knew, undoubtedly and unquestionably, that it was no witchcraft (that was just an irrational explanation based on the knowledge of his own cultural background), but happened due to the boy not paying attention to where he was stepping. However, the boy replied that he was watching his step, like he always does, for he knows, there are pieces of logs everywhere, and if there had not been any witchcraft, he would have noticed the log.

A potter also explained to the anthropologist that the pot he made broke as a result of witchcraft, even though he had carefully watched to make sure there were no stones in the clay, indeed, he had abstained from having sex before making the pot. “Everyone knows” that precaution and sexual abstinence are necessary for the success of pot-making. Evans-Pritchard, according to the “common sense” of modern Western cultures, considered it to be irrational and silly. Once he became ill, he thought the cause of his stomachache was the bananas he consumed that day. However, this was thought to be foolhardiness by the Azande, because banana alone does not make one sick, the cause of trouble must have been witchcraft, no doubt. If the Azande potter found a stone in the broken pot, if he wandered off while walking and did not pay attention to the logs, if he ate too much, he considers these to be the consequence of his recklessness (therefore treats them as) his own mistake. However, if he pays attention to all these things and still does have trouble, there is only one explanation for the misfortune, and that is witchcraft. No matter how irrational and non-sense it may seem from (the perspective of) our culture, witchcraft will give them a completely evident, rational answer for the interpretation of unforeseen, unexpected events. For them, it seems equally irrational, even troublesome when people from Western cultures call these events “coincidental”, a “misfortune” or a “twist of fate”, thus maintaining a possible dimension of the world in which contingency and the lack of explanation dominate. (GEERTZ 1994: 217–238)

Evans-Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, adds to this that, unlike our culture, Azande do not theorize, analyze in the above and similar cases, but rather act directly, concentrating for example on what they can do to eliminate or prevent witchcraft. (EVANS-PRITCHARD 1976)

We can give a closer example of this way of thinking. Ivan Olbracht, a Czech writer and journalist operating between the two World Wars, wrote reports and works of literature from Transcarpathia. The host of the writer was an Orthodox Jewish shoemaker. Olbracht often conversed with the master. During their conversations, they discussed various subjects, from lunar landing to earthquakes.

In one of such conversations the master asked the writer, “Do you believe the Earth is rotating?”

The writer was baffled and wondered, “On these occasions, man discovers shameful deficiencies in his literacy. Yes, somewhere in France – or wasn’t that in France? – ...there had been a church tower, and a famous man carefully released some weight from it, and that weight drew some lines in the ash... but where and when, and who it was... Good God, how could I have guessed that I will ever have to argue with someone about the rotation of the Earth?”

The conversation continued and finally came to the question of earthquakes.

“What causes earthquakes?”, the Jewish master asked. The writer was even more agitated than before, so he returned the question. The master then announced, “The Earth stands in water. There’s a big fish in that water. And whenever that fish starts fluttering its tail, there will be an earthquake.”

The writer was fascinated by the answer, which derived from Assyrian-Babylonian myths, which, over the past centuries of Jewish tradition, could reach the Transcarpathian master. Then Olbracht told his interlocutor how the Lower Kalocsa peasants explain earthquake. According to them, a large snake was crawling underground; engineers then/once came to the scene and followed the snake with red and white sticks, binoculars, and calculators. They had calculated where it would emerge from the ground, and when it did, “the artillery called upon shattered his head.”

The Jewish master raised his head and said with a contemptuous, painful expression, “Peasants... Boors... What do you expect from boors? Boors are all stupid.”

He then asked the writer how ‘old’ the world is, to which Olbracht stated that the ‘age’ of the world cannot be calculated. The old man smiled and answered, “We know.”

According to the Jewish tradition, it can be determined when the creation of the world happened, from which date the Jewish tradition has been counting the years. As the conversation ended, the shoemaker asked, “Is it true that you eat water snakes, crabs and snails?”

In the practice of Jewish tradition according to the Torah (the five Books of Moses), a distinction must be made between consumable and non-consumable foods. This division (in addition to other commandments that make the distinction obligatory) serves, among other things, to make it evident to humans, that the world is divided into ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, holy and unholy. Life is based on the choice between the two, on the dichotomy of purity and impurity. The only rational decision for a/any Jewish man is to choose the divine-sacred-pure side and practice and live his life accordingly. In the light of this, the world, along with its various explanations, becomes understandable to the shoemaker.

Olbracht knew all this, so he summarized the lessons of their conversation, “What can we expect from such people? Can we expect them to have at least some humanly opinion about something? Have at least some reasonable opinion. Can we expect something from people who – God forgive them! – devour frogs, snakes, snails and crabs?”

But all polemics are useful and scepticism is fertile. So, in the evening, as I was almost fell asleep, I thought about that: who would guarantee that my electrodynamic earthquake theory is not as silly as the fish theory of Abraham Herskovics the shoemaker or the snake theory of the peasants at Alsókalocsa? (OLBRACHT 1987: 212)

The above examples demonstrate that we tend to feel superior to the thoughts and ideas of other cultures. That is why we can attach labels like “superstitious”, “primitive” or “prelogical” onto others. Olbracht’s last quoted question might make us uncertain about those labels, that everything can only be normal as it seems to us. At the same time, the approach of cultural anthropology does not suggest that all worldviews are “the same foolishness”. On the contrary, the rationality of each culture has the same value, and it is equally considered real and normal.

If it is accepted in a tribal culture that due to dance and drumming, the next/following day the rain will fall, then it is by no means a more irrational idea than when we listen to the weather report and dress accordingly the next morning.

In both cases, the decision is left to the specialists. If the tribal rainmaker is well prepared, he can bring on a rainfall the next day. This is “known by everyone” despite the fact that the majority of the tribe members would possess the knowledge needed for rainmaking. Similarly, although we do not usually know much about fronts, cyclones, and anticyclones, yet, based on our cultural evidences, we accept that our meteorologists will most likely predict the next day’s weather correctly, and we put on shorts or raincoats accordingly.

Cultural anthropology calls the view and approach with which it attempts to understand another culture “cultural relativism”. Therefore, the researcher (i.e. the cultural anthropologist), adopting the mindset of the members of a community under study, also examines the question of who is “rational” for the people he wants to understand.

To understand others, we do not need to agree with them. However, in order to get to know each other, we need to understand each other’s thoughts and realities. Let us try to do this by putting our own prejudices on the selves when we meet others, it then will make us become more reflexive and conscious about our own evidences later. *Wahari – The Culture of the Jungle*, a book about the Venezuelan Piaroa culture written by Lajos Boglár, explains the “social stakes” of all of this. In 1968, Professor Boglár noted in his diary:

We were sailing on Orinoco; our barge was approaching a coastal settlement.

“What settlement is this? Is it inhabited by Guahibo or Piaroa Indians?”, I asked our mechanic.

“No son indios, son racionales! They are not Indians, they are Rationals!”, he answered creepily without batting an eye... This meant that the “civilized” neo-colonist was convinced that an Indian was no sentient being and can only be considered human if it perfectly adapts to the rational way of life!

The implications of this adaptation, and the kind of mirror it holds up to the world of “rationals”, was observed by Lajos Boglár in 1974 in the Puerto Ayacucho’s market. He then asked one of the Piaroa, who bought *licor de caña de azúcar*, a distilled spirit made from fermented sugarcane juice, about their lifestyle change: “– You know, on Saturdays everyone in Puerto Ayacucho drinks, and we too want to get civilized.” (BOGLÁR 1973: 131)

3 Time of cultures – Time and culture

The trees of the ancient forest almost cover up the moon and the stars. The light of the fire illuminates the masks, the symbols painted on the bodies, the lip decorations. The shaman sings about the birth of the cosmos and the time, which also happened at night. This night is also the night of creation. The community finds a new home, and by the time the Sun rises, the world and the time will be reborn.

Lajos Boglár describes similar rites in his study titled *The Concept of Time in Indian Cultures*, as well as in several of his other writings. (BOGLÁR 2020: 66–76)

Researchers of society and religion met with many of these events while doing their work. Out of many, we may read about one of the most exciting examples in Mircea Eliade's book *The Sacred and the Profane*. Based on the works of researcher of religion E. Williams and of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Eliade recounts the sea-voyage of a sailor from a New Guinea community. As the sailor is put out to sea, he identifies with a mythical hero, Aori. He wears the same dress and headdress as Aori in mythical time, at the beginning of time. He paints his face black, dances on the deck, as Aori did, opens his hand as Aori spread his wings. The word "like", however, does not accurately reflect the meaning of the actions, since he is not "like" Aori, but then and there he himself is Aori. The time he takes off for fishing is the time of myths. His path, persona, activity identifies with the ancestor and the unchanging time of myths. (ELIADE 1996: 60–67)

Evans-Pritchard, who conducted research among the Sudanese Nuers too, also reports that in the 1930s, the tree under which mankind originated from, still stood in the land of the Nuers. In the reality of Nuers, this was a complete and evident fact. According to Evans-Pritchard, this reality is determined, among other things, by the structure through which

the Nuers perceive the flow of time and memory. This structure is formed by successive age groups that define the Nuer society. The Nuers record six consecutive age groups. Another fundamental component of the Nuer society is the sectoral system, which also places the living and the ancestor of the sector in a permanent structure. The size and the extent of the sectors in the past do not change, regardless of how many generations follow one another. The time of myths is therefore such a reality that is beyond the boundaries of generational history, regardless of whether or not (or perhaps because of) it fixes the fact of permanence in the changing and passing world. The memory in Nuerland encompasses approximately a century, and since the structures of constancy do not change, the distance between the present and the beginning of the world also remains unchanged. (EVANS-PRITCHARD 1963)

The question arises, is there any “objective time” in our world or is time created by us? Alfred Gell, in his *Time and Social Anthropology*, considers time to be universal, experienced by all, but lived and interpreted differently by different cultures. Accordingly, we all perceive the repetition of nights and days, moon cycles, or sun years, as we experience aging and passing, but we measure, explain, and record it differently. (GELL 2000: 13–35)

Thomas Crump in his book, *Anthropology of Numbers*, recalls the dramatic example of a variety of time experiences. In 1519 CE, according to European time notation, the Aztecs, indigenous people of Mexico expected the arrival of Quetzalcoatl (their god of wind, air, and learning). In this year of their 52-year cycle of time, Quetzalcoatl was to arrive on the 9-wind day, dedicated to Him, from the east, dressed in black, to dislodge Tezcatlipoc, the currently ruling god.

On the same day, on April 22 according to the Western calendar, Cortez landed on the coast of the future Mexico. And since that day was Good Friday, the Spanish conqueror was wearing a black outfit along with a hat, according to the fashion of that era. The time, the black outfit and the hat resembled what the expected deity was supposed to wear, and have resulted in the combination of time perceptions, which helped Cortez with his small army to take over and occupy the Aztec Empire with little effort. (CRUMP 1998)

At the same time, we can meet with differences in time perceptions even within one culture. Example of it can be found in the common practice of Catholic religion in Hungary. During Shrovetide, the last three days of the Carnival season preceding Ash Wednesday – as we learn from the work of János Bárh titled *The Ethnography of the Catholic Hungarians* – the Catholic Church organized sacrament worship in which high school students of the Catholic small towns were required to participate. We do not know how happy the students were about this, but we do know that the last three days was the highlight of the Carnival, marked by many fun festivities, such as wearing masks, performing rituals, along with noisy parades during which social- and lifestyle constraints – for example commonly accepted sexual conducts – could be overturned. Time perception of the “profane” world and the rhythm of the “holy” thus can differ even within one culture. In addition, the two times are in dialectical relation as they include opposite values. In the above example, the two times come to agreement on the last day of the Carnival, day after Shrove Tuesday, on Ash Wednesday. Ending the time of “profane” on Ash Wednesday, on the beginning of the

“holy” time of Lent, preparation for Easter, during Mass – as it is even nowadays – the priest marked the forehead of the worshippers with the cross of repentance using ash, which is the symbol of death, passing and repentance. The ash came from burning last year’s Palm Sunday’s blessed branches of willow at the beginning of Holy Week. Before Mass, the priest sanctified the ashes, with which he then marked the forehead of the believers, using the words: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Thus, the “holy” time enclosed, “defeated”, adapted to the events of “profane” time. (BÁRTH 1990)

Elements of the Jewish celebration of Purim are like that of the Carnival. Because in the Jewish calendar Purim falls on the time of the non-Jewish Carnival (although on different days due to the differences between the two ways of measuring time), some of the custom elements could really “cross over” between Purim and the Carnival. However, in the celebration of Purim, time of the ‘profane’ and of the ‘holy’ rather entwine, instead of separate distinctively. The events of the celebration tend to reveal this.

Purim, the celebration of sortilege, also known as the Festival of Lots, is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Haman, who was planning to kill all the Jews. This took place in the ancient Achaemenid Persian Empire. The story is recorded in the Biblical Book of Esther. The day of deliverance became a day of feasting and rejoicing. In the heart of celebration is the reading of the scroll containing the story of Esther. Those who partake in the ritual follow the words of the reader, and when the text comes to Haman, the name of the evil, rattles sound in the synagogue. There are some who sound *vuvuzelas*, horns commonly known from being used at soccer games, while others are whistling, booing or pounding on the benches.

The story of Purim (to which similar one has been repeated over and over again in Jewish history) thus become relivable at every festive occasion. Rabbi Vries’s book of *Jewish Rituals and Symbols* recounts the atmosphere of Purim in the Synagogue, The atmosphere is not quite reverent. After all, it is Purim! Man is happily consoles himself with the historical certainty that escape is always near, and the enemy is always defeated.” (VRIES 2000: 99)

Thus, ritual time makes it possible to experience the “time of the ancestors”, that it has a living content in the actual situation as well, and this way for the current and for future generations as well. In the Purim, as is in the case of the other holidays, the “sacred” and “social-ethnic” components of Jewish history do not separate.

Entertainments, comedy performances, concerts, dance and gaiety traditionally part of the celebration. At this time, many members of the community come to the synagogue dressed in costumes. In addition to the costumes related to the story of Purim, I could also see Scottish caps or Playboy Bunny earrings. Wearing of funny costumes, as well as the joy of unrestrained gaiety, is not only legitimized, but is directly motivated by the ritual-rabbinic tradition. An example of this is the commandment that on the day of Purim, “we have to drink until we can no longer distinguish between the damn Haman and the blessed Mordecai” – as written by Hayim Halévi Donin in his book, *Being a Jew*. (DONIN 1997: 85)

Celebration of Purim is a “ritual valve”, a release from the tension arising from the minority existence of “Jewish destiny”. At the same time, however, all this is done in the manner prescribed by tradition. This way, patterns of tradition do not get damaged. Thus, the effects of the Purim experience do not become a “disintegrating” factor in the everyday life, but it rather smuggles a cheerful, fun filled memory into the world of daily existence.

The above examples also illustrate the diversity of meaning and use of time. In our perceived world of “rush”, we live with different kinds of time. For example, in our competition with the minutes, reality of mythical times often goes unnoticed. Besides religions living in the “profane” times of modernity, just think of a sporting event, a theatrical experience, the “condensed time” of the cinema (as Mircea Eliade calls them in *The Myths of the Modern World*) or of a young couple’s housewarming party, which means the beginning of a “new life” for them. (ELIADE 2006: 21–43)

Measuring of and various cultural readings of quality of time is ingeniously described in Thomas Hylland’s Eriksen’s book, the *Tyranny of the Moment*. Eriksen calls the clock the external manifestation of time. It makes time in modernity “objective” and “measurable”, i.e. it became “something” that can be measured independently of human experience. In contrast, in other cultures, actions control the course of time, “measuring” does not control the actions. This can be experienced even in societies where it is now customary practice setting the clock and the time. The author tells a story of his colleague who has done his field work in a village in Java. One day the anthropologist had to take a train to get to a nearby city. So he asked a man when the train leaves. First the man was puzzled, then pointing in one direction said: “The train comes from there, then stops here and after a while it continues on its way in that direction.” (ERIKSEN 2010: 219)

4 Friendships and cultures

Looking for a socio-cultural definition of friendship, it is very difficult to find a concise description true in all cultures. Our friend can be one of our relatives, our love, a partner of the same age, our older mentor or even our boss. Friendship, like all other social relationships, is influenced by cultural background, at the same time, friendship can alter the norms of social rules, although, common social position is not enough criterion in itself to make a friendship work.

In general, it can be said that friendship in all cultures includes strong feelings of loyalty to one another and the existence of mutual support. However, the forms and frameworks of the manifestation of friendship are diverse in the different cultures.

We can read in *Man and Woman*, the book by Margaret Mead, if we were born as a boy in Samoa, our friend will be called Soa, which means companion in circumcision and a communicator in the arrangements of love affairs. Boys in Samoa get circumcised in pairs. They choose their companion for the shared experience; this shared experience creates bond, a lifelong, close friendship between them. Friends spend as much time together as it is possible, even sleep together often. After adolescence, they help each other in choosing a mate, when the boys send their friends in their place to the chosen girl to court her, to praise them to the girl, and to convince her to fulfill the desire of their Soas. To do this, a very deep trust is needed...

Successful courting is a reciprocal gesture, as the suitor can also count on his friend when he looks for his prospective partner. Friends are not only engaged in the matter of courting the girls, but they do work on the taro fields together, go fishing, and in general, become allies in the matter of community and political affairs of the Samoan society.

Friendships of Samoan girls are not as close as that are of the boys. They also have confidants with whom they take care of the younger children or work together later, but long-term alliances formed only for the time of their first love adventure. However, after

some time and a few adventures, they all turn their attention toward finding the “ideal” mate, as they are occupied with the idea of marriage, while they make all efforts to exclude others from their love affairs as fully as possible. In addition, from then on, the activity of young girls become more and more individualized, so girls do not develop such close and lasting friendships as boys do. (MEAD 2003: 7–86)

Reciprocity of friendship challenges and forces people to choose. When, how and for how long should my solidarity last? From Evans-Pritchard’s research we learned that this issue may be particularly dramatic for African Nuers. Young boys of Nuers collectively go through a painful initiation process, during which the skin on their their foreheads get cut deep to the bone with razor. The six parallel horizontal lines thus created will be a visible sign of their shared experience for the rest of their lives. Among those initiated together, strong friendship, cooperative work relation, and alliance emerges. Those of the same age form a common group within the Nuer society. The age group, the friendly relations have many responsibilities, and many manifestations of solidarity. But there are several such close knit groups exist in the Nuer society. In addition to his friends, he also belongs to a complicated system of family relations, to a new kinship “inherited” through marriage, a network of commercial partners, as well as to the village community... Therefore, if a conflict explodes between people or groups, it will most likely affect the friendships that have developed over the years. Where does one stand, aligns with whom, his friend, his uncle or his neighbor, against the other? No wonder the Nuers, as long as they have a chance, try to avoid conflicts or at least quickly put an end to the clashes.

Initiation alliances and age groups have decisive importance in other African cultures, as well. At Kenya’s Nandis, after being born, the child becomes part of a group with a specific name in order to learn and practice along peers the activities assigned to his/her gender. As adolescents, the boys move to a separate camp and come back to their family only when they are ready to start their own family. Shared experiences, feelings, and newly gained knowledge entwines the lives of young people with unbreakable threads. This bonding and solidarity is also exemplified by the peculiarity of Nandi guest hospitality, when male peers offer their visiting guest their own wives. (EVANS-PRITCARD 1963)

In other African tribes, the status of women is quite different from the above example. For example, at the Ila-Tongas, an ethnic group in West-Africa, girlfriends can publicly and legally acquire a lover with whom they can live and for whose “services” the husband even has to pay. Maternal lineage is being traced in these communities, thus women have more rights and much more opportunities to engage in friendship or open love-relationship.

We can read about an exciting approach to friendship in the Bible as well. David, the shepherd became a warrior, carried on a deep friendship with Jonathan, son of the king. Hardship of their relationship, related to their different social status, is further aggravated by Saul’s jealousy of David, whom the king ultimately wants to have killed, and who, because of that, has to flee then fight the king. Nevertheless, in Samuel’s books, it is written that the relationship between the two friends is stronger than a brotherly or even a love relationship.

The biblical story suggests that, in some cases, friendship can mean more than a blood relationship.

From these examples, we can conclude that friendship and biological bondage may clash, result in a dilemma and it may force us to choose.

Which means more?

The answer is depending on the given culture, and within it on the circumstances and life situations.

In addition to enjoying the gift of friendship, it is no harm to know who will never be our friend. Ralph Linton cites an exciting example of it from the life of the American Comanche culture. The young Comanche warriors are highly ambitious and live in constant rivalry. Nonetheless, contemporaries are not the greatest threat to each other. Their real enemies, with whom it is better to avoid any contact, are the older men. The elderly men are expected to be kind and wise, to smooth out conflicts, to work for peace in the society. At the same time, the majority of “old folks” do not want to play this role, they still want to live the lives of young warriors, want to fight and have many women to sleep with. So, as a man becomes older at the Comanches, he gains greater and greater magic power with which the older ones either weaken or even kill more young men. No wonder young people have to pay close attention to tribal myths and tales that teach that while the good medicine men can be of any age, evil actors are always “old”. (LINTON 1997)

5 Culture and humor

A while ago, a religious schoolmaster was hired in a small Jewish community. The first thing he did after his arrival, was visit the small town's Jewish tailor to have a new suit made. Two years passed, but the suit was not made. At last, the schoolmaster found another position and left town. Fate had it that four years later he returned. As soon as he set foot in town, he noticed the tailor running toward him announcing excitedly,

“Sir, your suit is ready, your suit is ready!”

At first surprised, the schoolmaster then growled at the tailor,

“What are you thinking! The Eternal One, blessed be His name, completed the universe in six days and you needed six years to make a suit?”

In response, the tailor shrugged his shoulders, tilted his head, spread out his arms and replied,

“It is very true, however, look at the world He created, and look at the suit I made!”

How should this joke be interpreted?

“Wry”, “doubtful”, “blasphemous”? Does such a story temporarily allow the teller of the joke and his listeners to turn against and ridicule traditional values and norms which it twists around? (i.e. FREUD 1982: 127–130) Or, is it the experience of the joke, and the free communication with the most important and “most sacred” components of their culture? (COHEN 1987: 1–16)

How does humor fit into the set of concepts and practices of a culture?

What is its relation to the “canon” of communal values and norms? Do those who laugh at it, and those who find it inappropriate, or reprehensible, consider humor as some kind of “apocrypha” norm and event? When, with whom, how, and why may we joke around? The following examples may provide a glimpse into the cultural meanings connected to these questions.

Judit Hidasi, in her study of *Why the Japanese don't laugh at our jokes?* tells a story that she has heard in one of professor Inoue Fumio lectures. (HIDASI 2008: 56) According to the story, a Japanese linguist known for his excellent lectures had gone to Kagoshima prefecture to give a presentation. He intertwined his lectures with several jokes. His audience remained somber, never laughed at any of it, but instead only sat quietly staring straight ahead. The disappointed lecturer learned only later that the organizer warned the audience beforehand not to laugh during the lecture of this famous professor from Tokyo.

According to Hidasi, laughing, kidding around, and telling jokes are not part of the everyday communication in Japan. A joke is considered an “apocryphal” narration, and laughing is an “apocryphal” act. As such, joking disregards social norms. Uproarious laughter, for example, was traditionally considered by the elite as “vulgar” behavior of the “lower classes”, the antithesis to the “ideal of self-control”.

“Spontaneous” laughter, even in contemporary Japanese social communication, is considered reprehensible behavior. It may show lack of self-control and communicate disrespect. Tooth exposure is considered unaesthetic, “disgusting and rude”, and such, a vulgar behavior. This belief originated in the Middle Ages, when the sight of neglected teeth was regarded as a lack of “refinement”. Inseparable from all of the above are the rigid rules of interaction among Japanese. Married couples, relatives, friends, officials and subordinates, teachers and students must communicate with different expressions and gestures.

Recognition of this fact makes it understandable how the spontaneous reaction to a joke, or jest transgresses the framework of Japanese socio-cultural norms. It makes the accepted and defined boundaries between man-and-man, ideal social self-image and “spontaneous” attributes of personality “unmanageable” and “uncomfortable”.

From this perspective, jokes are regarded as “apocrypha” text, and the laughter they induce an “apocrypha” behavior.

However, as Judit Hidasi points out, Japanese humor is present in many forms and genres in their culture. Plays on words, and staged gags are alive and well in contemporary Japan. The basis of verbal humor is a spoof on human weaknesses. An example is the story of the tremulous samurai who, in the middle of the night, when he is scared to venture out to the outhouse, orders his wife to accompany him with a burning candle. When he reaches the outhouse, he asks his wife whether she is afraid. The wife, standing outside, assures her husband that she is not afraid. The samurai then proudly acknowledges that she is the “true” wife of a samurai.

More typical of the humor genres mentioned by Hidasi is visual humor. An excellent example is the color woodcut print, *Lovebirds*, created by Utamaro in 1788. The artist depicts lovers, their bodies curled around each other. The couple is tied in a loving kiss. Their heat of passion is indicated by their untouched meal and sake. Words on the fan held by the man puts the eroticism of the picture in a different context. The poem on the fan is as follows: “Its beaks is stuck tightly in the oyster’s shell, the snipe cannot fly away into the autumn starlight.” The versified humor pokes fun at the weakened man’s desire and futile

efforts of getting free, made ever so difficult by the passion of the woman who is holding him tightly. (SATO TOMOKO 2008: 62–67)

According to the stories told, Japanese humor makes fun of virtues that don't fit their cultural ethos. The butt of these jokes are individuals and faults of personality which do not comply with the accepted and honored social norms, such as "bravery", "resoluteness", "directness". In this way, the humor fulfills the role of "cultural canon". Social virtues are emphasized when the consumers of humorous stories, jokes, and pictures laugh about the contrasting traits. At the same time, if humor is not derived from a supportive source and context of the ethos, laughter may be an "apocryphal" act, for it violates the ethos by its "spontaneity".

Humor and laughter, depending on the context, may be the expression of two opposite meanings in the Japanese culture.

A study, conducted by the well-known social-anthropologist, Radcliffe-Brown, documented in his book titled *On Joking Relationships*, through examples from African tribal culture introduces how humor may strengthen the "social canon" in certain instances. (RADCLIFFE-BROWN 2004: 85–106)

According to the anthropologist, joking within kinship groups follows and shapes the interactions, including belonging and separations, within the socio-proximity. An example, manifested by this kind of jocularity, is the grandson who pretends desire to marry the wife of his grandfather, or acts like he already has her as his wife. Conversely, the grandfather jokingly takes ownership of the wife of his grandson. Humor in this situation is based on the generation gap, and the different social status between the grandson and his grandfather.

Similar examples, such as the joking relationship between nephew and his maternal uncle, come from other tribal cultures, where the lineage is traced along the paternal branch. In these cases, the nephew may exhibit disrespectful behavior toward his uncle, and in some instances he may even take some of his possessions. Joking with the maternal uncle may at times be combined with irreverence. This kind of kidding around deepens the differences of socio-proximity relations for those who take part in situational humor and lessens the possible tensions which develop due to rules of social separation. Jokes of the nephew with his maternal uncle allows him to experience human relationship in a less restricted, deeper, and "more human" level. Must note, the way the nephew jokes with his maternal uncle, is not allowed with the brothers of his father. Also, that I turn, the nephew later will have to endure the rude jokes of his sisters' sons.

Belonging to the paternal clan (including both its living and deceased members) is no "joking matter". The son is tied by strict regulations and societal norms to the paternal branch of the family, which entails all sorts of obligations and responsibilities. Experiencing and expressing emotions, including the liberating feelings of humor, is only possible between relatives on the maternal side, or between those who are not considered rivals, members of different generations, grandparents and grandchildren.

Based on these examples we find that, depending on the cultural context, humor may be integral component of the “social canon”.

Anthropologist Kate Fox, in the chapter on humor in *Watching the English*, a socio-cultural work on English behavior, introduces English humor as the “comical” manifestation of “Englishness”. (FOX 2008: 61–73)

The title of the chapter (*Humour Rules*) highlights the author’s interpretation, since “humor rules” may mean the rules (as principles or regulations) of humor, as well as the verb “to rule”, or “humor that governs, navigates, or guides”. Kate Fox, based upon her research findings, ascertains that the latter definition is more prominent. She believes that English humor, extends into all areas of life, and dominates the English social communication. Even if in a subtle way, humor in English conversations is omnipresent. Irony, joking, kidding, mocking, and self-mocking, intertwine the everyday interactions of English culture.

Part of their humor is the “rule of frivolity”: the ironic taunting of those who “take themselves too seriously”, mocking “overstated patriotism”, or “exuberant cheerfulness”. Irony is one of the most important elements of the English conversation. The English, writes Fox, do not joke around all the time; however, they are always ready to crack a joke, primarily by using irony. Accordingly, when someone asks someone else a simple question, such as “How are the children?”, the one who posed the question is prepared to receive such an answer as “They are magnificent, helpful, orderly, diligent!”, and then to give a knowingly sympathetic answer like “Are you having an awful day, dear?”

In English culture, the participants in social interactions are motivated to use humor in all elements of communication; therefore, if they became the receiver of the joke, they understand it perfectly. The humor, in this case, not only fits into the “canon” of social practice of English culture but becomes the symbol and marking of identity of “Englishness”. The “true English” is the one who “understands” the humor, is ready to take part in it, and participates in this activity accordingly.

Fox illustrates this with a comic episode that once took place between an English-lover Italian and the father of the anthropologist. Italian friends of her father simply could not get used to the ironic-humorous understatements of the English. They asked Kate Fox’s father to help them understand it. In connection, one of the Italian friends began to tell a story of the unpleasantness of a local restaurant where the food was inedible, the place was filthy, the service was terrible... to which Kate Fox’s father responded,

“Then, if I understand it correctly, you would not recommend this place to anyone, would you?”

Hearing this, the Italian friend lost his cool,

“Well, that’s it! This is what I’m talking about! How do you know when to respond like that?”, he asked. The father replied apologetically, “I cannot explain. We only do it. It comes naturally.”

The types of English humor, concerning being humorous as a permanent “ready to use” form of communication, a “tool”, is part of the English cultural practice and “social canon”. This is why it often creates problems when, writes Kate Fox, the knowledge and understanding of the above is thought by the English to be self-evident even for those who are part of other cultures and are not familiar with the “rules” of the English humor, or the system of its “rule”.

Alan Dundes, in his book, titled *Cracking Jokes: Studies of Sick Humor Cycles and Stereotypes* writes about the “dead baby joke cycle” phenomenon. (DUNDES 1987, also explanatory remarks by ORING 2008) Typical example of these kind of jokes as follows:

What is small and red that sits in a corner?

A baby with a razorblade.

This and other similar jokes, according to the author, express loathing and anger felt toward babies. Those feelings are considered “apocryphal” in the American ethos and go against the accepted cultural norms and decency. How could it be then that these jokes had wide range of popularity from the 1960s to the 1980s in the United States?

Alan Dundes’ theory of catharsis is based on Freud’s observations, according to which, through jokes, people can express their suppressed sexual or aggressive desires, and can also liberate themselves from the burden of worries and anxiety. Telling jokes about dead babies dehumanizes those babies. Dundes points out that in American social communication, the worry, anxiety, guilt and feeling of complicity attached to the recently legalized contraception and abortion brought into existence and kept them alive during that period.

Dundes applied this theory in his analysis of jokes about Auschwitz. According to his findings, from the perspective of social ethos, humor based on jokes considered “taboo-wrecking”, “vicious”, or “sick” may be part of the “cultural canon”, since they satisfy such psychological needs of the individual and collective members of the society and community as easing and releasing of anxiety, suppression, pain and trauma.

As the last example, let us return to the joke about the tailored suit and the imperfect world mentioned in the introduction. The question arises: is not such a joke, which allows the “total” criticism of the work of the Eternal One, a manifestation of disrespect toward God, and as such, a “blasphemy”? To formulate a possible explanation, let us examine a few examples of the “canon” of Jewish ritual life and its experience.

The meaning and main point of ritual life in Judaism is adequacy, derived from the Biblical tradition of the Jews. It is the task and responsibility assigned by God to His chosen people, to abide by the day-to-day conduct according to the collection of laws defined in Halakha. In everyday cultural practices, separation of territory into sacred and non-sacred is wrought out to the finest details. (In a like manner the Eternal One differentiated between His people and the others.) The Halakha system defines the order of rituals, such as the proper way of tying shoelaces in the morning, how many steps may be taken with-

out head cover, when married couples may sleep together, how to separate meals containing milk or meat products which is further separated to edible or inedible, and differentiation between the holiday and the weekday. All aspects of Jewish religious practices deepen the dichotomy that separates the sacred from the profane for members of the community.

Communal projection of this is the separation of the chosen ones from the rest. Being chosen, however, does not mean superiority or any such elitist haughtiness. The essence of meaning of being chosen is a mission, or an obligation, which requires the Jews to keep the commandments given by the Eternal One collected in the Torah (the “Teaching”, or “Instruction”, in the five books of Moses), and through it represent and promulgate the Truth of the One Single Creator god. Responsibility of the others is, to observe the example set by the Jews, accept the existence of God, and keep the seven binding laws given to Noah by God after the Flood. The rabbinic explanation deduces from relevant parts of the Book of Creation (1 Moses 9:4–7) the seven fundamental laws to be adhered to by all humanity: the requirement of maintaining courts to provide legal resources, prohibition of blasphemy, idolatry, sexual immorality, murder, theft, and eating flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive. (HERTZ 1984[Vol.1]: 80–81; UNTERMAN 1999: 175–176)

Insofar as gentiles accept the existence of God and adhere to these fundamental commands, they are granted eternal life same as the Jews. In the meantime, to fulfill their mission, the Jews must adhere to six-hundred-thirteen commandments, not to mention additional rabbinic instructions which are like “fences” surrounding those commandments. To remain devoted is necessary in order to ensure the integrity of norms described in the Torah.

As we can see, the “stake of sacredness” in the culture of Judaism is not self-serving. The reason why the individual must live by the sacred orders is so that his community may live up to the will of God and serve the good of all humanity. Therefore, every little detail is so important; tying the shoelaces in the right order, using separate refrigerators to store food that contains milk or meat products, or the timing to light the candle on Sabbath. All these details determine the fate of the world. The “stake of sacredness”, the attainment of sacred aim cannot be reached without the separation of sacred and profane. Practice of separation on social level maintains the sacred-ethnic community of Jews.

Opposite to this pattern is the everyday reality, which determines the “quality” of the world. The “world”, and life within it, is imperfect not because of any acts of God. Based on my research, conducted in the synagogue on Bethlen Square in Budapest, I believe the aim of the jokes in all cases is man and his imperfections. An interesting illustration of this topic is an imaginary event that they shared with me as a “joke”.

“The Eternal One in those times offered the Torah to others, who immediately rejected it: The Edomites did not like the commandment ‘Do not kill!’, the descendants of Ishmael the ‘Do not steal!’, and so on. Finally, the Jews asked, “How much does one commandment cost?”

“It is free”, said the Lord.

“Then, we take ten!”

Humor and self-irony, easing and relaxing the patterns of Torah and the “permanent” anthropological reality, are the defining motif of the traditional Jewish folklore. Let us take an example from the treasure of traditional anecdotes of the Hungarian Jewish community.

“Why had they persuaded the Jews to take a loan for the exodus from Egypt?”, poses the rhetoric question [Rebbe Moshe of Lelov].

The answer is simple. “If they owe that much, then they most likely won’t feel like returning to Egypt.”

A follower of Jewish faith from the countryside moved to town and bragged of the devotion of the congregation he came from,

“Folks in our congregation at Yom Kippur, to torment themselves, put kernels of corn into their slippers and stand on those while they pray all day long.”

“That’s nothing!”, retorted Rebbe Kive, leader of the local congregation. “Here, folks in our synagogue, stand on pins and needles even on a regular Saturday.”

Self-ironic humor is inseparable even from the centuries old Eastern-European Jewish folklore. (For examples see KRAUS 1995: 120, DON-RAJ 1997: 106, also BENEDEK 1990: 70; WIESEL 2007: 297–298; ZBOROWSKI-HERZOG 1962: 409–430)

In in this type of Jewish humor it is constituted by the meeting of sacred patterns and those who try to live up to them. This is deeply experienced by the members of the community at the time of Teshuvah, (repentance) which, according to the ecclesiastic calendar, begins with the month of Elul and ends at Yom Kippur. At that time people, feeling sincere remorse, can seek forgiveness for the wrongs they have committed:

“Our traditional customs are traced to the institutions of our religion and practices as far back as to ancient times. It also traced the origin of the forty-day period that begins with the first day of Elul and culminates at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, back to heroic times. It was on the first day of Elul when Moses received the merciful message of God: go up to Mount Sinai to receive once again the two tablets made of stone, to replace the ones broken earlier because of the ‘sin of the golden calf’. For forty days the children of Israel were in self-torment, waiting the return of their leader: Will God forgive them? They spent the fortieth day, tenth day of Tishrei, in particularly deep penitence, fasting while practicing abstinence. On the evening of that day Moses returned with the tablets of Ten Commandments: God had forgiven His people. From that day on, so the legend says, from year to year on that day, God with His special loving forgiveness turns to His fallible children hopeful of rectification.” (HAHN 1995: 42–43)

Therefore, the ritual tradition carries the sources of psychological tension. It is not by chance that in the month of Elul I was able to collect more jokes related to the theme of

Jewish conscience and religious value system. During that month, the week before Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), when prayers at dawn pointedly call for repentance, they told me two jokes (during the prayer) with this comment, “I just remembered, it is the time of Selichot” (time of early morning prayers of repentance):

Uncle Cohn is standing in front of the butcher shop. He is looking at the different sausages when thunder and lightning starts. He looks up and says, “But Lord, I’m only looking!”

At Yom Kippur Cohn is late from church. He quickly runs up to the rabbi and says, “Imagine! The Ford stocks are up 52 percent!”

“Listen, Cohn”, says the rabbi, “do you realize, you made three mistakes at once? First: you were late from church. Second: at Yom Kippur you were not supposed to mind such a mediocre matter. Third: Ford stocks are already up 55 percent.”

On the following days, I got to learn more of the Uncle Cohn jokes:

Uncle Cohn steps into the butcher shop and says, “I want a fish!”, and points at the ham. “But this is ham!” says the butcher. “So, have I asked the name of that fish?”

Cohn goes to the synagogue at Yom Kippur. He finds the shammes (church attendant and caretaker) at the door, who asks for the church ticket. Cohn thinks for a second then says, “Let me in only for a moment, I’m looking for someone.” The shammes lets him in. When Cohn does not return, the shammes goes after him to find he is standing in the tier. He walks up to him and exclaims, “Hey, You ganef (cheater), you’re here to pray!”

The punchline of this joke suggests that even during sacred times, Jews are more concerned with cheating than being honest. The example of the “ganef” who sneaks in to pray, also points out that in the emotionally taxing time of self-reflection humor may ease the tension.

We may come across humorous comments and witty remarks even on the most somber day of the Jews, at the fasting day of Tisha B’Av in the month of August. Without recognizing the aspects of self-irony, we may label these comments and remarks made on “sacred days” a “blasphemy”. Then again, at the center of these jokes, in all cases, stands the imperfect man. Sacred patterns and religious rituals never, in any joke, get criticized or attacked. Accordingly, the complaining tailor in the first joke may be interpreted as a “this-is-who-we-are” an auto-stereotypical self-deprecation. We don’t see or acknowledge our shortcomings. Instead of admitting this is how we are, we complain and shift the responsibility onto God. This is the message, among others, with the components of acerbity and “apocrypha”, not contrasting but complimenting each other, of this joke.

Recognizing this, even those kind of jokes that appear to be “blasphemous” may be analyzed as part of the “cultural canon”, because with the application of self-deprecation, the traditional-religious value system is strengthened further. “Skepticism” or “complaint” manifest itself only within this knowledge and connection, without creating a fissure

between the sacred patterns and those who try to live by them, the members of the community. At the same time, it is impossible not to notice, or to explain away the “acerbic”, “apocrypha” sharpness of the joke, quoted at the beginning of this study.

Along with the ones analyzed, “apocrypha” is part of the Jewish humor, which makes this kind of humor exciting, equally interesting and “Jewish” for the listeners.

Throughout my research, my partners in conversations continuously emphasized that the essence of Jewish humor is the freedom to make jokes about subjects connected with sacred rites or observances that would be considered “blasphemous” in other religions. The “freedom” of humor, therefore deepens the special characteristic of Jewish religion in the community. Thus humor, as appearance of “canon” and “apocrypha”, becomes the representative characteristic of Jewish identity.

The examples point to the inseparability of humor from a given cultural-social phenomenon, and the situations of the joke. How, when, to whom, and what kind of meanings get communicated on the individual level depends on the knowledge of the culture, socialization and personality of the participants.

“The humor and responsiveness to its forms, with aspects of production, performance, and reception is the intellectual factor that constitutes the elements of any given culture. As with the culture itself, “humor-competence” belongs in the category of transmitted and learned knowledge passed on during the developmental stage of socialization.” (HIDASI 2008: 55)

With this in mind, humor-competence is collectively defined by the norms learned during the process of socialization. For example, when and how to reward or sanction a child’s attempts of making a joke. It is also defined by one’s personality traits, such as who and to what extent they can comprehend a joke, who is a good storyteller, who will become a comic, or good listener. Likewise, the aesthetical-psychological aspect of humor is also inseparable from the role it fulfills in cultural practices. This also depends on the socio-cultural context, which carries and determines the possibilities and boundaries of the aesthetical-psychological experiences, the emotions and the cathartic spiritual moments it generates. Mary Douglas, with her symbolic anthropological approach, defined these as such:

“The joy generated by a joke, whatever it may be, is joined by a latent enjoyment of wit: the harmony of social accordance and social structure.” (DOUGLAS 2003: 128)

Hereby, the humor may collectively represent the social norms, the “canons” in their rephrased, understated, parodied, “apocrypha” forms.

The jokes, comical situations within the common cultural knowledge, in the communication of cultural patterns and meanings, present themselves and become comprehensible, interpretable, even if there are some who misunderstand or sanction those who tell

them. The “not suitable”, “inappropriate” humor generates assessments and reactions also through common knowledge. The excitement of laughter arises from the common experience of the joker and his listener, as they share the “canon” and “apocrypha” meanings, based on their common cultural knowledge, since telling a joke, making a ironic comment, or playfully mocking someone are all tied to a “cultural canon” and its “apocrypha” interpretation.

Humor is part of a common cultural discourse which takes place, or “plays out” in the context of “cultural canons and apocrypha”.

Humor is then a particular and exciting part of the cultural discussion and communication on the subject of “canon” and “apocrypha”. The anthropologist researching humor, may have the opportunity to observe when, where, and in which way humor is being used during social interactions. Also, where, in which way, and why a person reacts to humor. Observations of situations and understanding internal-cultural interpretations makes it possible to share our thoughts with those who laugh at different jokes in different situations. It may even enable us to laugh wholeheartedly at each other’s jokes, and at the same time at ourselves, instead of laughing at each other.

6 Virgins and cultures

To lose, to give, to share, to sacrifice, or to give it away? What does our virginity mean to us? Value, power, curse or a burden? How do the changes in our bodies relate to our biological self and our personality?

Different cultures give different answers to the questions above. These responses are formulated primarily in connection with female virginity, as changes in the female body, including virginity and its loss, can be seen and experienced. Bleeding and physical transformation with potential fertilization evoke an arsenal of different ideas and social reactions in all cultures. But what are the social meanings of the issue and the cultural significance of virginity in different cultures?

Fiona Bowie's comprehensive study on *The Anthropology of Religion* reviews the relationship between virginity and other social aspects of different cultures. For example, in Arab societies and North Sudan, the loss of virginity brings a huge shame to a girl's family. Virginity is not part of the personal identity of girls, but of the whole family. The family decides whom she may marry, for marriage strengthens the family's social, political, and economic positions, therefore, the girl cannot independently rule over her virginity. That is why the greatest insults in these cultures are the obscene remarks made about the sister's lost virginity. We may recall the finals of the 2006 FIFA World Cup, the referee sending off the Arabian-born French team member, Zinedine Zidane for headbutting the Italian midfielder Marco Materazzi in the chest. According to some rumors, the Italian defender made an unequivocal comment on his sexual act with Zidane's sister. If this is true, Materazzi gave a very accurate anthropological knowledge, only not in the most sympathetic way.

On the other hand, if a girl is born in the United States or in Europe, her virginity will most likely belong to her own individual identity. In this case, the loss of virginity will be a central issue at high school age, as virginity can be classified as a failure in this social

environment. Loss of virginity is a sign that the girl is attractive and valuable for the opposite sex and hence for herself. Most of the adolescent girls' goal in our culture therefore is to lose their virginity at the "right" time. This should preferably happen in a love relationship, not as a "one-night" adventure, for it is this way when 'deflowering' becomes valuable for her age group, for her friends and for herself.

In both above examples, the loss of virginity is associated with the biological consequence of the penetration of the hymen. There are cultures where the two are not at all interrelated. For example, among the Ashanti in Ghana, women with an active a sexual life, and even those who already have children, are considered virgin. Women are called either "virgins" or "mothers" in this culture. These names indicate status differences. To become "mother" does not depend on a sexual act, but by going through FGM/C the ritual of female genital mutilation/cutting. (BOWIE 2006)

Clifford Bishop in his book, *Sex and Spirituality: Ecstasy, Ritual and Taboo* describes how blood in many cultures is considered an unclean and damaging, maledict matter. Therefore, in many communities of South and Central Asia, deflowering is a ritual act with the participation of a paid religious specialist. Without that no-one would marry the girls of a family in fear of some misfortune. Among the Central African Gbayas, virginity of young girls is taken by other women, for being also women they are not considered to be at risk. Travelogues from Tibet and New Guinea spoke about travelers receiving the gift of a virgin girl to spend the night with. In the light of what has been described above, these gifts have probably had other meanings than just expressing hospitality... (BISHOP 1997)

Hans Biedermann's *Dictionary of Symbolism* recounts that in certain religions and cultures virgins have sacred power. The myth of miraculous conceptions of boys become divinity and / or rulers, surrounded Perseus, Alexander the Great, Augustus or Genghis Khan.

The myths of ancient divine conceptions and virgin births were later interpreted by the theologians of early Christianity as the forerunner of the Annunciation and the birth of Jesus.

Think of the Vestal Virgins allowed to perform rituals that were forbidden to the colleges of male priests, or the Catholic nuns allowed to read the Gospel during the liturgy and deliver the sacraments. We may also mention Jean D'arc or Queen Elizabeth I, whose power in the world of men was recognized as being inseparable from virginity attributed to them. However, the loss of virginity can also be a blessing and the source of sacred ritual power.

In ancient times, young girls in several Greek and Roman settlements sacrificed their virginity to the gods on the phallus of statues of gods or as a sacred prostitute in the temple of Aphrodite.

In tribal societies, loss of virginity and the sexual acts can have a positive magic effect. For example, in the society of Naga of Assam, couples make love on the porch of the rice storerooms. The owners are happy to receive the couples, as love fulfilled on the porch of the rice storerooms believed to increase abundance. (BIEDERMANN 1996)

Losing, giving, sharing, sacrificing or giving away? The diverse cultural readings of virginity and the loss of it may perhaps make our attitudes towards others' and our own sexuality more reflexive and understanding.

7 Body and soul, and that's all? Cultural meaning of body and soul

Milan Kundera, in the novel of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, writes about the irreconcilable duality of body and soul:

“A long time ago, man would listen in amazement to the sound of regular beats in his chest, never suspecting what they were. He was unable to identify himself with so alien and unfamiliar an object as the body. The body was a cage, and inside that cage was something which looked, listened, feared, thought, and marveled; that something, that remainder left over after the body had been accounted for, was the soul. Today, of course, the body is no longer unfamiliar: we know that the beating in our chest is the heart and that the nose is the nozzle of a hose sticking out of the body to take oxygen to the lungs. The face is nothing but an instrument panel registering all the body mechanisms: digestion, sight, hearing, respiration, thought. Ever since man has learned to give each part of the body a name, the body has given him less trouble. He has also learned that the soul is nothing more than the gray matter of the brain in action. The old duality of body and soul has become shrouded in scientific terminology, and we can laugh at it as merely an obsolete prejudice. But just make someone who has fallen in love listen to his stomach rumble, and the unity of body and soul, that lyrical illusion of the age of science, instantly fades away.” (KUNDERA 1994: 54)

From the Kunderan perspective, the question arises: was indeed the “unidentifiable something” in the body unknown “long ago”? Has there been, is there such “duality” of self-reflecting experience of man that can be considered a universal feature of all cultures?

At the same time, Kundera can be quite right when he says, we are often confused when we want to capture with precise or even scientific parameters the question haunting all of us: What kind of being man is? Who are we?

Our confusion can also arise, among other things, from the fact that we do not know, we do not understand the answers or even the questions that the world views and cultures different than ours formulate. Who knows, maybe we can get closer to our questions becoming more open, more deepened if we try to see beyond the supposed “duality” we think of our body and soul by following our not fully thoughtful cultural knowledge.

Is man really composed of body and soul? After all, what does “body” and “soul” or similar expressions mean in various cultural contexts? Can we really consider the existence of our bodies and souls a universal evidence, or can there be other, entirely different kind of explanations for our anthropological “ingredients”?

In connection with the approach of cultural and psychological anthropology, I believe that the existence and the experience of existence of an individual is inseparable from its social and cultural context (cf. LINDHOLM 2007: 10).

During socialization in our culture, we learn the answers to the questions we ask of ourselves and our social environment about our existence and the meaning of our lives. Often, we get these answers even before we formulate, before we could have even asked these questions. The fragility of our body or the miracle of it, as well as the experience of the “something” that resides within us, becomes an evidence through the world view of our culture, and because of that we do not often even think of it. That is why it is so difficult to accept and adopt other anthropological concepts considered equally evident, and other experienced worldviews, for our cognitive comfort zone can get unsettled by those.

However, getting to know other “bodies and souls” can lead to a thorough understanding of each other’s most decisive questions, dilemmas, or even improbable answers. This chapter, therefore, tries to reflect on the above-mentioned questions through some examples of cultural and worldviews.

Veronica Strang in her exciting book of *Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values* on the culture and worldview of Australian indigenous people, points out that Australian cosmology formulates such a “holistic cosmos” in which the worlds we call “nature” and “supernatural”, and all parts of those, are considered equal. (STRANG 1997)

There is no hierarchy in this cosmos, all components are involved, part of it, and complementary to the other. Man is thus part of the cosmos much like the plants, animals, rocks, winds or the stars. In this context separate idea of “body and soul” does not exist.

The universe is described in the mythology of Australian indigenous people as the consequence of creation in “dreamtime”, in mythical times. In “dreamtime”, thanks to the actions of mythical ancestors, the world was created in which Australian indigenous people have been living ever since. However, creation of the world is not just a once in the time occurrence of the ancient past, since the ancestors, after the world has gained its present form, have been transformed into rocks, birds, animals, lakes; in all the components of

earth and heaven. Man is also part of this transformation. Accordingly, the individual is not just a member of a family, clan, or ethnic group. All human beings are bound to those animals, plants, natural forms, and phenomena that are associated with the mythical ancestor of their group. Ultimately, all people are related to all natural and supernatural aspects, as the various mythical ancestors have been transformed into every detail of the entire existing universe. The concept of “body and soul” does not emerge in this reality. The human body (and the inseparable “spiritual” component) is part of the whole universe, as the universe and its world, the natural environment that can be experienced, belong to the human body. So, man and nature together form a “body.” Against this background, the conflicts and tragedies that still threaten the traditional culture of indigenous Australians from the direction of the Australian majority can be interpreted.

This is also underlined by Strang’s interviews with indigenous peoples, which show that with the increase in the number of young people leaving their native country, their natural environment, the older informants of the anthropologist feel that the Earth itself will die. From this perspective, it is also fully understandable what kind of destruction it has caused and causes when an Australian farmer’s sheep herd, a road construction bulldozer or even a national park off-road vehicle passes through the land of the indigenous people. In this case, unauthorized intrusion into nature can equal to a violent penetration into the body of man it belongs to.

From the research of Lajos Boglár in the South American Indian cultures, we can learn that the cultural meanings of the transformation fundamentally define the anthropological concepts he explores. (BOGLÁR 2001)

For example, the Piaroa culture investigated by Lajos Boglár place the human “body and soul” in a continuous transformation flow. Nature, supernatural, human community and the individual are also inseparably linked to each other in this worldview concept. With the word of Lajos Boglár, “people are connected to their surrounding world by social grouping and ecological network.” (BOGLÁR 2001: 26)

In this network, with a series of transformations, man continuously humanizes nature. Mediator of this transformation process is the Piaroa shaman, whose name – *menyeruwa* – means both man of “medicine” and “singing”.

The shaman continuously transforms nature into human culture: he makes plants and animals edible and heals and prevents illnesses. In this process, his activity is not only about the preservation and healing of the physical body, for it is inseparable from the inner essence that is inalienable from the body. Making animals and plants edible, as well as healing, is accordingly done by singing.

In the magic song, the shaman singing the stories of myths connects the elements of the universe: mythical ancestors, nature and man. Thus, in the Piaroa cosmology, “body and soul” of man cannot be separated from one another or from the universal unity that surrounds it.

Considering all, the Piaroa shaman first transforms himself with the sniffing of the narcotic drug called *yopo* into the world of spirits before he starts his magic singing. This

is followed by the singing of mythical songs until dawn. During the singing of mythical songs, the rest of the community is soundly asleep, as their “body and soul” are safe; the shaman maintains the relationship with supernatural forces and thus maintains harmony between nature and culture, and keeps alive the possibility of curing potential illnesses. The unity and harmony of “body and soul” is deepened by the morning ritual following the magic singing, when the shaman goes to the bed of each family and through a reedpipe blows into their drinking water stored at the bed. The magic-healing power of the morning drink called “blown water” by the Piaroas is due to the power of singing the myths that last until dawn, and the preventive medical action associated with the blowing of magic power: the shaman drips honey into the drinking water. Piaroas use honey as a remedy for respiratory diseases, chest and stomach problems. The healing of the “body” and the “soul” are inseparable from each other, as man is an inseparable part of a unified universe that includes both nature and the supernatural.

We cannot speak of separation of “body and soul” in the Piaroa culture either. The worldview of the Piaroas sees man as a holistic unit that allows the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to be maintained, as well as the prevention and treatment of illnesses through the activities of shamans. It is no coincidence that with the change of Piaroa culture and the intensification of the assimilation processes, proportion of serious illnesses and alcoholism among the Piaroas has greatly increased. (BOGLÁR 1978: 198–200)

Thus, related to the example of the Piaroas, we can see that the basic teachings of a culture about the “components” of man can determine the actual social problems that could not be understood without them. At the same time, with the competent interpretation of these, possible social conflicts and problems can be prevented or at least mitigated.

The anthropological teaching of the diverse traditional Indian spiritual system based on ancient mythical texts, the Vedas, also looks differently on man as the construction of “body and soul.”

“According to Indian thinking (writes András Kozma in his book *The Symbols of the Hindu God-figures*) the advaita (without duplicity) Brahman is the ancestor, the core, the present and the future of the universe. Brahman has no spatial and temporal scope, He is beyond space and time. Brahman is in itself a complete, functioning and operating energy, but it does not become personal, it only manifests itself in itself, as He is the Highest Universal.” (KOZMA 2001: 20)

From the quoted “god-concept”, teaching of the Vedic thinking of the “I” is inseparable. According to the Advaita Vedanta philosophy the soul of man is one with and the same as Brahman, that is the “I” is a personified substance of Brahman. This universal “I” means the divine, all-pervading energy that keeps together, forms and pervades the universe as it does the personality of each individual. Consequently, the “true self” of man is the “Atman” in him.

Accordingly, one can only be “self” when he recognizes the “Atman” in him and with proper life guidance and spiritual practices promotes the elimination of material “adhesions” that hinders identification with the “Atman”. During successive lives, one can achieve the liberation from material dependencies that can be associated with the body and the mind, and the encounter and convergence with the universal energy (as well as with the “true self”).

Of course, this process also touches on the anthropological “ingredients” that we define as “body and soul”. As a result, this process also includes aspects of “physicality”, and that of sexuality.

Thus, Kama Sutra (the philosophical work on the science of physical love), well known in Western culture, cannot be understood without the aforementioned spiritual and anthropological theory. As we have seen, one can only get closer (and ultimately) to his “true self” by the spiritual development of his lifestyle and his life skills. Accordingly, one must develop his personality in all areas of life. According to the traditional Indian world view, human life is governed by four principles: “Artha”, “Dharma”, “Kama” and “Moksha”.

“Artha” is the path of social relations and the pursuit of social harmony, “Dharma” is the path of realization of harmony with nature, and “Kama” is the dimension of living the desires, the love of pleasure.

In fact, “Moksha” is not the fourth component of the above-mentioned principles, but rather refers to the process of achieving “liberation”, unification with “Atman”, due to the spiritual progress in the areas governed by those three principles. (SAILI 2007: 26)

Proper practice of “Kama” is therefore an activity of spiritual significance that is part of the process of encountering the “true self” of man. In this light, sexual act therefore is not just for the enjoyment of the body; sexuality has spiritual meaning and spiritual reward.

In the traditional Indian view, the act of love itself can be seen as the revival of hierogamy (holy, divine sexual union). The participating couples in their love making in fact repeatedly relive the love affairs of some divine manifestations of Indian mythology (such as that of Shiva and Parvati or Kamadeva and Rati).

In fact, the Kama Sutra originates from one of the thousand years of love affair of Shiva and Parvati.

According to one of the Indian myths, the love of Shiva and Parvati was secretly watched by one of their servants. The servant then what he saw passed it on to man. The acts of pleasure of the divine couple have been recorded by many, and these notes were later compiled by Vatsyayana in Kama Sutra. (KARSAI 1986: 58–61)

The knowledge summarized in Kama Sutra therefore allows the sacred pattern to be followed and, consequently, progress towards attempting perfection.

The spiritual significance of lovemaking is underlined by the narrative of Indian mythology about the Kamadeva, according to which Kamadeva is the first born divine manifestation, and at the same time the youngest sacred creature, since it is born over and over again during the love act of men. In addition, Kamadeva and her female partner, Rati, are also taking care of the continuous rebirth of the universe. (SAILI 2007: 9–11)

It is also clear from the description that physical love cannot be separated from its spiritual stake, because man not only repeats and relives patterns of divine love, but also creates the divine energy that sustains the universe. The spiritual significance of personal actions thus deepen and become an awareness in the practitioner during the act of love.

In addition, participants in the love act not only experience the physical pleasure but also the dynamism of their entire “emotional scale” of their personality.

The “Navarasa” emotional scale in traditional Indian culture involves nine emotions and manifestation of those emotions. These are love, laughter, sadness, anger, heroism, fear, disgust, wonder and peace. These feelings can be discovered separately and together during the act. All this shows the complexity inherent in sexuality, the reality of the depth and often contradictory excitement of the love affair, which can bring man closer to a deeper understanding of self and that of his partner. The Kama Sutra therefore recurrently emphasizes that the anthropological experiences in lovemaking – in addition to the enjoyment of perfect pleasure – can be realized only if the togetherness is based on the mutual reciprocity of the lovers. (Notice that in most of the illustrations of Kama Sutra, as well as other traditional Indian art depictions of loving couples, lovers look into each other’s eyes or search for each other’s gaze).

In addition, “Navarasa” also defines sixty-four positions of Kama Sutra’s art of love. The number sixty-four in the positions of lovemaking has a symbolic meaning. In traditional Indian culture this sixty-four positions, these manifestations are also seen as the outpour of Sarasvati. In the Indian mythology, Sarasvati, the mistress and governess of knowledge and arts, is the female manifestation of divine energy.

In addition, traditional Indian culture has sixty-four forms of art recorded. The sixty-four forms are the manifestations of creative energy that purify man’s life and promote spiritual transformation. The number sixty-four therefore is not unwittingly linked to the repertoire of experiencing sexuality, as it represents the symbol of attaining spiritual perfection and completeness. (In Indian mythology and traditional culture there also are sixty-four “Maya”, magic powers, “Yogini”, female spiritual leaders, and “Mudra”, spiritual gestures.)

It follows from the description that the bodily experience of love, like the practice of sixty-four forms or art, helps to “cleanse” the path to spiritual perfection and thus to the attainment of spiritual transformation. (SAILI 2007: 98–99)

To sum it up, neither does the traditional Indian culture embrace the sharply separable duality of “body and soul”, instead, Indian mythical thinking draws a reality in which the universal energy existing in man is connected to the universal energy that holds the cosmos together. From this point of view, the “true self” of man is the only “Self” of the universe. Consequently, not only is the dichotomy of “body and soul,” but all duality is only an appearance, an irrationality.

At the same time, the reality of inseparability can be realized, even in the case of seemingly primary bodily experiences, such as the love affairs. Sexuality thus becomes a possible act of spiritual transformation.

Is there such a thing as Kosher Kama Sutra? – Shmuley Boteach is asking in his book, *Kosher Sex*. (BOTEACH 1999, 2011)

Of course, in the culture of Judaism, we do not find sutra type of literature, not even on sexuality. At the same time, we can discover analogies between the Indian and Jewish readings of sexuality. The spiritual teachings of the Jews, like the Indian examples in the previous chapter, define sexuality not only as an act between bodies.

The book by Rabbi Boteach mentioned above also emphasizes that the “kosher” affair means the unification of the whole personality of both parties. However, the question may arise: who are those two “full personalities” uniting in lovemaking?

In the Torah, the sacred document that defines the culture of Judaism, which includes the first five books of the Bible, man is called “is”, and the woman is “issa.” The closeness of the sound and meaning of the two words expresses both the equality, the essence, and the unity of man and woman. Moreover, the Torah also states that a man and a woman united depict the likeness of man to God. Accordingly, “man and woman only together represent the whole man.” (WOLFF 2001: 212)

The Torah already emphasizes all this at the beginning of the Book of Creation:

“And God created man in his image, and created him in the image of God; he created them for men and women.” (1 Moses 2:24)

Later, we can also read that the creation of man and woman is to make them to be “one flesh.” (1 Moses 2:24)

In the light of all this, it can be said that the realization of man’s likeness to God can come about through the unity of man and woman as taught by the Torah.

But what does unity of man and woman mean? What are the components of man and woman, that is, the personality of man? What does “one flesh” mean?

Rabbi Boteach, referring to Zohar, the decisive book of Kabbalistic literature, points out that the Hebrew word for “love” (“yada”) is “to know someone”, “to be one”. Consequently, among all (and very varied) sexual positions allowed by all religious standards, the “missionary position” is preferred by the writer of Kosher sex.

The reason for this is that, in sexual intercourse, the three basic components of the personality of a person merge.

The first component is the body itself, the “skin” of man, the “outer skin” of the personality. In the “missionary position”, the body of the loving couple can unite as a fully realized unit, including the encounter of the eyes and the intertwining of the arms.

At the same time, besides the body, the “soul”, which means “life force”, “living spirit” of the couple also unites. This dimension of unification takes place during love making while lovers talk to each other, whisper into each other’s ears while making love. The most optimal realization of all this is also made possible by the “missionary positivity”.

From what has been written so far, we can see how body and soul are united in love. Earlier, however, we read that the “three components” of the personality merge in the act.

So, the question arises: what is the “third anthropological component” according to Judaism?

The “third component” could be translated as “soul” and “spirit”. In his book, Rabbi Boteach calls this “ingredient” an “impersonal soul / spirit” that comes from the Eternal (God’s spark - the spark of God) and connects each person one by one with the Eternal.

In love, between the coalescing lovers the exchange of kisses represents the sharing the “breath of life” received from the Eternal.

To understand the “three components” of the personality, the key is also found in the Torah:

“And God created the man from the dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life into his nose; and man became a living being.” (1 Moses 2:2-7)

Thus, according to the Torah’s anthropological teaching, man can be regarded as a “living being”, made up of the “dust of earth” which – according to rabbinical explanations – is made up of all material components of the earth, and the “breath of life” that gives it life. The difficulty of interpreting in this case is that both the “breath of life” (Hebrew “neshama”) and the “living being” (“nefesh”) are also translated as “souls”. (WOLFF 2001: 26-27, 85)

Without getting tangled in the philological analysis of the Torah expressions, we can see that the “living being”, that is, the human being, cannot exist without the presence of “breath” from the Eternal source, that is, the life-giving and securing “soul” or “spirit”. Thus, man’s life and personality are not just for himself, not only his own, but it is a “gift” from the Eternal One. The teachings of the Torah and Judaism underline that if one recognizes and accepts this, he will follow the instructions of the Eternal One of how to live responsibly and appropriately with this “gift received from outside.” The rules and guidelines for sexuality can also be understood in this light, as are other traditional Jewish regulations related to the body, starting with the regulation of meals, that of the hygiene, and the rules of dressing.

An up-to-date article in the Unity September 2017 issue from Rabbi Báruch Oberlander, *Is There Such a Thing as Kosher Tattoo? – From Make-up Tattoo to the Holocaust Remembrance*, discusses one of the current and exciting issues of body-related regulations. Rabbi Báruch Oberlander, of course, also refers to the Torah when he states that tattooing is clearly forbidden in the Judaism’s system of norms:

“Do not cut your bodies for the dead – says the Torah – or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.” (3 Moses 19:28)

However, the question arises as to what constitutes a tattoo in the reading of Judaism.

In addition to many interesting examples, we learn from the article that make-up tattoo, because it is not permanent, is not considered as a tattoo. Rabbi Oberlander mentions that

the well-respected Rabbi Yosef Ovadia, although initially opposed and earlier rejected it, finally allowed the make-up tattooing, especially since in addition to being temporary, it is being done to enhance one's beauty. Nurturing and enhancing the beauty of the body is supported in Orthodox Judaism.

At the same time, the problem of holocaust tattoos raises more dramatic questions. From an article, we can learn about a case that happened in 1965, when Germany offered one thousand dollars to Holocaust survivors who were willing to remove from their arms the numbers tattooed at the Auschwitz's death camp. One survivor turned to a well-known orthodox rabbi asking if he could accept this offer. The Rabbi believed that the tattoo had to be kept, as it is a sign of the tragic events and the pride of the Jews, despite the persecution.

Another known rabbi, however, argued that although it is important to remember the horrors, those affected suffer no further loss. Therefore, if they need the money offered by Germany, they can have the tattoo removed from their arms. In addition, those who are tormented by wearing those numbers, can also get rid of the tattoo.

Existing tattoos are otherwise not required to be removed, because according to the Orthodox Rabbinic Resolution, the existence of tattoo is not, only the act of tattooing is forbidden.

Therefore, it is unacceptable the recent tendency among young Jews to have the numbers of their forebears killed in the death camps, or those who survived the Holocaust, tattooed on themselves.

In these cases, the orthodox rabbis tend to encourage young people to rather engage in other forms of commemoration along with more intensive religious practice. (OBERLANDER 2017: 15–22)

In summary, we can see in the chapter that the complexity of the “body and soul” is also present in Judaism. We read that the concepts often translated as “souls” may refer to the complex personality of man, and to the energizing life force received from the spiritual, “above” human, source of the Eternal One.

We can also see that the body is an inseparable component of man's personality, through which the experience of spiritual transformation can be realized even in activities that seem to be “everyday” or “profane”, such as body decoration or lovemaking.

Who is the man? – we are asking again and again. In my writing, we have seen examples of how some cultures try to provide answers to this universal question considering different world explanations and anthropological concepts. The examples analyzed can also help us to rethink and further contemplate on the concept of “body and soul” in a self-reflecting manner.

Presentation of the “body and soul” views that live with us in modernity and affect our way of life requires another study. Just think about how the art of Neoplatonism and Renaissance influenced modernity's ideal of beauty, in which beauty manifested through the body makes it possible to discover and experience the “essence of the soul.”

Consequently, the “perfect life”, the “perfect man” feasibility (think about “make yourself” or “be perfect” advertising slogans, messages of mythological-ideology) is inseparable from the “perfectly beautiful” body-myth. (SZÁSZ 2012: 111–123)

On the other hand, as a result of atheistic and / or evolutionist thinking, transforming the “soul” into “mind” and / or “consciousness” also directed the aesthetic and cultural focus of modernity on to the body. The body has thus become the “sure” and “the only” being with which (rather through which) “happiness” and a kind of “profane” and mostly undefined, yet “beyond us”, “eternal” moments can be experienced. In such moments, the fullness of personality, the “true self,” is revealed to us according to the reading of modern mythology.

From the examples analyzed in this chapter, we can see that “our bodies” and “our souls” cannot be separated from our personal admirations as well as from the cultural context in which our admirations occur. I believe, glancing at and understanding anthropological readings of different cultures, we can come closer to a deeper discovery of others’ and of our own ‘bodies and souls’.

8 Religion and ritual: the stake of sacrality

From the beginning, the issue of religion and ethnicity has been the concern of researchers in cultural anthropology, for religious phenomena are embedded and manifested, furthermore, directly experienced through the culture of the community. This does not mean that one could not have an intimate, deeply personal relationship with sacrality (holiness), only means that such relationship is realized through one's culture and language, not to mention that relationship with sacrality compels the individual to take responsibility towards the surrounding communities. Religion therefore, if we apply empirical approach to examine, cannot be ascertained without examining the contextual relationship of the community and its culture in which it developed, practiced and experienced. Because of that, significance of religion and ethnicity are inseparable. During cultural anthropological research this, of course, can be approached from more than one directions.

For instance, if we are researching in a community – let us say, in a Hungarian settlement of the Carpathian Basin – where religious affiliation of the Hungarian Reformed (Calvinist) Church essentially expresses ethnic consciousness and alliance, we then have to recognize that these two cultural factors clearly mean “permanency” for the Hungarian, as well as for the members of groups of different nationality and religion, living there as part of the larger community. Such diversity is covering all areas of existence, determining the path of life for the individuals born into those communities. Religious institutions, rituals, and teachings of ethnic groups sanctify and underline these boundaries, while with the help of sacraments legitimize and strengthen their bonds of belonging to their own community.

Of course we know of communities where different ethnic groups belonging to the same denomination live together. In fact, the situation can be even more complex. For example, there are places in Vojvodina, where Catholic Hungarians and Croats live along Orthodox Christian Serbs. In this case, the question arises whether denomination (in this case, Catholicism between Hungarians and Croats) or rather linguistic similarity (between Croats and Serbs) is the dominant reason for ethnic rapprochement, in cases even of ethnic mixing (such as intermarriage)? Added to this is the teaching of universal nature of Christianity which, in principle, could render these questions incompetent on the ground of Catholicism in case of Hungarians and Croats, and on the ground of ecumenical endeavors of all three communities. However, in their everyday life, each community separates itself from the others, thus turning the theological content of their religion into a matter of ethnicity as well. In other cases, over several generations, the same denomination may be an assimilation factor as is the case in the examples of the Bulgarian diaspora. Many of the Bulgarian market gardeners settled in Hungary, due to the same Orthodox denomination, blended into the Serb communities, similarly to Bulgarians in certain settlements in the Banat, part of the province of Vojvodina, where they became part of the Catholic Hungarian communities.

During my research of minor denominations in Vojvodina, I met a significant example related to this phenomenon. The communities here also included people with various ethnic backgrounds. In addition to Hungarians, Serbs, and Croats there were large number of members of this community born in mixed marriages, socialized in the “meta-ethnic”, atheist “Yugoslavia”, who – after the break-up of Yugoslavia – felt, they did not belong anywhere, for they were not part of either of the ethnic groups, or denominations, even though the socio-political function of the belonging to a ethnic-religious community once again became essential in these parts.

In the religious practices and ideology of minor denominations, representation of multi-ethnicity is prominently emphasized – just as it had been in Early Christianity according to the words of Paul the Apostle – “there is neither Jew, nor Greek” – which suggests, it makes no difference who was born into which ethnic or religious community. Sacrality, in this case, overrides the relevance of ethnic ties. This is reflected in bilingual worships, sermons, and teachings of the Bible study class; it also comes across in the identity-strategy, self- and group definitions in the interviews I conducted with members of the congregation.

Common in the previous few examples is that, although the phenomena they exhibit are quite different, in each case we can count on the sacred legitimization of the given social situation. Whether it is the group-cohesion of an ethnic community that religion sanctifies, whether it is integration of several cultures into a metaethnic – community above ethnicity – community, in all cases it is sacrality that legitimizes that specific *communitas*, and furthermore deepens and strengthens its sanctity-created, supported and mandated mission as well:

That someone was born Hungarian, Serb, Jewish, Christian, or became one has not happened by chance, it all happened because of God's will. To which community one belongs thus becomes the essence of the person's identity. Accepting and deepening this belonging means not only compliance with the collective requirement, but it is a sacred act at the same time. One, as a member of the community, has a sacred mission as well. This is how separation becomes defining aspect of the sacrality and ethnicity issue.

Manifestation of sacredness goes along with the phenomenon of boundary creation and separation. The sacred time, the sacred space, just as the sacred way of life and world view are also separated from the profane. (ELIADE 1996: 10–11, 15–19)

Separation of "our" world and that of "the rest" is equally important from the community's point of view. There are different rules, behavior patterns, as well as related identity-strategies that apply accordingly to members of each sacral community. This is then what determines the shape of interactions with the "other" communities.

I first met with this in the Jewish communities during my own research. Separation of territory of sacred and nonsacred is well defined and established in the Jewish culture. Motif of separation extends to the smallest details of life. The halakha, system of rituals governed by rules, determines the order in which shoelace must be thread after getting up in the morning, how many steps can be taken without a headgear, when a married couple has to abstain from sexual intercourse, how milk and meat must be separated, dishes already divided as clean and unclean anyway, distinction must be made between holidays and weekdays, much the same way as the Eternal-One has made a distinction between His own and the rest of the people. All aspects of the practice of Judaism is separation, deepening the dichotomy of sacred and profane in the members of the community. It is no coincidence that the Hebrew word sacred, *kadosh*, is rooted in the word separation.

"Segula" is projected in the community as the separation of chosen people from the "goyim", that is from the world of the rest. Being chosen, however neither means supremacy, nor gives the right to harbor any elitist arrogance. Being chosen means a mission, a task, the essence of which is that the Jews must keep the provisions of the Torah, thus represent and promote the truth of the Creator One God to the rest of humanity. The "only" duty of the rest is to follow the Jews' example, accept God's existence, and keep the seven laws given by the Lord to Noah after the flood.

The rabbinical explanation deduces from the relevant sections of the Book of Genesis (1 Moses 9:4–7) the seven basic laws that apply to all human beings: the necessity of tribunals, prohibition of blasphemy and idolatry, sexual immorality, bloodshed, robbery, and enjoyment of meat cut from a live animal. (HERTZ 1984[Vol.1]: 80–81; UNTERMAN 1999: 175–176)

If the gentiles accept the existence of God, and keep these basic ethical provisions, they obtain eternal life just like the members of the Jewish community. The Jews, however, to fulfill their mission, must keep six-hundred-thirteen commandments laid down in the Torah, not to mention the associated ancillary rabbinical provisions that like a "fence"

surround these commandments. Compliance with those assures that the norms required by the Torah will not get compromised.

From this brief illustration we can also see that the stake of sacrality is not an end in itself: the individual must live according to sacrality code of practice so that the community could live up to the will of the Saint in order to benefit all of humanity. Every little detail is important because even the order of threading the shoelace, obtaining two refrigerators to separately store milk and meat, or the timely lighting of the Sabbath candle is a decisive action to the fate of the entire world. Stake of sacrality is the realisation of the sacred objective which cannot be achieved without separation of sacred and profane, which therefore creates the sacral-ethnicity of the Jewish community and on a social level maintains its separation from other groups. The Jewry therefore are such a sociological-theological “phenomenon” which cannot be known if we separate its “ethnic” and “religious” elements.

All this, of course, makes the sociological approach of Jewry difficult. I also struggled a lot, how to organize my observations, interviews in such way that the significance of everyday experiences mentioned above could be felt, could be transmitted. Finally, I found an approach which I have already been repeatedly overlooked, even though it is an approach which is used and repeatedly referred to by one of the Jewish communities I studied, it is from Hayim Halevy Donin’s book, *To Be a Jew*. (DONIN 1998)

It describes in plain intelligible language the traditional Jewish laws, customs, and “way of life” according to the rules of halakha, as they apply to daily life in the contemporary world. In it we find the category which makes the Jewish concept of holiness understandable and intelligible. In the center of Donin’s thoughts is the commandment related to the sanctity of the Torah: “Because I am the Eternal-One, your God; sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. (3 Moses 11:44) “And the Eternal-One spoke to Moses, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel across the community and tell them: You shall be holy because I, the Eternal-One, your God am holy.” (3 Moses 19:1–2)

Thus, the concept of holiness in the Torah covers such divine expectations and commitments which, in the everyday practice, must affect the entire way of life and culture of the individual and the community. Donin makes an attempt to demonstrate this all-encompassing meaning in a trichotomy. Accordingly, he divides the Jewish holiness-concept into time, space, and the personal holiness. (DONIN 1998: 43)

Using these three categories, I was able to organize the presentation of the everyday practice of Jewish life in such a manner that, in the same time, I could interpret their connections as well. (PAPP 2004)

I believe this approach can also be used in the holistic exploration and understanding the code of other cultures, for the living culture empirically is accessible, and it divides the community’s cultural systems along the fundamentally defining aspects of cultural practices. And because these mean such defining systems which cannot be interpreted without the understanding of their interrelatedness and the detailed understanding of the complete culture, they are especially helpful in the realization of an attempt of holistic understanding and interpretation.

Analysis of time, space, and holiness of an individual may help us to understand the relationship between sacrality and ethnicity.

The sacred time in the life of a community may become relivable through myths and rituals. During rituals, mediated by the myths, ancient stories are reenacted, re-experienced. The myths are sacral narratives in which, for the members of the culture, totality of reality is articulated. The myths narrate and teach what, how, and why things in the life of the individual and that of the community are in the way in which we get to know them, they teach the importance of community norms, expectations, duties, obligations and values, along with the significance of appropriate behavior and interpretations of explanations.

However, the myths do not only teach about reality, they also carry reality. This reality with the help of the rituals is re-enacted, it thus becomes again-and-again relivable, creating the permanence of sacred time in the generational and social-historical process of changes. (cf. BOGLÁR 2001: 54–62, 71–72)

The sacred significance of rituals is that it makes the knowledge formulated in myths a special, relivable experience. Collective and personal auto-communications are created during the rituals, allowing the participants of events and myths identify with those conducting the rituals. (LOVÁSZ 2002: 50) Auto-communication is also possible in the everyday practice as well. In the Jewish community I have researched there were those who identified their own life histories with that of Bible-mythical personalities, life history and the personality traits of Jacob and Esther. In Jewish culture recurring same and permanent content of Torah- and the following times considered to be evidence of what is stated in the Talmud: “what happened to forefathers, repeated in their offspring’s life.” (Ber. Rabba 84.6; HERTZ 1984[Vol.1]: 224)

Internalizing the experience can be achieved without the rites; rituals are to help keeping them alive, collectively. The reason for repetition of these rituals is also the collective desire of “spiritual moments”. (cf. MARÓT 1940: 143–187) All this means a cathartic experience which makes identification with the mythical heroes possible. During the Catholic rite of Passion for example, to relive the suffering of Christ becomes possible. In Jerusalem on Friday, groups of pilgrims on Via Dolorosa follow the stages of Christ’s crucifixion, carrying crosses on their shoulders, stopping at every Stations of the Cross to reenact and make it relivable in songs, prayers, and mythical moments the happenings on the path to crucifixion on Mount Calvary. “Metamorphosis”, state of ecstasy often makes it possible for the participants to experience the feelings felt by Jesus during Passion.

There is also an interesting phenomenon in the ritual life of the Hungarian folk culture; it is the custom of whipping of Pilate on Maundy (Holy) Thursday. In the church, at the end of mass, the priest slams the prayer book onto the steps of the altar, while faithful loudly pound on the pews, thus commemorating the deed of Pilate on Holy Thursday. (BÁRTH 1990: 406) Evocation of mythical events carry the expression of opinion formulated against the actors of the original events, while it makes the ethical standards through experience relivable.

The custom of whipping of Pilate is similar to the Jewish celebration of Purim, during which they read the Book of Esther aloud in the synagogue. When the reader gets to the name of Haman, the main antagonist, instigator of a plot to kill all the Jews, the noise of wooden cacklers, whistles, and pounding fills the synagogue.

In the crossroad of existence in sacred time and the reality of daily life, man faces the dichotomy of sacred and profane. In minority cultures this is complemented by an additional feature, for in addition to their own sacred time and everyday life, there is the time structure of the social majority. Thus, norms of their own culture and that which, from their perspective, appears to be profane cultural practices meet this time, deepening their own identity, their attachment to the mindfulness of their own religion. For example, if it happens to be Sabbath according to the time structure of Jewish culture, because of the time structure of mainstream culture, restrictions deepen. The term of “Sabbath concert” exists in the Jewish community I researched. It refers to concerts members of the community would gladly attend, but because of the observance of law of Sabbath, they cannot make it.

Another good example is when Christian communities express their differences against the social majority. In these cases it is their religious value system that makes them “minority”, when compared to the secular, “profane” social majority. This is being emphasized in the practice of a Budapest Protestant congregation, when its members take the New Year’s Eve midnight communion: in the church, during devotional service, communicants approach the altar in silence to receive the body and blood of Christ – represented by the sacrament of bread and wine – to be consumed in unison, while from the outside the noise of fireworks, horns, breaking glass, and shouts penetrate the walls of the church.

What makes this religious community “different”, makes it a “minority” is that it obeys and lives by the law of God in opposition to the culture of the world of “profane”. Distinction between sacred and profane time also clarifies the separation.

The sacred space is the visible expression of this separation. The sacred environment provides a context in which the abovementioned events take place, it preserves and represents the significance of those events when there are no rites being performed there.

Spatiality also carries a decisive importance in terms of ethnicity, since the religious environment is also home to the community. During my fieldwork, whether I conducted my research among Romanian, Serbian Catholics, Protestant Hungarians, Orthodox Romanians or Serbs, or Israeli, Trans-Carpathian, Hungarian Jews, the word “home” frequently came up as a reference to the church environment. The latter is perhaps the most typical example of it.

Entering a synagogue, one can expect to find sacred symbols and objects as well as refrigerators, kitchen equipment, and ashtrays.

Even the rituals, at first glance, seem more like a large family gathering, rather than a sacred event. Part of this is the psychological component of being a minority, as such. In their own sacred environment they can feel relieved from social pressure and carry on their customary behavior. In addition to familiarity, and the at-home feeling, it is ensured by the protection of sacrality. Just how important this is in life’s “fragile” situations,

is demonstrated by an example I came upon during one of my earlier fieldworks conducted about the use of space by Jews in Budapest. One of my conversation partners summed it up for me this way.

“For you to see what this is all about: Every morning I take the trolley to the temple for the shacharit (Morning Prayer), and each morning I have to face Mogen Dovid (Star of David) hanging on the gallows, a swastika, and Juden Raus (Jews out) drawn on the interior wall of the bus. Every morning I get this, you see? And it’s not just me, because most of the other also come with this trolley. Well, now you can imagine how much relief it is to reach the temple. As if to arrive home again, you calm down, you’re safe among folks with same mentality, those who walk in the same shoes as you do. And most importantly, you pray together and the Eternal One watches over you there. The day starts quite differently for us than to others, doesn’t it? When I’m nervous, several times during the day, I look at my hand with the tightness of the tefillin belt still showing, and I calm down. Well, this is how complex this is.”

In a Christian environment, even if emphases are different, religious environment and atmosphere also have an impact, for in such environment one can discuss the difficulties of co-existence, the feelings, the thoughts arising from the religious value system without conflicts, with understanding each other, or relive those mythical-ritual dimensions to which the “outside world” responds at times cynically, other times with indifference or even hostility.

In addition to what was said, the sacred environment is home for the symbols announcing universal importance of sacrality, and the microsocietal events, activities based on community existence.

Without understanding the system of sacrality, for example the significance of sacred time, not even the interior arrangements of a synagogue can be understood.

All of the sacred objects found in the synagogue – the Aron Kodesh (ornamental closet), the Bema (raised area around the Aron Kodesh), and the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light), or the decorations, ornaments, and symbols (the Shield of David, the menorah) – contribute to the experience of living in the Jewish sacred time. The first mentioned items, for example, refer to the objects found in the destroyed Temple of Jerusalem.

These objects, however, not only illustrate the interior as it once was of the Sanctuary, but carry a fundamental sacred knowledge, a message for the members of the community.

To gain a deeper understanding, it is necessary to discuss the importance of the Sanctuary and the role of the synagogue in the cultural Judaism.

The first culturally codified sacred space of Jews, in which communication with the Eternal One permanently took place, was the Tabernacle Tent (Hebrew: Mishkan).

The dwelling place is modeled on the heavenly Sanctuary; the exterior symbolizes the creation, the cosmos, and the next period of Israel’s history until the coming of the Messiah. (UNTERMAN 1999: 224–225)

In the time of King Solomon, role of the Tabernacle Tent was taken over by the permanent structure of Sanctuary in the Jerusalem Temple.

The question arises: what was this role, what significance was carried by the desert Tabernacle Tent, later held by the permanent Sanctuary that – after its destruction – still serves as the base of all Jewish ritual space?

One of its important meanings is the divine presence.

After the inauguration of the altar built in the Sanctuary, the Torah, the central reference of the religious Judaic tradition, reports the following:

“When Moses would come into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the voice speaking to him from the two cherubim above the covering which was over the Ark of Testimony, and He spoke to him.” (4 Moses 7:89)

At a previous place we read:

“There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of Testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel. (2 Moses 25:22)

Primary means of the sacred space is where communication with God takes place. It is the place where Moses directly received the Almighty’s commandments. This is why the “the whole Sanctuary is called the Tent of Meeting, that is the place where God reveals His will through Moses to Israel, where the human soul meets God with reverence for the Divine Will.” (HERTZ 1984[Vol.2]: 301)

The sacred space, in addition to, or in conjunction with the “meeting”, is the permanent residence of the Divine Presence as well.

Consequence of all this for the way of life of the Jews is the prohibition of contact with all that is impure, that is what the Eternal One revealed to Moses upon their meetings. (2 Moses 29:45; 3 Moses 25:31)

So then Mishkan meant the source of holiness for the congregation of Israel. (HERTZ 1984[Vol.2]: 185) That is why God Himself gave detailed instructions of its construction and of its facilities: “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” (2 Moses 25:8–9)

Therefore, holy places of the Jewish culture are based on the Sanctuary described in the Torah, of which all facets revealed and defined by the Eternal One. The first Temple (Hebrew: Bet HaMikdash) was built by Solomon in Jerusalem in place of the Tabernacle. The Scripture calls it the “house of sacrifice” (2 Chronicles 7:12), also the “house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7), in part referring to Beth HaMikdash as the central building of the sacrificial cult, as well as to the theological aspect according to which to meet the Holy, sacrifice itself is not enough, it has to be accompanied by prayer and confession, too.

The Temple was twice destroyed, once in 586 BCE by the Babylonians, then again in 70 CE by the Romans. The third Temple, however, will descend from heaven only at the “end

of time”, in the Messianic age. (UNTERMAN 1999: 236) After the destruction of the Second Temple, facilities of the Sanctuary and the significance of those, however, got carried on by the Jewish tradition. According to the Jewish conception of continuous time structure, the Jewish culture exists in the waiting mode of “preparation”: condition of the undisturbed anew functioning of the future Sanctuary is the awareness of generations of its content, and significances of its spaces. In addition – because of the recurring Jewish time duration – preservation of the Holy’s presence entails the experience of simultaneity by the maintenance of symbols and rituals of sacred places in the eternal presence of ancestors and the destroyed Sanctuary.

There are rituals linked to the destroyed Sanctuary itself. In the Jewish ritual year, during three weeks of mourning and on the following Tisha B’Av, the 9th day of Av, they commemorate, relive the tragedy of destruction of the Sanctuary. In traditional Jewish homes, they leave a small area of wall unplastered or unpainted as a reminder of the destroyed Temple. Jews who are seeing the Sanctuary’s site for the first time in their lives, or returning after thirty days to visit, must tear their garments. (UNTERMAN 1999: 236)

Of the Sanctuary, only section of the outer wall (“Western Wall”), the Kotel (“Wall”) or more commonly known as the Wailing Wall remained. The Kotel’s permanence – according to Jewish tradition – meets the divination of truth, prediction of prophetic literature: “My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” (Ez 37:27–28)

The Kotel, therefore, is the tangible proof of divine presence after the destruction of the Sanctuary, and thus preserved to this day the meaning of “Meeting Tent”, as the place where communication between God and man is carried out. This is why visitors can see a number of Jewish pilgrims at the Western Wall praying, placing kvitel (a note with a petitionary prayer) into the crack of the wall. This meaning is deepened by the fact transmitted by tradition, according to which, up to this day – and to the end of time – the remaining section of the Temple is that part of the Western Wall which was closest to the Holy of Holies.

The Kodsh HaKadashim, Holy of Holies, Tabernacle (later the Temple) was the most sacred area. Here they kept the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments. Holy of Holies was separated from the rest of the Sanctuary by a curtain (Hebrew: parochet). Once the Temple was built, the Holy of Holies was placed on the Even ha-Shtiyya (a stone base, representing the center of the world) on which God created the world. A basket of manna and the willow branch of Aaron was kept in the First Temple, but when the Second Temple was built, neither these nor the Ark of the Covenant was placed in there, for their location at the time of the Babylonian exile was unknown. However, in the Messianic Age all these treasures will come to light, announcing the beginning of a new era. (UNTERMAN 1999: 224)

Significance of the sacrament in the Holy of Holies, and its survival to this day is sufficiently illustrated by a case from the location of my research, the Synagogue of Bethlen Square in Budapest:

Young men, living far away from the Bethlen Square Synagogue, wishing to preserve traditional ritual commandment of not to travel on the Sabbath, spend Saturday night in the Synagogue. They sleep on deckchairs, but it is far from uncomfortable for them. One of them placed his temporary bed front of the cabinet guarding the Torah scrolls, and would not trade his nightly “experiences” for anything. He likens those to the aforementioned: “I would not go home to sleep even if I could. I sleep front of the Holy Ark, the Ark of the Covenant; I can feel the strength coming out of it permeating me.”

Furthermore, the furniture in the synagogue is both “copies” and symbols of the sanctuary, so they are able to preserve the reality of the sanctity of its spaces. Such is the significance of the seemingly insignificant sink in front of the entrance to the Synagogue. Those, arriving to the rituals, every time before they cross the doorstep, rinse their hands with water. This ritual is one of those originated from the time of the Tabernacle that carries over the survival, and represents the concurrency of those: “Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet in it. When they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the Altar to serve there or offer gift offerings to God, they are to wash so they will not die. They are to wash their hands and their feet so they will not die. This is the rule forever, for Aaron and his sons down through the generations.” (2 Moses 30:20–21)

According to Jewish tradition, repeating “wash it” and the last sentence places emphasis on this mandate, which was meant to be for “all times”. This is why the “pious ones”, those who adhere to religious laws, wash their hands before every worship, “for according to our sages, this is equivalent of the communion. At the entrance hall of most Jewish temple, there is a sink for the purpose of ritual hand-washing” (HERTZ 1984[Vol.2]: 360). Let us look at a few more examples of the articles belonging to the Sanctuary. Those conventions and styles that determined the construction of synagogues in different countries over the centuries were not unvarying, however they were all modelled after the Temple of Jerusalem. This is true for the greater synagogues, the “great churches”, while in the case of prayer rooms (“small churches” or “little houses”) it is not always true. Exemplifies this that while a mezuzah have to be affixed to the doorframe of the prayer room, it is not required at the synagogue, for that is a “holy place”, “little sanctuary” (Hebrew: mikdash me’at) (Ez 11, 16), replica of the Jerusalem Temple. (FROJIMOVICS 1995: 192)

Synagogues are generally open to a courtyard, as on one hand, it separates the synagogue from the “outside” world, on the other hand, it is where rituals take place, according to tradition, in the open air (for example weddings), finally – and this is most important for our discourse – it represents the courtyard of the Sanctuary (FROJIMOVICS 1995: 192)

On the east side of the interior of the synagogue, in the direction of Jerusalem stands the Holy Ark (Hebrew: *Aron Kodesh*) where the Torah scrolls are kept, separated by a curtain (parochet), according to the already discussed Holy of Holies. The Holy Ark represents the Holy of Holies. In the center of the synagogue, on a platform, stands the bimah (“platform” Its most important ritual purpose is to hold the Torah scrolls during public reading, and as such, it is considered the center place of rituals as well. The bimah represents the golden altar once stood in the Sanctuary, and because the altar stood in the center of the Sanctuary (Hebrew: *heichal*), the bimah is also placed there. Lamps in the synagogue, the Eternal Light and the menorahs (seven-branched candle holders), are also preserving the time of Sanctuary in the present. They are reminder of tapers of the Sanctuary guarding the Eternal Light (*ner tamid*) (“...the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out...” “3 Moses 6:6; cf. 2 Moses 27:20; 3 Moses 24:2). The menorah refers to the seven-branched candle holder in which oil lamps burnt continuously, flooding the Temple with light. The Torah describes the method of its preparation – even its maker, Bezalel, is mentioned – also, its authentic imagery is preserved on the Arch of Titus, so its exact form can be reconstructed. (FROJIMOVICS 1995: 193–195)

Discussion of details was necessary in order for us to see, how only a few items alone can carry and transmit such cultural knowledge to those for whom it means the evidence of their culture. The sacred space also teaches of these to those present in it.

The sacred space, as the scene of everyday culture, can also be viewed as a micro-social environment. This is where religious socialization takes place, where the given religious culture gets instilled in children, this is where information exchange happens, connections are made, lifelong friendships are formed, mates are found, social-economic webs get established, business ventures, and partnerships are built. The consecrated environment often becomes the scene of the mother tongue use. My Vojvodina conversation partners described the Catholic and Reformed Churches as the only places where one surely can use and practice the mother tongue.

Usage of the sacred language in the synagogue has similar significance. Because of that, Hebrew, the language in which the Torah is cited and prayers are said, cannot be defined as a “dead” language, for on the daily bases “live” meanings formulated by it in the synagogue. Hebrew words associated with the ritual life, got adopted in the Yiddish language spoken among the ascending generations of Hungarian Jews, turning it into a common language understood only by Jews. Accordingly, in the synagogue setting, the language use also deepens the sense of identity in the members of the community.

However, there are also other religious spaces where just the opposite of all this is true, the language of the sacred environment does not match the mother tongue. For example, in the church of the Hungarian community of Dobrodol in the Srem Region of Vojvodina, masses are conducted in Croatian.

In Srem, where Dobrodol is located, Hungarian Catholics never have been allowed to worship in their own language. Language of sacrality nevertheless is considered bilingual. This is what keeps alive the double dimension of religious consciousness in their culture,

in compliance with their surroundings, and characteristics defining inter-ethnic community. Hungarians, living among the Croatian and Serbian majority and in the social context defined by them, use the majority's language. However, in their own ethnic-cultural environment, Hungarians use their native language. Similarly, while their "official" liturgical language is Croatian, in the "intimate" and "vital" scenes of sacrality, Hungarian is used exclusively. In case of family prayers, the Rosary Society, prayer circle of women, Holy Saturday processions held without representatives of the Church, and the incantations, folk sacral healing rituals they use their native language. The church liturgy, led by a Croatian priest, official representative of the Church, therefore, is primarily an illustrative event; it matches the ever-present inter-ethnic strategies, while the paraliturgical events make it possible to experience the "true" meaning of sacrality through the hidden spheres of community awareness and practice. Religion, even in this case, is the maintainer of own identity and culture.

The previous examples show that religion and ethnicity describe and define the basic anthropological questions of man. Sacrality and *communitas* equally determine the "innate" parameters of man while they also define his universal location and mission within these limits.

Sacrality of a person, therefore, includes everything we discussed so far, since the sacred time and space are such frameworks, such cultural forms, which can only have vital and influential significance if there are in harmony with the person's lifestyle. Looking at it from the point of personal identity, all this means that sacrality encompasses and sanctifies the entire spectrum of identity. Religious teachings create cohesion among the gender, generational, social, ethnic and national identity elements. This is why the ethnic minority and religious identities cannot be defined as sub- or superordinate, for they are juxtaposed, complementarily carry their common meaning and significance. So a man can be a member of a community in such a way that belonging to it and holding onto his own culture at the same time means a universal sacred mission.

Bearer of the sacred identity communicates these daily with his personality, over and over again his interactions are directed by it. Because of that, his behavior, manifestations of his identification are not static, not constant. This identity-core is situational and dynamic, adapting to the different inter-ethnic majority, regional, cultural, historical and social contexts. This flexibility is kept within the limits by the sacred strategies, as these actions are assessed later, based on religious teachings.

Therefore, it makes a difference how man and his community implement the requirements of their religion that is, how they fulfill their mission. Looking at it from this perspective, dividing lines within a given religion can be understood. This is why disputes between the reformers of liturgy, moral teachings, issues affecting the community structure, and the traditionalists within various denominations, religious communities are so intense, for the stake of these is always the perfect compliance with the wishes of the sacred, the authentic sanctification of personal and community life.

Minority existence, especially in communities of which its religion is different from that of the majority, religious issues become more pronounced. In such cases tensions, existing because of the dividing lines within the minority community, may explode along religious lines.

This is well demonstrated by the example of a half decade-long Christmas vs “Grandfather Frost” dispute among Hungarians of Vojvodina. This minority community is divided by the argument along the lines of two types of inter-ethnic strategies. While one party prefers the adaptation to the culture of the Serb majority, formulated during the existence of Yugoslavia, the other sees hope of survival of their community in strengthening the Hungarian culture and tradition.

Kindergarten teachers, belonging to the latter, erect and decorate a tree and thus celebrate Christmas every year. Those who continue to support the former Yugoslavia’s atheist-internationalist, socialist value system criticize, even hinder those activities. Stress, in the small communities as well as in the public discourse, recurring most noticeably at this time. It is no coincidence that dividing lines related to a religious ritual get more emphasized, for religious tradition of the minority group living in the orthodox majority environment accentuate the dissimilarity of cultures.

In a small religious community, disagreements may occur in less dividing and pronounced cases.

One time, when I was present, lay leaders of a Protestant church argued about whether the presbyters ought to take their place close to the pulpit, clearly visible to the entire assembly, or rather mingle with members of the congregation. One group argued that the representative seating arrangement would demonstrate that the body of elders, together with the pastor, “is in place” and in accordance with each other, collectively assist the life of the congregation. The other group, however, argued that this would mean taking the prominent seats, which Christ opposed in His teachings. (Matthew 23:17) The debate ultimately did not come to rest, decision was also delayed; the episode demonstrates the importance of a seemingly “insignificant” event in a community, where every aspect of life carries a universal stake, in this case to understand God’s will, and to find a most thorough, humanly possible way to follow it. Success of it leads to the realization of sanctity of the person.

Returning to the example of Judaism, for a religious Jewish person, every minute of life is dedicated to serving God, as it stands in the book by Istvan Hahn: *Jewish Holidays and Folk Customs*: “Characteristic of the Jewish religion’s strictly rabbinical form is that it includes life’s most profane events in the sphere of religion. The *Shulchan Aruch* [compilation of Code of Ritual Laws] regulates such things as dressing, putting on shoes, etc. Result of this is not what some may be concerned of, namely the profanation of religion, but on the contrary, all actions, even the least significant ones gain a religious weight, get almost sanctified: this way, our all day work is nothing more than a single worship lasting from morning to night.” (HAHN 1995: 13)

Therefore, behind manifestations of personality, life's little moments there are oceans of cosmic meanings and theological teachings. What can an anthropologist do in the case when, searching on the sociological surface of these events, he attempts to observe and interpret the community components of religion?

Particularity of the cultural anthropological approach and method, while conducting research of sacrality, is the same as is in other cases, namely it is proximity-experience which occurs during participant observation. (GEERTZ 1994: 201–202) The researcher not only contemplates on the event from the outside, but he also grasps the stake of sacrality and of its emotionally experienced significance as well. I believe, if we do not experience this significance, we will discover to the full extent neither the motivations of religious deeds, nor the aspects behind them.

However, we need to be aware of that the emotional and mental attitude toward religious events and their substance is not the same for all community members. Some are indifferent, skeptical, while others – considered according to the norms of the community – proclaim and implement religious rules “excessively”. If we want to grasp, and be able to differentiate on the level of groups and individuals the realization of communication with tradition and teachings, on the one hand we need to have a detailed theological and ethnographic knowledge and understanding of that specific religion, on the other hand of its spiritual aspects manifesting in ritual practices. (cf. OTTO 1997: 18)

At the same time, we should separate the social-ethnic aspect of the religious practice, primary concern of which is the social dimensions of sacrality.

Behind the testable social practice issues can be found those internally-sacred phenomenon that formulates the cultural knowledge base of the given religious community. Sacrality provides the cultural-cognitive base of social behavior, manifestation of which we meet in the sphere of social practice.

We need to be aware of this, because in certain religions and denominations separation of these two phenomena can often lead to conflicts. In my Vojvodina and Jewish researches, I met with this type of criticism, directed by those who through their daily activities committed to carry the sacred meanings, the ones who deeply sense the stake of sacrality and regard its transfer as their mission, toward those who are only superficially familiar with their religion and related practices. These differentiations often lead to conflicts during the rites when some of the participants violate the ritual norms. Then, in other cases in my research I met with the intention of the members of the “inner circle” (on the occasion of greater religious rituals and social events) seize every opportunity to deepen the sacred teachings of their religion and its messages in the members of their community. This complies with the social needs of the wider community. In minority cultures, we hardly ever encounter any major public events during which religious leaders, representatives would not otherwise engage in the sacral activities (such as blessings, sanctifications), supporting them with their presence. We will be able to understand these efforts, conflicts or even social representations, if we understand not only the social manifestations of religion, but

the sacred meanings, experiences behind them, and those who actively participate in it. It is the duty and responsibility of the “sacred seeds”, consisting of the latter, to maintain undiminished the religious teachings and traditions by which the members of the “outer circle” can return in the occasion of a community or personal life crisis. Additionally, stake of sacrality in the religious-ritual groups gets coupled with that universal importance that at the time of final judgment all shall attain salvation. Duty and importance of the “sacred seeds”, therefore, is to ensure the possibility of getting on or returning to the path of sacrality, with the preservation and maintenance of it. Following and interpreting personal identity changes can be achieved if we are well aware of those “permanent” sacred meanings with which man is in a reflexive relationship during his lifetime. In this context, sacrality is the “leaven” of the identity and the ethnic-social existence. Sacrality therefore is the cornerstone of cultural practice, with the research of which the whole spectrum of the world of individuals and communities may be unraveled.

9 Eternity of the moment: Modern myths

*“There is something money can’t buy.
For everything else there’s MasterCard.”*

The recurring slogan of the less than one-minute MasterCard commercials is a concise statement of the “basic experience” of modernity. The needs of a cash-based economy do not meet every man’s needs. There is something “more” that we need, but which is also inseparable from the “security” that can be bought with money. We need the “money”, the socio-economic environment of modernity, but this is not enough for the “completeness” of human life.

In Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s *Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age* the time usage of modernity is characterized by the “fast and momentary” that replaces the former “relatively slow and linear” (ERIKSEN 2001: 104). In a “fast and momentary” world, therefore, “moment” is of key importance: “It is not because of the phenomenal global success of Nestlé’s main coffee product that the term *instant* is a key concept for an attempt to understand the present age. The moment, or instant, is ephemeral, superficial and intense. When the moment (or even the *next* moment) dominates our being in time, we no longer have space for building blocks that can only be used for one or a few configurations with other blocks. Everything must be interchangeable with everything else *now*. The entry ticket must be cheap, the initial investment modest. Swift changes and unlimited flexibility are main assets. In the last instance, everything that is left is a single, overfilled, compressed, eternal moment. Supposing this point is reached some time in the future, and both past and future are fully erased, we would definitely have reached an absolute limit

(recall Virilio: ‘There are no delays anymore’). It is difficult to imagine this happening – there are many universal human experiences that only make sense as duration. However, in several fields, the tendency towards extreme compression of time is evident: some of them perhaps unexpected, such as consumption, work and the very formation of personal identity.” (ERIKSEN 2001: 119)

According to Eriksen, “the tyranny of the moment” is a social experience in modernity that, in addition to “consumption”, “work” and social interactions, defines “personal identity” as well as the “intimate sphere” of the individual. (ERIKSEN 2001: 131)

The quoted anthropologist describes the culture of modernity in the presence of three contemporaneous components. In this context, societies of modernity can only be described and analyzed with economic (capitalism), political (modern democracy) and ideological (individualism) aspects. After the First World War – in the words of Eriksen – “modernity has become dominant” and has enabled “the global flow of people, goods, ideas, and ideas” to become more and more intensive. (ERIKSEN 2010: 310)

If we accept Eriksen’s views above, the question arises as to what ethos these socio-economic-political and ideological processes are creating. If in modernity the accelerated time is dominated by both social practice and individual lifestyle, and if we really live under the “domination” of the moment, what ideas of mythological ideology legitimize this for us? Do we really live in the “tyranny of moment”? If so, why do we accept this reign? Or maybe we do not perceive the moment merely as “tyranny” or “symbol of tyrannical domination”?

After all, Eriksen himself at the end of his book, when he shares with his readers his “protection of slowness” solutions, suggests that one should, among other things, make himself aware of the following: “I live in the present moment whenever it suits me, and refuse to be interrupted by the next moment.” (ERIKSEN 2001: 157)

From the foregoing it may appear that in modernity “we cannot do anything else” but “seize” the moment, because moments of reality what surrounds us, that is social reality. But can you find “true life” in those moments? What does “true life” mean in modernity and does it have some “permanent-content”? Are there time-concepts such as “eternity” and “outside of time” in contrast to “the tyranny of the moment”? And if so, what are the bases of these concepts? Is there a mythological system of modernity that sets the foundation, holds it together, and explains the reality of social experiences and ideologies of modernity, and thus ensures its continuity? How can you describe everything that you can’t buy for money – as it is phrased in the MasterCard advertisements – and what makes sense of being in modernity and maintaining modernity? How can we recognize these values and find out how we can live with and by them?

“Mythology explains itself and everything in the world. Not because it was invented for explanation, but because by its very nature it is also its feature to give an explanation” – writes Károly Kerényi. (KERÉNYI 1984: 267)

From the perspective of anthropology of religion, myths are stories that “the ones who pass them on and those received them, consider them to be the narratives of reality.” (BOWIE 2006: 267–269, SEGAL 2004: 3–6)

For a group, the myths express the absolute truth. (HAVILAND 1990: 387–389) Therefore, myths are not just “mosaic pieces” of a culture, but they do permeate the culture, as they are present in the everyday life, in the seemingly tiny moments of life, so – for many anthropologists of religion at least – to understand a culture, “mythology is the magnet”. (BOGLÁR 1995: 89)

In connection with the above, a deeper understanding of the cultural components and ideology of modernity can be contributed to the analysis of mythical stories that are accepted by those recipients of myths who consider them to be real stories and stories of reality. Of course, it is not easy to talk about these stories in general, because the diversity of the recipients and the individual readings make the meaning of these stories multitone. Not to mention that neither the cultures of modernity form a homogeneous group.

At the same time, it is worth considering the intercultural narratives that have become massively consumed in the cultures of modernity and which have influenced the way of thinking and the ethos of local communities.

In addition, it is worth studying in more detail the stories that address the issues surface in modernity; those readings about the reality of modernity, ontological and anthropological issues that are also have reached, or are reaching the majority of people living in modernity.

Therefore, in my writing, I analyze primarily works of great success, in which at least one of the aspects mentioned above is present. Watching movies, the experience of the cinema is also the kind of event in the cultural practice of modernity, in which the ritual “condensed” time that allows the experience of myths can be found. (ELIADE 2006: 38)

A movie, viewed in the cinema with company or even alone, creates the opportunity for auto-communication, to identify with the reality of the film and its characters. Thus, the narrative of the film, during the ritual of watching the movie, becomes the story of total reality, and the summarized and conveyed meanings in it thus live on, may live in the consciousness, attitudes and cultural practices of the recipient.

The reality summarized and presented by the films can create and maintain motivations for the viewer that influence and thus determine his decisions, values and actions alike. (GEERTZ 2001: 81–85)

The analysis of the stories of the films can be justified by the consideration of the economic (and sometimes political) components of modernity. Whether a large-scale, high-budget film is a financial downfall or a reward for filmmakers does make a difference. If the film does not properly “deliver” “reality”, if it is unable to influence the viewers, then financial gain is lost. At the same time, if it “moves” the masses, if it is able to present “reality” or something “real”, if it can create the possibility of transformation and identification, it can make hundreds of thousands of movie viewers persistent consumers.

I still intend my analysis to be only a thought-experiment, which can promote the possibility of thinking together about modernity, our current cultural experiences.

The purpose of my writing is to glimpse into the narratives that speak to us in the language of modernity about what to do with our lives and how to look for the “true life”, a “happy permanence” in the “world of moments.”

Immortality, the state and place of eternal life and happiness can be found in most cultures. (ELIADE 2006: 90)

Eden, as the “original state,” where there is no temporality and where one can experience the eternity of “true life”, without dying, sickness, and experiencing everyday problems, is one of the decisive objects of myths. According to Eliade, “at the *beginning* of humanity’s religious history, as well as at the *end*, we find the same desire for Paradise”. (ELIADE 2006: 107)

Without addressing the question of whether mankind’s “history of religion” really came to an end, the question may arise: does desire for Eden live on in modernity? How do modern myths depict and describe to us Paradise and the experience of Eden? Does it manifest and, if so, the concept of eternity in the “culture of moments”?

In the movie *The Beach*, the protagonist feels he has found the Garden of Eden. With the help of a secret map, today’s tourist-traveler gets to a wonderful exotic island of Southeast Asia, where in the commune everyone can enjoy the independence from social norms and structures, and the pleasures of the Nature of Eden.

Using Victor Turner’s *communitas* theory to describe: a group, “break-away” from modernity and independent of social structures, created the *communitas*, an Edenic micro-society of mutual equality in a “threshold- or boundary-state” of *liminality*. (TURNER 1997)

It is worthwhile to examine the characteristics of this Edenic micro-society: one can freely establish sexual relationships, grow and use marijuana, frolick in the sea, enjoy the sun and each other’s company.

In principle, everyone in the group is equal, the leading role means a manager-type status. At the same time – as Turner also describes – in this kind of “Edenic commune” structuring inevitably starts to take place, not to mention the fractures between people, and the recognition that nature does not always offer its friendliest side to man.

In the film, all this is culminating in the tragedy of one of the young men, who, after a shark has ripped off his leg, gets excluded by the community, because his suffering becomes unbearable to them. There are more and more problems built into the story, suggesting that a human community (whatever the circumstances are) cannot live in the “Garden of Eden”. “Human existence” does not allow the constant experience of Eden. However, at the end of the film, the protagonist, when the commune – after a series of tragic events – got expelled from the Beach, recalls the events, and summarizes the film’s message:

“And as for me, I still believe in Paradise. But I learned that you should not look for it at all costs. No matter where you go, if for a *moment* you feel it was worth to go there, it was worth it. Once you experience that *moment*, you will remember it *forever*.”

According to the summary of the film, it is true that the Edenic state cannot be experienced by a community in the long run (not even in the “Edenic environment” of the world), but this is not what matters. Paradise exists, in the “moment” in which the experience of Eden has become possible. If this “moment” is realized, then this moment becomes eternal, no matter what happens after the “moment” passes. Eden, according to this, is experiencing the eternity of the moment. In the moment, the fullness of “true life” unfolds and becomes experienceable.

This narrative feeds on, and at the same time modifies, the Eden images and ideas of cultures and historical ages from which the modern myths derive. In modernity, of course, survival of these can also be observed, but emerges also a narrative that consistently talks differently about the possible experience of Eden.

Just think of the shamans or the icons that provide a clear pattern of access to Eden. Either the shaman’s journey or an icon is “window” to the “real-eternal” world through which Eden manifests itself to us. Religious works (including films retelling religious myths from *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* to the *Little Buddha*) also show us the image of the Edenic state.

At the same time, the motif of searching for Eden is still present in modernity. We cannot find Eden in our own “modern”, “civilized” world, so we can only find it “somewhere else”, “outside”. We can also find the cultural-historical and ethnological background of this reading when we think of the ideas of “Island-Gardens of Eden” that live from ancient myths. The film, *The Beach* is also linked to this mythological narrative, but puts the emphasis on something else: no matter where you go, no matter where you are looking for it, Eden can be “experienced” only for moments. However, if you can “experience” the “moment”, you are really experiencing the eternal Eden.

As it has been depicted by Renoir in his painting, *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*: the feet of dancing, chatting, living the “true life” couples are walking in the sky, dancing on the clouds.

The painter has depicted one of the most significant mythical meanings of modernity in his painting: Eden is within us.

To experience it, however, depends on man. Eden can be experienced only if one can recognize and realize the eternity of the moment.

In Woody Allen’s movie, *Manhattan*, the protagonist (after he left his young lover and realized what a mistake it was) lies on a couch and thinks about what makes worth living:

“Groucho Marx, for one... and then the second movement of the Jupiter Symphony. Louis Armstrong, the Potato Head Blues. Swedish films, of course. Sentimental Education from Flaubert. Then Marlon Brando. Frank Sinatra. Cézanne – those fantastic apples and pears. The crabs at Sun Wo’s.” (cf. ALLEN-BJÖRKMAN 2010: 164–165)

They are not just single “instant” moments, but momentums referring to the accumulated beauty of moments in life: movies, actors, books, music, paintings, “apples”, “pears”, and “crabs” – these eternal experiences revealed in the passing moment are the “meaning of life.”

According to this, Eden may not be permanently experienced in life, but it can be glimpsed at even if only temporarily, thus can be experienced in modernity, too.

Eden that can be experienced through everyday life is perhaps most vividly presented by the Wim Wenders’ film, *Wings of Desire*. At the beginning of the movie (after listening in to several people’s everyday thoughts and problems), we can hear the conversation of two angels sitting in a modernity’s rushing, built-on-moments-symbol of car, describing to each other their latest experiences gathered among people.

After their descriptions, one of them ponder over the differences between angelic and human existence. Let us recall part of the movie, and the related dialogue:

Looking at it from the angelic, “spiritual” world (which, from the human point of view, is the world of Edenic realm), it is precisely the temporary nature, fragility, and contradiction of human existence that becomes the holder of “true life” for the conversing angels.

For them, a lunch, a neckline, feeding a cat, or stretching the toes under the table worth incomparably more than the monotony “enthusiasm for the spirit”. In this light the evil, the lie or the savage are also inspiring, because those are all part of “true life”.

The viewer can listen into the conversation of angels:

“How good transcendence is, to prove from day to day to eternity what is purely spiritual in men. “Sometimes I get fed up with my transcendent existence. I don’t want to always hover above. I’d rather feel a weight within that would end this boundlessness and tie me to earth.”

I’d like to say for every step or windstorm: now, now, and now, and now, and no, as always, forever and ever. Sit in the main square at the card-table, say hello or just nod. “Each time we took part in something, it was pretending. Wrestling, allowing a hip to be put out, pretending catching a fish in pretense. We have pretended to be sitting at tables drinking and eating. Only pretense. Having roasted lambs and wine served. Out there, in the desert tents. Only pretending.”

“I don’t want to have a child or plant a tree, but it would be nice to come home after a long day to feed the cat like Philip Marlowe. To have fever. Fingers stained black by reading the newspaper. To be excited not only by spiritual things, but by a meal. By a neckline, by an ear. To lie, through one’s teeth. Being able to feel your bones moving along while walking. At least to guess instead of always knowing everything. To be able to say, “‘Ah’, ‘oh’, and ‘hey’, instead of: ‘Yes, Amen’”.

“Yes. To be able to enthuse for evil. To draw all the demons from the pedestrians that pass. And finally plunge into the world. To become a savage.”

“Or to feel how it is to take off your shoes under the table... and move your toes, barefoot, like that.”

“Stay alone. Let things happen. Keep being serious. We can only become savages in as much as we keep being serious.” Do nothing but watch, gather, justify, strengthen, protect, to be transcendent, excluded, and to remain a concept only.”

In the *City of Angels*, Hollywood’s adaptation of the *Wings of Desire*, a similar conversation is taking place between two angels, one of whom (the protagonist) lost his beloved soon after he, for his love, gave up his angelic existence in exchange for the life of a human:

“This is life. You are alive now, and one day you will die. How is it, anyway?”

“What?”

“The touch.”

“Wonderful.”

“If you knew this was going to happen, would you have done it?”

“A whiff from the scent of her hair. A single kiss of her lips. A brief touch of her hand is worth more than the entire eternity without it.”

The theme of love plays a central role in both, the *Wings of Desire* and the *City of Angels*. It is interesting that the female protagonists of the films (the trapeze-artist of the *Wings of Desire*, and the doctor of the *City of Angels*) occupy an “intermediate place” between “heaven and earth”. (KRAUSS 2005: 114)

Both female protagonists, the trapeze-artist in the *Wings of Desire* (who is able to visit the angelic world in a dream), as well as the doctor in the *City of Angels* (the one who struggles with death every day trying to save the lives of her patients) live in a “liminal state” that gives them the opportunity to meet with the male protagonist angels. These angels, in the same time are “liminal beings” as well, as compassion for human life, desire and love, which they cannot experience in their etheric, non-Edenic world, have arisen in them. The two worlds are able to meet and unite through feelings of love and kindness. The angels do not merely become human for their loved ones, but in them, and in the love they have experienced with them is summed up all that is worth living for. And “true life” means *human* life. In the sex scene of the *City of Angels*, the angel feels the all-consuming fire. However, the fire he experienced is not the fire of damnation, for despite the unexpected, sudden tragedy, the loss of his love, he was able to experience the moment of true Eden.

This is demonstrated by the protagonist in the scene at the end of the film, when he jumps into the crushing wave of the ocean representing devastating infinity and fertility at the same time, in front of the eyes of angels lining up on the ocean shore.

In the last scene of the *Wings of Desire*, we can see that the main characters, the man and the woman, can share the hovering between heaven and earth: as the angel holds the rope for her while she dances in the air.

A whiff from the “scent of her hair”, “a single kiss of her lips”, “a brief touch of her hand”, experiences moments of love – as the male protagonist phrased it in the *City of Angels* – is worth “more than the entire eternity without it.”

Considering all this, the question arises: can we find the eternity of human life in the stories of modern myths about love?

In Luc Besson’s film, *The Fifth Element*, the “evil” planet is invariably approaching the Earth. An “evil” is a celestial body that exists for destruction itself. The new weaponry is incapable of destroying it: the nuclear weapons that have been meant to work against it will only nourish its power, which lives and thrives on destruction. Saving the Earth depends on a small team. The only hope for mankind is the Fifth Element, who comes to Earth every five thousand years to protect the humans with four stones of the four elements: fire, water, Earth and air. This is a chance for humanity.

Is it worthwhile to save this world at all, where there has been so much suffering, needless hatred and wickedness accumulated and continue to accumulate? His shock and uncertainty remains until the last moment, even though “evil” has entered the Earth’s airspace and after a few seconds mankind will die... With a gasping whisper, she shares her dilemma with protagonist, a burned out, frustrated taxi driver, who since he met and got to know her, fell in love with her, and with that, his life has gained meaning again. As she tells him, it makes no sense to save this world, he agrees with her, but points out, in spite of that, there is one thing still worthy of maintaining human life with all the pain and cruelty: and that is love. To emphasize his declaration, even though with difficulty, while he embraces her, he confesses to the savior of mankind that he is fond of her, he loves her. And the “fifth element”, after experiencing the power of love, eventually unites with the four elements and the Earth and humanity is saved.

This is how the modern myth of love, by Luc Besson’s film, *The Fifth Element* is presented. According to the movie’s narrative, love is the “essence of true life”, a treasure that is worth living for in spite of all the miseries. In fact, it is what gives meaning and endurance to human existence and other aspects of life.

The myths of love have probably the widest mythological repertoire with the greatest number of narratives in modernity. Advertisements, the internet media, literature, and fiction permeates the world of TV series. Defining majority of films also tell the story of the myth of love, raising and answering the basic questions of modernity that affect the

lives of all of us: What is the world like? Who man is? What is the meaning of life? And how are we as men, women, and lovers?

Mythical meanings of love and sexuality are an integral part of the mythological systems of cultures. (cf. OLÁH 1986)

Hierogamy, sacred sexual union, and the sacrality of sexuality also play an integral role in the decisive roots of cultural history of modernity. Greek mythology, the Bible, artistic works and narratives from the Renaissance emphasize the sacred character of love unions, not to mention the erotic aspects of European folklore.

The Biblical teachings are no exception, since the Bible sees in the unification of the two bodies (male and female) the possibility transubstantiation to the likeness of God (1 Mos 27:2–24).

Jewish and Christian traditions saw and see the feasibility of fulfilment of it within the social framework of marriage, protected by norms and laws the sanctity of sexuality within it.

At the same time, European folklore and art have often interpreted marriage as a symbol of social compulsion, which is more likely to hinder the possibility of experiencing true love, just think of the tragic stories of European love ballads.

In both cases, however, the emphasis is on the sacral significance of love and sexuality and with it the emphasis of their vulnerability. According to the biblical reading, marriage may be in danger, while according to non-biblical reading, external norms can stand the way to the fulfilment of “true love”.

In both cases, threat comes from the society.

The narrative of “inexplicability” of love and desire is also related to this: “There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a young woman” – says the Book of Proverbs. (30:18-19)

Love is expressed in the joyful and tragic tales of the European folklore and love related pieces of art. (HOPPÁL–SZEPEŠ 1987)

Thus, what has been said, love is thus a sacred, endangered by society, unexplainable “treasure”, value and excitement of which is created and maintained by a combination of those mentioned aspects in human relations and culture.

Modern myth projects this in the movie, during the “condensed-mythical” time and experience of film-watching.

They project, make “true” love and sexuality experienceable, and thus have an impact on the cultural practice of everyday life. They act as “stimulants” that continue to live on in the fantasy of love-desire, in the motivations and the love-sex life of the recipients. (DUNCAN–KEESEY 2007: 9–10)

It is very difficult to sort out and formulate a more general view of the unbelievably many cinematic works, but the question is inevitable:

How do some films summarize our experiences, our ideas, our knowledge, our desire of love? How do we love? What do we experience in love? Is love really giving us the meaning of life, as the *Fifth Element* tells us? And if so, who, how and how long can one experience it?

The two main characters of the film, *Blue Lagoon*, as survivors of a shipwreck, grow up on a “paradise island” where “the guilt of adult society is unknown”. (DUNCAN-KEESEY 2007: 78)

The two young adolescents innocently and sincerely discover their own sexuality and love. The film in long scenes shows the nakedness of the two young people, as they happily and innocently swim in the ocean while they discover love and each other’s body.

The pure, innocent, sincere and beautiful young people on a tropical island, in the world of “Edenic state” can experience the “true meaning of life”. The beautiful, exotic island, the world of the Garden of Eden is far from everything that can be associated with society. True, this state of living is formidable as they must face nature by themselves, but it is also a “civilization-free” world where “true-paradisiacal” love can be “really” experienced.

At the same time, the film depicts the longig of departure from Eden, and retreat to society.

But the “enchantment” of society is just a memory for the two youngsters, as they were but children when left ashore in “Eden”, and in their paradise island home they only recall the ideal scenes from the memories: the pictures of a wedding, the harmonious signs of human-social coexistence.

So, they hold only the “good”, and “precious” patterns and images of society, from which, representing the human world, emerges an imaginary and desired “Eden”. However, the “real Eden”, looking from the viewer’s perspective, is what the youngsters are experiencing, for the viewer “knows” from his own experience that “Eden” is not the same as “civilization.” The end of the film also suggests that the desire to leave the “true Eden” behind has irreversible, tragic consequences: the young couple, as a young parent, will eventually lose, as they lose the “true Eden”.

With this, the film re-narrates and deepens the myth of “true-Edenic love”: at a young age, away from society (in spite the fact that it can be lost and only temporary all “Edenic” existence) “true love” can be experienced in life.

It is no coincidence that the story of *Blue Lagoon* takes place on a “paradise” island, as neither is the age of the protagonists.

“The Island of Eden”, far away from “civilization”, also provides a liminal place to experience “true love and real life”, as does the age of the protagonists.

The “innocence” and “purity” of the neither-child-nor-adult age of adolescents is a liminary phase in the life of a man, in which the I of the “child-paradise” is dominant, what has not yet been “infected” by the world of social structures and the pressure of need to adapt to it.

In light of this, it is not surprising that in latest Hollywood film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* in the costume ball scene, where the two lovers meet, the director has Romeo dressed as a knight and Juliet as an angel.

The two “sincere”, “innocent” living their love “purely” and with “true passion”, the “knight” and the “angel”, make it re-presentable the love-myth narrative – summarized by Shakespeare, one of the “mythical ancestors” and “myths-teller” – that determines and legitimizes the culture of modernity.

The essence of this narrative is already conspicuously illustrated by the poster of the film: in the middle of the picture we see the two lovers threatened by weapons on both sides.

The story is well known, “true love” is overcome by the cruelty of “civilization”, the “inhumane” social structures, and the inability to experience and maintain “true life”.

But the question arises: did “true love” really be defeated for Romeo and Juliet?

Didn’t that short time, those few *moments* Romeo and Juliet could have shared “worth it”, despite death?

Can’t the moment of “true love” defeat death?

Through the example of the lovers uniting in death, the message of Shakespeare and the film emphasizes that from the point of those living the “true life”, even if it inevitably leads to tragedy, the “meaning of life” is “true love”, which is stronger and more important than the typical of society’s world of “no true-human existence”.

Among the modern myths, it was probably James Cameron’s *Titanic* which most vividly presented and answered these questions. It is no coincidence that the *Titanic* received eleven Oscar awards (including the Best Film Award), and for many years was the most popular cinematic film in the world, as the director of the film from scene to scene, deliberately “condensed” the narratives of the modernity-love myth.

James Cameron embedded these narratives in a mythical frame, whose “truth” was legitimized by the “true” historical event of the *Titanic*’s sinking. The tragic story of the *Titanic* that “everyone” knows, is an event in the memory of modernity. What’s more, this is a story mystery of which makes the film particularly suitable for presenting mythical narratives.

These narratives are also reinforced by the story locations of the film. The protagonists (who, like the above-mentioned films, are “innocent” young adults) travel between the two continents on the ocean.

The ocean as a symbol of “infinite” water symbolizes sexuality (fertility, moisture), destruction (danger, death) and shorelessness (immenseness). It is no coincidence that the key scenes of the film are tied to the ocean. In one those scenes, Rose, the female protagonist, jumps into the ocean trying to kill herself. Her desperate action is prevented by her future love, Jack.

In the same way, perhaps the most well-known scene of the film, when Rose offers herself to the “unification” with the ocean on the stern of the ship, while Jack embraces her from behind.

Their love is also due to the endless freedom between the shores of the ocean, but it also is the cause of Jack to die.

As I mentioned, the ocean liner passes between two continents. The two continents, Europe and America are the world of the social structures of modernity, where social stratification determines the lives of people belonging to different social strata, including the limits of experiencing love and sexuality. At the same time, the Titanic is a liminal space in which these boundaries may disappear; the ship is on the ocean, even if only temporarily, but it breaks away from the world of social structures. Social structures have a negative impact on the lives of both. Jack is a poor boy whose artistic ambitions are limited by his social situation. Rose is the offspring of social elite family that have lost its wealth and therefore she should marry a rich monster. So, in the world of social structures, Rose was unhappy and wanted to commit suicide. At the same time, on the Titanic things may happen that to be impossible in the world of social structures: she can experience “true” love with a young man who belongs to a completely different social stratum and who comes from a completely different life situation.

The symbol of the ship in Greek and Christian mythology may mean traveling to the afterlife and the attainability of eternity. The Titanic can thus be the mythical venue of both separation from social reality, and “true-eternal life”, where the story of the “true” values of life can be told.

The fulfillment of love of the two young people presents this mythical “fulfillment” in detail, including many exciting mythical narratives and symbols.

The fulfillment of love of the two young people is described in decisive scenes of the film. The road to fulfillment begins in Rose’s suite. They are alone. She leads him into her luxury cabin where Jack immediately recognizes a painting. “It’s a Monet” – he says in amazement.

It is no accident that the film refers to the impressionists. Both Rose and Jack share the receptivity of “modern”, “unconventional”, “revolutionary” art at the time. The fundamental narrative of modern art mythology is the “liberation” from social conventions. This was accompanied by the revolutionary revival of contemporary nude images, “free” and “natural” depiction of female eroticism, differing from academic norms, let’s just think of *Olympia* of Manet, the other dominant impressionist painter.

In light of all this, it is not surprising that Rose asks Jack, the painter, to paint her completely naked in her suite. In the scene of creation of the painting, she plays the role of the “model” playfully, innocently, and purely. Rose, at the same time, is both playful and determined. In her determination youthful purity and the confident will of a woman’s desire manifests itself simultaneously. During a previous conversation, Jack told her that earlier he has painted “working girls”, Parisian prostitutes. Referring to that conversation, Rose in this scene asks him to paint her the way he painted “that French slut”. In this re-

quest, the liberation from social conventions, desire for the freedom of a “true woman”, and “pure” eroticism through the liberating power of art are realized. Her posture, her naked body with the diamond necklace she wears, holding her head (as she self-assertively looks at the painter) both refers to Goya’s *Maya*, Modigliani’s nude images, or the previously mentioned Monet’s *Olympia*. Liberated from conventions, “natural”, “realistic” erotic nudity, makes the body’s free, independent beauty mythical.

Narrative of the film is framed by the memory of the elderly Rose. The scene of creation of the painting is summarized by the reminiscing Rose by saying: “Jack was a true artist.” According to the modern art-mythology, formulated in the twentieth century, the artist is “the alpha and omega of value creation” (DOSSI 2008: 107). According to the new concept of art from the time of the Impressionists, this value means realization of “freedom”, “independence”, “taboo breaking”, all of which “which makes it possible for a person to escape for a moment the collective state-of-trance conformism.” (DOSSI 2008: 110–111)

This “escape” enables people to see and live the “true life”. Mythical creator, hero of all this is the artist, its catalyst and “civil religion” is the art. (DOSSI 2008: 111)

This is how (and because of it) the “eternal moment” of Rose and Jack’s love is introduced by the act embedded in the art of painting nakedness. This mythical moment is to protect the multiple liminal state that excludes, may exclude the worlds of “external” social realities. The young lovers travel on the ocean, between the continents of social structures. On the ocean, between the continents, they are sailing on the migrating “island” of the Titanic. Inside the ship, they hole up in her suite, hiding from the world of social realities.

At the same time, the world of social realities poses a threat to their “true-Edenic” world of love. The suite belongs to Rose’s fiance who sends his bodyguard after her. The bodyguard finds the two lovers who have to escape from the suspicious and aggressive man.

First, they take the elevator down to the boiler room. The lovers “descending” to the “lower world” of the ship run through the boiler room. The fire of the furnaces burning in the boiler refers both to hell, to total separation from the world, but also to the eternal fire of desire. Alluding to the experience of a “true”, “innocent” desire the ethereal float of Rose’s long white dress, as we observe her run in slow motion through the boiler room.

Their escape finally ends up in the bottom of the ship: lovers found themselves an even more hidden, even safer, more liminal space in the space of multiple liminality. Rose and Jack find shelter in one of the cars in the ship’s storeroom.

In the car a red rose, symbolizing the connection of love, sexuality, and Rose appears.

The scene, in this hidden and perfect for a sexual union type of setting, begins with a parody of social conventions.

Jack is sitting in the driver’s seat while Rose is sitting behind him in the seat reserved for a distinguished passenger.

“Where can I take you, Miss?” Jack asks jokingly.

Then the ultimate crossing the limits of social norms, stepping into the moment of “true life” takes place. Rose pulls him back and replies,

“Up to the stars!”

On the back seat, locked in the car with full protection of liminality, Rose and Jack finally consummate their love. Naked body of the two lovers coalesce. Culmination of the scene, when Rose's hand appears on the steamed-up window, as with the print of her palm she indicates the climax of her pleasure.

We see them bathed in sweat. Their passion is fulfilled on the ocean, on a ship traveling between continents, in the most hidden part of the vessel, inside on the back seat of an out of sight, closed car. The blissfully entwined naked bodies, the moisture, the sweat symbolizes the mythical safety of the mother's womb and the timelessness of creation. In the fulfillment of their love, the moment of happiness of "true life" can thus be realized.

However, the question arises: How long can it be maintained, can the happiness experienced in the moment made permanent?

The subsequent scenes of the film continue right after the collision with the iceberg when due to the scheme of Rose's Jack gets arrested with the accusation of stealing the diamond necklace.

The scenes after the fulfillment of love suggest that permanence of "true life" undermined, made impossible, and destroyed by both nature and society.

As we know, Jack is rescued by Rose, but eventually, after the sinking of the Titanic, Jack sacrifices himself for Rose. The ship, the ocean, the spaces of liminality are, therefore, mean death and the end of their love. At the same time, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, in the "message" of the Titanic, we see that death does not make the eternal moments of "true life and love" temporary. It is true that Jack and Rose could only "temporarily", only for moments have experienced the fulfillment of their love, but in those moments, they experienced "eternity." This experience is "worthwhile" as, according to the film, it survives all the dangers and tragedies, including death. At the end of the film, there is a flashback of Rose's last dream, a vision:

Rose, after transformation to eternity, finds herself on the Titanic where Jack is awaiting her. This is how the liminal space of the eternal moment becomes the eternal Garden of Eden for the lovers, where they in their lives could have experienced the eternity of "true life". This is how the film *Titanic* becomes one of the incomparable representations of modern myth of love and permanence.

The diamond necklace, mentioned multiple times in the film, is an important symbol. The story of the film is built on the search for this necklace:

A group of treasure salvages has found the drawing of Rose in nude. Rose tells them the story, while the group is trying to find the diamond with the help of description of the events. At the end of the movie, it turns out that Rose had the neckless for all that time, and throws it back into the ocean just before she dies.

As we know, diamonds are the symbols of permanence, steadfastness, and purity in known mythologies. (BIEDERMANN 1996: 135)

In the film, the diamond necklace first is linked to the world of social structures, since it is with what Rose's fiancée, her future husband is trying to "buy" her love. Later, Jack paints Rose wearing this necklace, then with the accusation of stealing it, he gets arrested, and finally Rose throws the necklace into the ocean. The diamond thus represents the tension of contradiction between social prestige and "true life". Rose, by not giving it to the treasure salvagers but dropping the diamond into the ocean, suggests that the socio-economic value of diamond is unimportant. The diamond is only valuable and "permanent" as the symbol of "the moment of eternal love".

Opposite the "permanency" of diamond is the "permanence" of the iceberg, the symbol of catastrophe and death. It may seem that besides the social structures, laws of nature also carry the forces of unattainability of true and permanent happiness. The rigid reality of nature, the cosmos, points to the temporary nature of life and the fragility and vulnerability of man.

This is why it is significant that the Titanic collides with the iceberg right after the consummation of love, as it is no coincidence that one of the most successful modern myths of "true life" and "eternal love" is the film related to the tragic story of Titanic.

"Reality of the iceberg", catastrophe of the Titanic reminds us that one ought to find the "true", "permanent" values of life while he can. Message of the film is to find and experience "eternity" in those moments that offer the attainability of "true life".

Thus, the film summarizes the mythical narrative of eternity "condensed in moments" as the object and purpose of the desire of happiness in modernity.

The "moment of eternity" or the "eternity of moment", according to the reading of the *Titanic*, can be attained and experienced most realistically in love and sexuality.

By observing the cultural practice of modernity, we can come to the same conclusion. I believe, Kate Fox's views on the characteristics of contemporary English sex life are also realistic in the broader context of modernity.

Fox believes that experiencing free, "true" sexuality "where we can be ourselves" in the "rule-free zone" can happen outside the world of social structures and norms. (FOX 2008: 346-347)

During the phases of dating, couples step by step strip off, block out the outside world until they finally make love to each other. "Good sex" is achieved when "culture" and "society" are locked "out of bed" and the lovers can "really" and "naturally" be themselves. Thus, the two "true self" can experience the reality of "true life" in the sexual act. Thus, the "bed" becomes the liminal, hidden Eden of intimacy. It is no coincidence, therefore, that in modernity, many people have experienced their most lasting, memorable sexual experiences, in liminal locations and situations, such as at conferences, camps or parties. The "real sexual experiences" in these cases are facilitated by the "suspension" of social structures and daily routines. For most couples, the honeymoon, the temporary withdrawal

from the world, means the “Edenic” experience of their sexual life. The “temporary Eden” thus becomes a “lifelong”, “eternal” experience and memory.

Going back to the movies that reach the masses, it does not mean the films analyzed (and hundreds alike) manipulate the people living in the culture of modernity. Movies only summarize the meaning of culture, ethos and desire of people, and thus ‘impact’ everyday practices.

Clifford Geertz in his study the *Religion as a cultural system*, discusses the dual aspects of cultural symbols. Accordingly, the symbols display and “of sense” summarize the meanings of culture.

At the same time, the “for sense” aspect of symbols has an impact on cultural practice. The people who understand the symbols are motivated by the “message” hidden in the symbols, to act and live and experience a given state of mind according to the message encoded.

So, man does not only create his symbols but also “live by” his symbols. (GEERTZ 2001: 79)

With this in mind, films can be interpreted as constructions carrying symbols and myths (SUTTON-WOGAN 2010: 16). In popular films, the symbolic-mythical narrative of “eternity of the moment” appears in “of sense” as one of the most important aspects and values of the culture of modernity. All of this has a “for sense” impact on the moviegoer masses of consumers motivated and “ready” to experience the “moments of eternity”.

Today, thousands of consumer industry products, modern beauty cultures, tourist advertisements, or even thousands of popular spiritual messages use these symbolic mythical narratives. Therefore, further detailed research and analysis of these can help us to deepen our understanding of our time and ourselves.

In the next chapter, we can see an example of this in the form of a case study. The purpose of the questions and interpretations it poses to stimulate and inspire the readers and listeners to ask questions and conduct similar researches.

10 Myths of Jim Morrison and the Jim Morrison myth

“Jim was not a showman. He was a shaman”, proclaimed the keyboardist Ray Manzarek, referring to Jim Morrison, lead-singer of one of the most controversial and influential rock band, The Doors. Then he added: “He was possessed by a rage to live. That was his trip, his gift.”

“A gifted shaman”, whose life and art was a “journey”, and not a star of “show business”, that is how Manzarek, co-founder of the band, who wrote a book and talked about the life and art of Morrison in many interviews, sees him. (MANZAREK 1998)

The quoted concepts alone carry the promise of exciting research opportunities. The question may arise: why does Manzarek use the words “shaman”, “journey”, and “gift” to characterize his bandmate? How and why was Jim Morrison’s art built on “shamanism”, and what kind of “shamanism” should we think of when trying to understand the meaning of this concept in Jim Morrison’s art? What other components in Morrison’s artistic concept relate to this “shamanism”? Has Jim Morrison had a specific “private mythology”, which was dominated by his “shaman” identity? Were Jim Morrison’s life and death “mythicized” by the “reminiscences”, subsequent evaluations, and by the “retelling” of his art? And why does Ray Manzarek’s quoted words show a distinctive separation of “shaman” and “showman”? Is this a reaction to the duality of Jim Morrison’s recognition? Does it cover the type of duality which refers to the discord between “show business” and “real art”, “fans” and “artists” in the evaluation of the acts of The Doors and Jim Morrison?

These questions can be analyzed from various aspects. “Shamanism” and the mythological aspects alone are questions of cultural anthropology worthy to explore; the analysis of which can provide possible answers to the deeper meaning of those in the culture of modernity. The myths built into Jim Morrison’s art, both his private mythology and the mythical narratives in connection, can be analyzed as the “total”, unquestionable existent reality for himself and for his fans. In the same way, we may consider The Doors concerts and the séances of the fans as the experiences of the narratives of the above-mentioned mythical reality. Accordingly, for interpretation of questions raised, my analysis is based on anthropology of religion’s approach. (cf. BOWIE 2006)

The subject of my writing does not, of course, make it possible to rely on the cultural anthropological research method of participant observation. However, the cultural anthropological point of view can still contribute (beyond the analysis of the relationship between modernity and religion) to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the “Jim Morrison myths”. If we accept that artworks can be understood as the “eye” of a given sociocultural context (cf. GEERTZ 1994: 248–255), which includes and expresses the common sense and experience of a culture and society (cf. MAQUET 2003: 79–90), then we can also get to know the characteristics of the social ethos of the “majority”, by introducing the “counter culture” and related mythical narratives created, used and represented by Jim Morrison.

In another respect, the audience has projected onto Jim Morrison, as a rock star, its own ethos, “created” and shaped him in his life and after his death; Jim Morrison “becoming a mythical being”, a “symbol”, allows further consideration and analysis of the perceivable desires, values, and consumer needs existing in modern societies.

It is also possible to view Jim Morrison’s work and persona from the perspective of anthropology of art.

Based on this, Jim Morrison’s creative work can be viewed from two aspects. On the one hand, we can consider Morrison as a “myth-teller” artist, who has created his own myth-based repertoire, thus becoming a catalyst primarily for the spread of “modern shamanism” in Western societies. (cf. BOWIE 2006)

On the other hand, during his career, Jim Morrison has explained in numerous writings and interviews that he sees himself as the creator of myths and society’s interpretative, analytical, reflexive, *liminoid*. (cf. TURNER 2003: 11–51)

These two aspects, passing of “ancient” myths, and the creator of independent, “new” artworks – as we will see – made Jim Morrison’s self-esteem and the acceptance of his art, complex and often contradictory.

Jim Morrison writes about this in his poem (*Road Days*), which may be considered a summary of his life, published in *Wilderness*: “A natural leader, a poet, a Shaman, with the soul of a clown.” (MORRISON 1988: 207)

Evaluation of his personality and art, both in terms of his contemporaries as well as that of the succeeding generations, is also complex. This is evidenced, among other things, in an article titled “*Legend or Loser?*”, appearing in the *New Musical Express* July 2011 issue

on the 40th anniversary of Jim Morrison's death, in which two critics describes his personality and introduces his work, addressing the "validity" of both aspects...

In my analysis, I do not want to take a stand on the above question, but instead make an attempt to get a glimpse into the possible meanings of socio-cultural context associated with myths of modernity partially shaping, partially confirming works of the rock start and poet.

Jim Morrison was born in 1943 in a southern Presbyterian family in Melbourne, Florida. His father was a senior officer of the United States Navy. Jim Morrison, according to his biographers, from childhood on had an exceptional intelligence; he was also a rebel who fled from his family's values. For his sixteenth birthday, he asked for the collection of Nietzsche's work. From the time of his adolescence, after reading *The Birth of Tragedy*, he was preparing to experience and realize "Dionysian art". (HAYNES 2001: 20) He made several short films while attending UCLA. Morrison completed his undergraduate degree at UCLA's film school within the Theater Arts department of the College of Fine Arts in 1965. After graduation, during that summer, with fellow UCLA student Ray Manzarek, Morrison founded The Doors, which made it possible for him to implement his artistic concepts.

As the lead-singer of The Doors, Jim Morrison wrote more than one hundred songs between 1965 and 1971, released seven platinum albums with The Doors, published four volumes of poetry, gave about two hundred concerts, and made three films.

After his death, in 1980, they wrote of him the first biography of rock stars of the 1960s. (HOPKINS-SUGERMAN 1980)

From the 1990s, at Duke University, then at Yale and Stanford Universities, finally even outside of the United States, universities started to offer courses on Morrison's art.

The essence of Jim Morrison's artistic concept was created by his own "artistic mythological pantheon". He has selected his inspiration from artists who have become mythical figures in the "art mythology" that was canonized at the beginning of the twentieth century. The heroes of this "art mythology" are artists who consciously opposed the canonized art forms, styles and academies, and the social norms and values surrounding them. The essence of "art mythology" is that art is the authentic, uncompromising and unrestrained exploration of "true life", to which reality and mission the artist remains committed even if his art is rejected, considered "counter culture," and pushes the artist onto the periphery of society. (cf. DOSSI 2008: 97–111)

Jim Morrison's "mythical pantheon" was also built on this concept. In his songs, poems and concerts he has consciously developed his aesthetic products revealing "profound human" realities. With this, he wanted to create a "counterculture" that was not only opposed to the majority social ethos, but also to the ideology and art of the contemporary "mainstream subculture", the ideology of the Hippie movement and way of life.

John Densmore, the drummer of The Doors, who also wrote a book about Jim Morrison (DENSMORE 1990), said the hippies believed that the essence of human nature was benevolent and the purpose of the hippie way of life and art was to uncover and help the liber-

ated ego to reach the Edenic state, while Jim Morrison explored the “true”, “ancient” nature of human nature, and the possibility that these “deep” consciousness-contents and journeys within would allow to abolish the ego.

“Jim’s message was endarkenment, not the enlightenment sought by the hippy generation”, wrote Densmore.

The source and point of reference of Jim Morrison’s ambition was the “mythical pantheon” he constructed for himself. The dominant figure of his pantheon was the god, Dionysus and the followers of His cult. The example of Dionysus and his followers was built by Morrison into his artistic ideas from the already mentioned *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Golden Bough* by Frazer. The Dionysian art, liberation of consciousness using consciousness-modifying substances, in addition to the use of ritual ecstasy to him meant the possibility of experiencing the “ancient, true” life.

In 1968 Morrison spoke about it this way in an interview published in the *Eye* magazine:

“I think there are a lot of images and feelings in us that can hardly move freely in our everyday life. However, when they do come out, they often manifest in perverse forms. It’s the dark side of things. The more civilized we become on the surface, stronger is the other side’s demands. Think of it (the Doors) as a séance in an environment that has become life-threatening: cold, limiting. People feel dead in this bad countryside. We collect them for such a séance to recall, reconcile and expel the spirit of the dead. With chanting, dancing, singing and music, we are trying to heal the disease, trying to bring harmony back into the world.

“Sometimes I think of the birth of rock and roll as the Greek drama that was born in the stack-yard in a critical harvesting season, and at first it was nothing but the worship of a dancing and singing group. Then one day an obsessed one jumped into the middle and began to imitate the god. At first there was only singing and rumbling. As the cities evolved and more and more people dealt with making money, but somehow, they had to keep in touch with nature, they used actors instead. I think this is the function of rock...” (DAVIS 2005: 272)

From the quote we can see how Jim Morrison identifies the actual social reality with the world of the “dead”. Opposite of this “today”, is the mythical-ritual “play”, “drama” of the “ancient” world, which makes it possible to experience the “true life”. So, he connects the Dionysian cult with art of the rock and roll he represents. An essential element of the interface is that both “ancient-Greek” and rock and roll rituals at the same time are “created” and “spontaneous” acts, in which connections with “nature” and the “true reality” can manifest without a boundary. The “ancient drama” can thus become “alive” in the present, making this relationship experienceable once again.

Jim Morrison, from European and American art, had built the work of those into his “art mythology” who crossed the norms of social boundaries and placed the experience of “ancient”, “free”, and “true” life at the center of their artistic concept.

During his studies and in preparation for his future artistic creations, Jim Morrison incorporated in his work the poetry of Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud. Morrison's music and poetry were directly inspired by among others, Rimbaud's *Departure* poem:

Everything seen...
The vision gleams in every air.
Everything had...
The far sound of cities, in the evening,
In sunlight, and always.
Everything known...
O Tumult! O Visions! These are the stops of life.
Departure in affection, and shining sounds.

Rimbaud's "far sounds of cities", "visions", which leads the artist to depart fit into Jim Morrison's artistic program, as the norm breaking lifestyle and worldview of the French poet served as a model for The Doors' lead-singer and frontman. (cf. DAVIS 2005: 68–69)

From English literature, William Blake, Oscar Wilde, Jack London, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and the literary movement of the Beat Generation (Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti) have influenced Jim Morrison's art.

In addition to literary influences, Antonin Artaud's "theatre of cruelty" concept was also incorporated into the "pantheon" of Morrison. In the modern theater, Artaud tried to create a sense of "ancient", "ritual", "chaotic" experience by liberating the senses, with the help of which the participants of the performances could come into contact with "true reality". (cf. GÖBÖLYÖS 1991: 18–31)

The decisive source of Jim Morrison's and The Doors's art, apart from those mentioned above, was Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*.

In his work, Huxley explains that "... if we want to stay healthy, we probably cannot be without directly perceiving the inner and outer world – the more irregular, the better it is – in which we were born into. This existing reality is so infinite that it is incomprehensible, and yet it allows us to understand directly and – in some respects – completely. This is *transcendence*, different from human perception, yet it can appear to us as *immanence*, an experienced participation. Enlightenment means being always aware of the full reality, its inherent variability – being aware and still being in an animal-like state in order to survive, thinking and feeling as a human being, and, whenever necessary, recourse to systematic justification. Our goal is to discover that we have always been where we need to be. Unfortunately, we make this task very difficult for ourselves. In the meantime, we have free grace in the form of partial and passing ideas. (HUXLEY 1997: 89–90)

To be able to live with this “grace”, that is, to experience “transcendence different from human perception”, in order to reach the “Artificial Paradise”, it is essential to break through the gates/doors of perception. (HUXLEY 1997: 69–70)

“Artificial Paradise” (with the help of drugs, art, and rituals) allows to satisfy the ever-universal desire of the “soul” so that one can go beyond himself, cross the gates and doors of perception.

The motto of Huxley’s writing was chosen from the work of William Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: “If the gates of perception were clean, one would see everything as it was: unlimited.”

Jim Morrison chose the name of his band based on these quotes; The Doors refers to the gates of perception and the artistic concept that aims to disclose these gates in order to experience the infinite.

To achieve it, in one of his most popular poems *An American Prayer*, Morrison wrote:

“Let’s reinvent the gods,
All the myths of the ages
Celebrate symbols from deep elder forests
[have you forgotten the lessons
Of the ancient war]
We need great golden copulations
The fathers are cackling in trees
Of the forest
Our mother is dead in the sea
Do you know we are being led to
Slaughters by placid admirals
and that fat slow generals are getting
Obscene on young blood
Do you know we are ruled by t.v.
The moon is a dry blood beast ...
We have assembled inside this ancient
and insane theatre
To propagate our lust for life
Flee the swarming wisdom
Of the streets...”

In the poem (as in the *Eye* interview cited above), Morrison paints the actual, current social reality as a “dead”, hopeless, and cruel world. In contrast is the opportunity to “escape”, the “proclamation of joy of life”, whose scene is the celebration of the “ancient and crazy theater of rituals” and the symbols coming from the “ancient”, “old” forests. “True life”, the “gods” can be discovered in the “myths” whose “reinvention” is the call of Morrison’s poem and summary of his artistic aspirations.

This is how the first song (*Break on through*) on the first album of The Doors also addressed the audience:

“You know the day destroys the night
Night divides the day
Tried to run tried to hide
Break on through to the other side

We chased our pleasures here
Dug our treasures there
Can you still recall time we cried
Break on through to the other side

Wait and seek to week
Day to day hour to hour
Door’s straight deep and wide
Break on through to the other side..”

The significance of the door and the gate is clearly shown in the lyrics as the possibility and condition of the “breakthrough to the other side”. Repetition of the phrase “*Break on through to the other side*” as a refrain between the verses, and at the end of the song, is a call and a music and lyric poetry that allows traveling to ecstasy, and transformation.

The mythical foundation of “passing through to the other side”, and the technique of transferring it to a ritual experience at the concerts, was attempted by Jim Morrison by adapting from and building on shamanism.

But the question is, what did The Doors frontman mean by “shamanism”?

How did he view the role of shamans and whether he identify with these roles? In the next chapter, I am looking for answers to these questions.

When we look around on the Internet, we find that most Jim Morrison fans treat it as evidence that Jim Morrison was a shaman. On one of the websites (<http://articles.waiting-forthe-sun.net/>) we find a description of Jim Morrison’s life that chronicles its stages as the steps of becoming a shaman.

According to the religion of anthropology’s definition, the word *shaman* refers to someone who is able to enter into a state of transcendence to communicate with “spirits”, with transcendent beings with the help of whom he can influence nature, promote fertility, prevent problems, heal diseases, and can maintain connection with the souls of the dead.

The word “*shaman*” originates from the Tungusic Evenki language of North Asia, so it is problematic to apply this concept in many places in the world (from the Brazilian rainforests, through Inner Asia, to the modern Western “urban” shamanism) to people with similar characteristics, but culturally different and associated rituals practices. “Shamanism” as an “-ism” makes it even more difficult to deal with this phenomenon in general. The best

solution is to see how specific cultures and individuals live the cultural-ritual practice we call “shamanism” based on the above definition and examine the person and community that identifies with “shaman” or the practice of “Shamanism”. (BOWIE 2006: 175)

For example, Jim Morrison’s concept of shamans differs from the definition of anthropology of religion mentioned earlier. In his collection of notes of artistic vision and worldview, *The Lords: Notes of Vision* Morrison writes about shamans as “professional hysterics” who are chosen by their community as “heroes” for their mental illness, who live for the people and are “punished” by people. (HAYNES 2001: 19–20)

This is how Morrison writes about the “wild child” he envisioned in the lyrics of The Doors’ *Wild Child*:

“Wild child full of grace
Savior of the human race.”

The *Wild Child*’s “ancient” shaman-reading is emphasized in the 1985 release of The Doors *Dance on Fire* video clip, in which a Native American boy’s shaman-dance accompanies the recording of the band’s playing.

In light of what has been described, it seems that Jim Morrison saw the shamans as “redeemers” with psychedelic abilities, living for the people, helping them, but also is a “victim” of his activity and adoptive host environment, of the “audience.”

This is what Morrison said about his “personal shamanism” in an interview:

“The shaman is actually a kind of mythical creature. As an actor-singer, I can adapt to this role. People’s lives are shaped by their own fantasy, they want to bring these dreams to life. But if that doesn’t work, they’re looking for fantasies elsewhere. Maybe that’s why my audience pays attention to me and feel what I feel.” (MORRISON 1999: 141)

In the above-mentioned *Lords*, he writes about the role of the shaman, which, as we learned, he experienced and passed on:

“In the seance, the shaman led. A sensuous panic, deliberately evoked through drugs, chants, dancing, hurls the shaman into trance. Changed voice, convulsive movement. He acts like a madman. These professional hysterics, chosen precisely for their psychotic leaning, were once esteemed. They mediated between man and spirit-world. Their mental travels formed the crux of the religious life of the tribe.”

Jim Morrison's shaman image is a mythical creature that brings the dreams and fantasies of human beings alive, who is able to share using his movements, and dance the journey that makes it possible to find a "new source of life" and the experience of it.

He identified with this role, but in another part of the interview quoted above, he also mentions that he is not sure that "people would consider him as their redeemer. The shaman is a healer – like a doctor. I don't think they would be more respectful of me because of it. I don't see myself as a redeemer." (MORRISON 1999: 140)

In his "personal shamanism", there is present the identification with the role of the shaman, as well as the distance from that of the "redeemer". Along with that, in the interview, he does not categorically distance himself from the role of the shaman, rather relates to the anthropology of religion – ethnographic characteristics of the shamans by identifying with the shaman's role as a "healer". Lack of respect and rejection of the "redeemer" role seems to be more of a reaction to the passivity of the adopters. It also implies that Jim Morrison did not fully identify with the shaman's image defined by him. All this allowed him to include other roles – "natural leader, poet, clown" – in his identity and art as quoted in his self-assessment at the beginning of the study.

However, shamanism has an overriding importance in his personal-life narrative, as he stated in his writing of the childhood "calling-story" in *Dawn's Highway*:

According to his remembrance, he traveled in a desert with his father, mother and grandparents. Their car passed the victims of a car accident. The injured and dead were Native Americans. The taste of fear was first experienced by the young child, along with the feeling that "the souls of one or two Indians" have moved into his own soul. (MORRISON 1991)

Jim Morrison, in his later recollections, returned to this story again as a decisive event of the course of his life and career. (cf. DAVIS 2001: 20–21)

Evaluation of the shaman's role thus coupled with the story of his childhood "calling", adopting, then incorporating the "souls of dead Indians" into his identity.

According to Stephen Davis, Morrison, starting in 1964, dug himself into the study of shamanism. Carlos Castaneda, with whom he had met while he studied anthropology at UCLA, had a significant impact on Morrison. Morrison himself also wanted to meet personally with Yaqui *brujos* (shamans), one of whom Castaneda wrote his doctoral dissertation, and a book about (its credibility later was debated). This journey ultimately failed, but elements of shamanism, such as wizards, travel or snakes, dragon lizards as the shaman-singer-poet's helper spirits repeatedly show up in Jim Morrison's art, songs and poetry.

Jim Morrison in his works personified himself as the "Lizard King". His concert choreographies also depicted that, as he accompanied his songs with several Hopi shaman movements; with the help of narcotics he tried to play his role on stage as in a trance like trip. *Celebration of the Lizard*, a stage production composed as a series of poems, they include

musical sections, spoken verse and passages of allegorical storytelling, was an example of it. In this performance, Jim Morrison presents the Lizard King and his companion journey through a desert wilderness. In the act, there are dreams, visions and images of shamanism (blood, death, travel, snakes, lizards) appearing continuously.

Celebration of the Lizard was presented as a ritual by the closing sentence of the first verse when to the audience Jim Morrison announced the act as the beginning of a “ceremony”. (DAVIS 2004: 66–67, 267–268)

In summary, Jim Morrison (even as he distanced himself from the shaman’s “redeemer” image), the “role of a shaman” determined his course of life and art, penetrated both his verses and his stage act, which he played consciously, as he identified with its “traveling-helping, healing” aspects, linking it to the “calling” and co-existence with the souls of the Native Americans that moved into consciousness during childhood. This has also contributed to the construction of a private mythology that, after his death, could have contributed to the creation of the “Jim Morrison Myth”.

The question may remain, how “authentic” is Jim Morrison’s “shaman’s mythology”, for in the traditional or ethnographic sense Jim Morrison cannot be called shaman.

I think, Jim Morrison’s “personal shamanism” fits into the passage that began in the 1960s when, among other things, Timothy Leary in the psychedelic healing, the “beat poets” in their art began to consider the culture of Native Americans, shamanism included, as a model. Culture of the Natives and the shamans were also the essence of the “ancient”, “natural”, “true” life for them, as it was for Jim Morrison. The “western” or “neo-shamanism” that started at this time also rejected the practice of “playing Indian”. The shaman’s activities and shamanic myths and rituals were perceived as universal, since the human mind, heart, soul and body are universal, only the cultures are different. Accordingly, shamanism can be experienced in various forms and is a spiritual practice that can be learned for any individual. (HARNER 1990, BOWIE 2006: 179–180)

In light of this, Jim Morrison’s art can be regarded as the “catalyst” of modern “neo-shamanism”, since as a popular lead-singer communicating his “personal shamanism”, he projected the example of a modern “self-made” shaman to his audience. It can be said even though show-business not always, and on occasion not even his own group supported him in unfolding his artistic ambitions. (cf. DAVIS 2005: 276–280)

Jim Morrison struggled with the obstacles placed in the way of expressing his artistic ideas. He left the Doors to write poetry and moved to Paris in 1971, where he died in the same year under unclear circumstances, leaving a fertile ground for the growth of the Jim Morrison’s myth. A vivid example of this myth, along with Jim Morrison’s “personal” myths is provided by his poem, *Indian Magicman* (MORRISON 1999: 96), in which his imminent Parisian death is combined with the spirits of his “shamanism” in a vision.

“In my torpid sleep last night
I was dancing, the moon glowed bright.
My throat was mumbling with a voice
Ghosts haunted me without noise

Embers burning 'neath my tongue
Miracles last three days long
I wanted my daunted face to hide
Cold sweat was sneaking down my spine

On my shoulders perched the wraiths
I looked them straight in the eyes
They were silent long, except
Murmuring two words: Paris, End.”

In another verse, *Vision* (MORRISON 1999: 189), this is how he summarizes the essence of Jim Morrison's art and personality:

“Like the angels
they dance over the room.
Through the air
us a company of mine
follow me like ghosts.
If I just stop for a moment
all of them would die.”

He expresses the artist's “private mythology”, re-creating in this verse the poet-lyricist who presents his “companions” as spiritual beings following him in the image of “angels,” “spirits,” and live within him. All this is more than an internal inspiration for the musician-poet, for if he paused creating even for a moment, he would kill his “spiritual companions”. We can see that Jim Morrison also has committed himself to the “art mythology” in the “pantheon” of which the artists who were “unable to act differently”, the ones who continued creating even if they became socially excluded from the accepted, institutionalized world of art, and thus pushed to the periphery of their society, taking on the way of life, stigmatized as “self-destructive” by the social ethos surrounding them. Jim Morrison and his “mythical” predecessors knowingly committed to the consequences in order to receive and provide an insight with their life and art into the essence of “true life”.

The spiritual legitimacy of “cannot act differently” has given it a narrative of “fatality” and made their aspirations “mythically” grounded.

Thus, this is how the myth of Jim Morrison fits into the “art mythology” of modernity.

“Art mythology” is a characteristic aspect of the myths of modernity. Its roots go back two centuries and still influence the discourse on art, and – as we could see in Jim Morrison’s case – the career of artists. In this mythical system,

“the artist’s vocation in the 19th century becomes a spiritual dedication and art is at the forefront of cultural value. Art-cult is born and together with it the sacred aura is created that surrounds it still. This is a sign of the transitional endpoint of the triumphant crusade that sets the modern art system as a new faith and the artist as an earthly redeemer. Art becomes a civil religion, and the artist becomes a genius whose creative activity involves the civil ideal of the autonomous subject. The public admires on the stage of the art, the beauty, the truth, the good, the desired utopia, the long-awaited abolishment of taboo, the unknown reality shown from an unknown perspective. Feeling elated by this consciousness-altering drug, which can be either an aphrodisiac, a narcotic or an antidote, it escapes for a moment from the state of collective trance of conformism. Artists are still expected to fulfill these promises with their works: seeing the world differently, shifting focus, breaking away from patterns, tasting of simplicity, and experience the taste of individuality.” (DOC 2008: 111)

Ultimately, if the artist is currently being excluded – or feels that way – from the system of values and norms of the given society, looking at it from a general and perspective, he serves the existing socio-cultural need, moreover, this need mythicizes the artist’s role and his person. This is what Jim Morrison and his career is about. At the same time, it allows the artist to consider his vocation a true calling, destiny-lived, sacred-mythical mission. This way, Jim Morrison did not create a distinct, peculiar myth, but rather tied himself and his art to the more general cultural characteristics of the above-mentioned “art mythology” by combining his “artistic mythology pantheon” with his own “private mythology” and artistic concept.

However, this was basically determined and made unique by his “personal shamanism”, which gave him a special place in the modern “art mythology” and the world of show-business. The uniqueness of his art, “seeing the world with different eyes” – quoting Dossi – among other things, was that he tried to make the “ancient”, “true” myths and rituals he envisioned experienceable in music, concerts and poems. He attempted to bring myths of shamanism into a comprehensive synthesis of the myths of modernity (both the surviving and later myths) starting from Greek mythology to the myth of Freud. A striking example of which is The Doors’ *The End*, one of their most well-known songs in which shamanic symbols, visions of shaman voyage are combined and displayed with Oedipus complex.

The End played a central role in almost all of The Doors concerts, with Morrison’s “Father, I want to kill you, Mother, I want to fuck you...” as he tried to make it experienceable with dramatic breaks, long delays, and often accompanied by a shaman-dance with accelerated speed of music on stage.

Jim Morrison tried to synthesize the myths that are alive and define modernity according to his artistic aspects. And the realization of this synthesis and “mythical-artistic” mission created the “myth of Jim Morrison”, which he shaped, and which began to form in his life. “Myth of Jim Morrison” was boosted by the unclear circumstances of his death, and since has been amplified (and kept alive) by the books, recollections, and films published about him. (cf. DAVIS 2004: 501–512)

Out of these, one of the most important films is Oliver Stone’s *The Doors*, released in 1991, which features Jim Morrison’s “private mythology”, accepted as reality and introducing Jim Morrison’s myths.

Accordingly, we can see in the film the call of the child Jim, the souls of the Indians penetrating his mind, those who several times appear in the film as Morrison’s companions. The film also includes Ray Manzarek’s recollections of a visionary scene when the band’s keyboardist saw Jim Morrison “dancing with Indian ghosts” on stage during a concert. Oliver Stone also refers to the identification of Jim Morrison with Dionysus, presents the ritual-ecstatic-transformational features of The Doors concerts, and the conflicts of the independent-minded, conscious artist with his band, the show-business, and the society.

The film continued to tell and make available “The Myth of Jim Morrison” to those who got interested through the film in the art of The Doors and Jim Morrison.

In addition, experiencing the Jim Morrison “myth” is made possible by the performances of The Doors tribute bands.

At last, we can ask the question, was Jim Morrison a shaman or showman?

If we turn to the words of poem, *Road Days* quoted at the beginning of the study, we can see that Morrison saw himself as a “natural leader, poet, shaman, and clown.”

According to self-definition, including self-irony, Jim Morrison was, among other things, both a shaman and a showman. At the same time, this role also carries one of the unresolved contradictions of his life. During his concerts, he repeatedly reproached his audience, got into conflicts again and again with the “games” of show business, including those who use rock music for political purposes, the world of managers, businessmen and even his own band-members. His art divided and has been dividing the audience and critics even to this day. (cf. GÖBÖLYÖS 1991: 123–129, 227–248)

However, this has also contributed to the globalization and shaped by the media of the “Jim Morrison’s Myth”, and thus his “shamanism”, his artistic concept could survive and live to this day.

This is how Jim Morrison’s “myth” is summarized on the sixty-sixth anniversary of day of his birth by a Hungarian online essay by József Nemestakács. (www.rockvilag.hu)

“What would he be like at sixty-six?” Look for the patriarchal images of Francis Ford Coppola today, for example – they used to be classmates at the UCLA Film School in California. But no, we want the pop-icon, the self-destructive, eternal rebel, whom forever we can only see as a young rock star, after joining the 27’s afterlife club thirty-eight years ago.

27's afterlife club, with the death of Amy Winehouse, revived the myths of mythical blues and rock stars died at the age of 27 (Robert Johnson, Brian Jones, Janis Joplin, Jimmy Hendrix, Kurt Cobain). As the "star of the 27's afterlife club, everlasting rebellious, forever young pop icon", Jim Morrison also depicts the character of a "mythical hero" in the world of modern myths, whose "art mythology" allows consumers to gain insight into the "other side", to whom his life is not an example to follow in the everyday life, as this "mythical role" leads to "burn-out" and early death.

Jim Morrison, as "shaman" and "showman" only with these two roles together, satisfied and satisfies this consumer demand, thus contributing to the incorporation of his "myths" into the mythological system of modernity.

11 How to conduct culture research?

The methodological paths of cultural anthropology are discovered by each anthropologist independently. Personality of the researcher, characteristics of the field, ways learned from the predecessors together provide those “techniques” with which he tries to break a path in the unknown, unfamiliar, “different” world of a different culture.

In one thing, however, all anthropological work is the same: it is the observation and interpretation of cultural semiosis that is the transcription of field notes and description of seen and heard signs and its object and meaning. Included here are the first, seemingly “incomprehensible” conversations in which the decoding and wishing to understand the interactive signals and signs used by members of the culture is essential for the researcher in order to understand the “message” of these conversations in their cultural sense as well.

Similarly, the studies to be prepared and the cautious generalizations drawn from them do not rely on anything other than the interpretation of these “conversations”.

The task of the anthropologist is to reconcile all the details that can be examined, to create a sociological synthesis of all the essential traits... First of all, one must realize that certain activities that are unconnected at first glance, activities that do not seem to be related do have meaning. (MALINOWSKI 1972: 50)

The conversation presented below was recorded in one of the synagogues in Budapest. Summarizing and rethinking the conversation, we may come closer to the anthropologist profession’s methods of approach, and we can see what an interpretative description and presentation of such few minutes can tell us about the culture when searching for “underlying” meanings of similar signs.

The date of the conversation is the morning before the arrival of Sabbath.

One of the defining figures of the ritual life of the synagogue, Uncle Sanyi, a distinguished elderly man, goes to the shamus (caretaker of the synagogue) and asks about the challas. The answer is not very encouraging,

“We don’t have any.”

Uncle Sanyi, however, is not losing his usual cheerfulness and with a wave of his hand, he says,

“No problem, then I’ll do the Kiddush with buns.”

Then, a young man in his twenties who, like most of his contemporaries, learned the basics of the ritual Jewish way of life from the elder prayer leader joins the conversation.

“But Uncle Sanyi, there was no challah taken from the buns, so it’s not going to be too kosher”, he says with a smile in his eyes and his voice, as he teases his old master.

“You don’t have to be so nitpicky; you don’t have to force every detail”, Uncle Sanyi laughs, recognizing his playful mocking.

“Well, yeah, sometimes, if there’s no challah we all do that”, says the young man, and all three are laughing about the conversation...

It may be worth mentioning what a jolly “observer” present may be able to draw from such a conversation before we can begin exploring this cheerful “sign exchange”.

First of all, it can be seen that this conversation was a reciprocal “winking” (GEERTZ 1994: 172–177), a conversation of specific messages that is, we cannot find the “essence”, the cultural meaning of this dialogue in the recorded sentences of the conversation itself, but it is disguised in the words carrying specific meanings understood by the participants. So, the point is that all these “meant to say”, were understood by all participants in the conversation, and they responded “firsthand”.

Secondly, it is immediately clear from the conversation that all three were reflecting on the rituals defined by the Jewish tradition, regarding the obligation of taking challah (separating a portion of the dough before braiding) on the arrival of Sabbath. So there is a culturally defined normative system that has constraints on the members of the community, and there are members of the community who “apply” the system of norms differently, but their lifestyle is apparently determined by these “applications”, since, in one way or another, this is supposedly reflected in their other synagogue conversations as well.

Thinking on these, a researcher can form a work hypothesis which may provide a possible interpretation solution by the end of the analysis of the discussion. Of course, not all work hypotheses correspond to the conclusion(s) found at the end of the interpretative descriptions (if there can be an end at all to the layers of interpretations turning up again and again). However, the work hypotheses inevitably appear in the participant observer, as this is the only way to break through the forest of the “other” culture. The formulation of work hypotheses can only produce “results” if every part of the research is confronted with our pre-set or considered ideas that is if we are able to change them by understanding the phenomena seen and heard, or even discard them by allowing the culture being researched to modify our study.

For me “the message” of the quoted conversation (my work hypothesis) was the following:

“The essence” of the living Jewish culture research is that the content that determines the culture communication with the meaningful examples of the codified tradition – that of the Jewish communities of different ages and regions – can be grasped.

In this case, by analyzing the conversation, we can find the cognitive characteristics of one of the communities of the millennial Hungarian Jewry. Uncle Sanyi knows he should take challah from the dough to make the Kiddush ritually clean, that is kosher, but for him the Kiddush itself is more important since the “essence” is not the ritually defined purity, but the “experience” of the ritual itself. His two companions not only understand, but also agree with him by saying, “if there’s no challah we all do that.”

However, the interpretive or thick description (GEERTZ 1994: 170–200) does not begin here.

First, I have to explain all the “incomprehensible” words I haven’t (intentionally) done this far, so the reader can understand the conversation itself instead of facing only the anthropologist’s methodological experiences.

Our work begins with understanding the phenomena observable on the field, however, quality of it depends on how we can make those occurrences or facts we understand to understand by others, present those to all in a comprehensible way.

The explanatory description of the phenomena of cultural semiosis, including our conversation, can be divided into three parts.

Part 1. An ethnographic description of the conversation

Part 2. “Decoding” the meaning of what has been said, the thick description

Part 3. Further interpretation of the already construed meanings by examining and analyzing the background of the given culture, placing it in the context of the socio-cultural system.

Thus, considering what has been said, the interpretation of such (and similar) conversation(s) also presents an example of the understanding the methods of cultural anthropology.

The ethnographic description

Recording the conversation itself.

To this, participatory observation, fieldwork is essential, and the anthropologist must be “inside” the microclimate of the culture under investigation.

Explanation of terms used in conversations, making them understandable, “translating”. (LEACH 1996: 46)

This leads to “thick description” (Part 2): the cultural semiosis, signs and signals between people in contact.

Part 3: embedding in socio-cultural contexts, from the perspective of our discussion it can present, based on a present day Hungarian Jewish community and its socio-cultural context: What is the meaning and significance of the conclusions drawn from this conversation. What does the analyzed phenomenon “tell us” about today’s Hungarian Jewish culture, what kind of questions, more general relationships can the decoding of such conversations lead us to.)

Finally, we can ask what an anthropological micro-analysis can say about the Jewish culture itself, and through this (and if so how) can the anthropologist comment on such general questions that in the narrower sense is not the task of her or his profession.

Let us now look at the analysis of the conversation based on the given guidelines.

- a) The first step of the ethnographic description, the recording of the conversation has already taken place; it may be worthwhile, after so many bypasses, to return and re-read that.
- b) Before the explanation of “incomprehensible” terms would take place, it is worthwhile to say a few words about the Sabbath, the “gist” of the conversation.

Sabbath, according to the time structure of Jewish culture, last from Friday evening to Saturday evening. This day was blessed and sanctified by God when he finished the work of the six-day creation and rested (2 Mos 20:11). The Jews are obliged to follow God (5 Mos 5:15) – according to the culture defining Torah laws (the five books of Moses) – and refrain from all work that would refer to human control over nature and its active transformation (UNTERMANN 1999: 200).

Sabbath – even though it is a weekly event – is considered to be the greatest celebration of Jewishness. (DOMÁN 1991: 153)

The Friday evening ritual (Kabbalat Shabbat) ushers in the celebration, which begins with the tradition of lighting the candle at home, it continues with the synagogue worship, and finally ends with a home ritual. (DONIN 1995: 75)

From the perspective of the conversation, for the time being, this is enough for us to know. Now let us see the meaning of the Yiddish and Hebrew words spoken.

Challah is a special bread, usually braided, which in many communities of the universal Jewish culture, included among the Hungarian Jews, is an essential part of the Saturday and holiday meals and rituals. On Friday night, during the second ritual, those are blessed. This ritual is called by the Hebrew word, used in the conversation as well, Kiddush.

The meaning of Kiddush is sanctification. It also denotes a ritual held on the arrival of the Sabbath and other holidays.

The Friday night Kiddush – and the challah in it – by the tradition of Jewish culture, it has fundamental content for members of the ritual community.

Looking at some of the typical moments of the given ritual, it is worth looking into these practices and their “messages.”

The Friday night Kiddush means recital of scriptural passages by the head of the family (1 Mos 2:1-2), and blessing of the wine and the sanctity of Sabbath. However, members of the community use this term for the entire sequence of the events following Friday night worship. (LAU 1994: 177)

The Kiddush must be sanctified with wine or kosher grape juice, but if it is not available, blessings can be given to two challahs. On the table, set for Sabbath, there are always two loaves of bread (in Hungary it is almost always braided challahs). This “double loaf” commemorates the manna that fell from the heavens when the Israelites wandered in the desert after the Exodus. To be sure that they would not break the ban on work on Saturday, God sent double amount of manna to every one of them. (2 Mos 16:22)

This way, the double meaning – the “message” of this ritual – deepens in the partakers of Kiddush. (The “message” is the work of creation and the periodic experience and deepening of the Egyptian Exodus.) (cf. DONIN 1998: 68-72)

The blessings of the Sabbath are done with the blessings that have been said, followed by the blessing of the challahs. Then a slice cut from the bread is dipped into salt by the leader of the ritual, referring to both the Jews and God’s “eternal salt agreement” (3 Mos 2:13) and the mourning of the destruction of the Jerusalem sanctuary. (Salt was offered on all the sacred sacrifices of the ancient sanctuary, and this continued after the destruction of the Temple; since then home became the sanctuary and the table became the altar. (cf. UNTERMANN 1999: 244)

In terms of experiencing their culture, this ritual is therefore of fundamental importance for the participants of our conversation. Absorption in the details of the Torah read during the ritual, but even the “props” (challah as the commemoration of manna from the heavens) used in the ritual, make the Creation, the Exodus from Egypt, and the mythical time of the Torah relivable once again, and through this to get absorbed in the cognitive content and the experience of their own culture.

Therefore, the tradition of Judaism is concerned to make sure that this ritual and all its components are according to the requirements, in short, that it is kosher.

And here we arrive to the next phrase of the conversation, the Jewish expression, (taking) “challah”. By mentioning it, the young man tells Uncle Sanyi that the Kiddush will not be “too kosher”, because one of its components, the challah (substituted with a bun) does not meet the necessary requirements, for “there was no challah taken” from it.

The Hebrew word “challah” (“dough”, “dough sacrifice”) means that a piece of the dough needs to be removed and burned by the baker before baking the bread. This act can also be traced back to the Torah commandment: “Throughout your generations you shall give a contribution to the Lord from your first batch of dough” (4 Moses 15:20).

In the time of the Sanctuary, kohen, the priestly servant was given the challah, and since the beginning of the diaspora, he has to burn it, due to the complicated purity laws related to the kohens. This command was only valid for Palestine at the time of the Sanc-

tuary, however, the statute was re-enacted when the Sanctuary was rebuilt in Messianic times; so that the ritual practice should not be forgotten, the rabbis have made it obligatory for future generations, including those who live today.

Although the commandment of taking challah is not only related to the bread, according to the system of ritual norms “the celebratory bread will not be kosher without taking challah” (RÉKAI 1997: 110). Due to possible misunderstandings, it should also be mentioned that challah means the celebratory bread, and it also means taking a piece of the dough before baking the bread.

Perhaps this will be enough for a little taste for ethnographic description. This description could, of course, be much more detailed, as several millennia of Jewish culture has adapted and absorbed so many cultural elements in its history that we should transcend the ocean of philological and ethnographic data in search of the meaning of the terms mentioned in the conversations. For our topic, it was important to outline the above in order to be aware that the anthropologist can only proceed to the next level of the “thick description” path, if he is at least this much prepared, this much familiar with the background of the community he is looking at, so he can understand this type of conversations.

2.) In the analysis, the second step, called the second part, means to clarify who in the interaction between the actors “winked” at whom and to what, and then try to decipher, interpret the cause and cultural context of it. Such an interpretation may become acceptable if, at the end of the conversation, not only to the participants, but ultimately to us, “outsiders” also has something to say.

In the first stage of interpreting, it is worthwhile pointing out that everyone in the conversation understands the other.

Uncle Sanyi does not get the challah usually available in the synagogue, (it will be important later), but he says, it is not a problem, “it’s not what’s important.”

The young man (the third speaker) also knows that “it is not what is important”, so he teases the elderly man, who also understands that the young man’s polemic argument is not to be taken seriously. Finally, this young man also confirms his elderly friend, he really understood Uncle Sanyi, so their conversation reaches a consensus according to their common attitude. Mutually confirm each other’s opinion with the last sentence and the laughter, “I used to do that too.”

The shamus laughs along with them, even though, because of his ritual role, he could be critical of the two speakers, those who smile at the “seriousness” of ritual purity (“don’t have to force every details”), in fact confirms the meaning of their communication.

The shamus (because of his ritual role) is a given “knowledgeable” member of the conversation; since if everyone were to take care of the rituals being “kosher”, he wouldn’t have to sell the kosher challah in the synagogue, for everyone individually would get it – as the practice was even some years ago – for the Kiddush held at home.

The conversation – based on what has been said – ends in the common attitude and practice of tradition and of those cultural cognitive harmony (along with a common laughter).

The next step in the interpretation may be if the anthropologist tries to further break down the “surrounding” phenomena, then to illuminate the “common attitude and practice” mentioned above, that is, the cultural context of the conversation.

What is noticeable at first is that they are selling challah in the synagogue, for this practice differs from the earlier one (some years ago, kosher ingredients were purchased by the individuals). This seemingly insignificant phenomenon points in two directions. On the one hand, it points to the phenomenon of today’s Hungarian Jewish culture that the consumption of kosher bread and other foods is limited to rituals, in the everyday life it is not considered too important. (According to tradition, all food and drink one is to eat ought to be kosher).

On the other hand, we can see – and this may point even further – that the synagogue takes over from the members of the community elements of ritual life that are “beyond” and outside of the community forms. What used to be traditionally home ritual, the synagogue now creates part of its conditions. This phenomenon is thus becoming part of a more general process (drawn up and supported by other conversations) part of the cultural changes of today’s Hungarian Jewish community. Within that to that particular phenomenon that traditionally home rituals move over to the synagogue.

This is not being mentioned in our conversation, but the synagogue here, too steps up as the institution that organizes ritual life.

Earlier, on Friday mornings, I went along Uncle Sanyi to the kosher bakery in Kazinczy Street, where he himself “took care” of the kosher affairs of Kiddush. However, at the time of the conversation mentioned, he had already quit going on those much tiring shopping trips, and now if the synagogue runs out of challahs, he would “solve” the home ritual some other way.

Strengthening the importance of the synagogue in the Jewish ritual life (which extends to both public and individual ritual ways of living) has many implications for these mentioned cultural changes. Connected to our conversation; by challah being available in the synagogue, those who are “inexperienced” in the maze of Jewish spaces in the city can also contribute to it (kosher stores are usually “well-hidden”, small spaces hard to find for “inexperienced”) or those who do not live at home in accordance with the standards of ritual life, they also buy the challah and keep Kiddush at home. It is related to the fact that there are also Friday night community Kiddush in the synagogue, where those more familiar with the rituals “pre-play”, demonstrate the ritual practice to the member of the community – which is growing year by year – who are now trying to learn, re-learn their “own” culture.

The effect of this is also twofold, since more and more people are able to hold the home rituals, those who up until now have kept it at home are now holding it in the synagogue as well or hold it only there. The point is that with this “relocation” of Friday evening rituals, a community Kiddush – somewhat different than the tradition – takes place in some of the synagogues of Budapest, as is at the place of the conversation. Besides, these phe-

nomena carry cognitive and value system contents, the analysis of which is also the task of the interpretative description.

One of the most important moments of the conversation is, accordingly, Uncle Sanyi's response to the young man's teasing that his Kiddush would not be ritually appropriate.

("No problem, then I'll do the Kiddush with buns." and "You don't have to force every detail.")

The sentences spoken also refer to another phenomenon of cultural change: experience of the rituals is more important than the system of traditional ritual standards.

Thus, holding the ritual, experiencing it, experience of the "spiritual moment" and its psychological content becomes more important than the normative "purity" of the conditions of the ritual.

Tradition is revalued. This is one of the most important features of the present day Hungarian Jewish culture, according to my researches.

Referring to what has been discussed, from here on there are two ways to proceed. One way is described in my work hypotheses at the beginning of the study, which seems to be justified by the discussion above. I must mention, however, I wouldn't have stated all this so "firmly" if there hadn't been a two-year research work and active coexistence with the given culture behind me, and interpretation of several other interviews and phenomena supportive of my hypothesis. (PAPP 2000)

The other way indicates that there cannot be a sharp distinction between the methodological "parts", since what has been previously mentioned is at least as much of a matter of interpretation of the sociocultural context, as it is the interpretation of the phenomenon arbitrarily taken out of the life of the culture itself. Neither the life of the cultures being studied nor the work of the researcher "following" those may be static. The outlined "parts" are only guidelines, can help us like imaginary "crutches".

Consideration of the socio-cultural context is important for our studies, because there are dozens among the anthropological works that can see the phenomena we've seen and heard as something "present constancy", it is considered valid only then and only for the moment, and they forget that the cultures they study, they are examining as historically changing and socially defined communities. (cf. SÁRKÁNY 2000: 89-101)

Thus, it is worth examining Jewish culture as a historically changing culture, which does not always indicate a "permanent" form. Therefore, at the examination of the socio-cultural context of the interpreted community, it is important to study the inherited content of the past and the social reality in which it lives. In addition to judaistic and ethnographic background research, relevant social history and sociological works are therefore equally important, since these variables only together can explain the underlying causes and meanings of the visible phenomena.

The present analysis should not aim to present them. It can be noted briefly, however, that the social history and sociocultural context of the above interpretation is drawn by

the specific attitude of the Hungarian Jewry to the tradition, which in the 19th century was brought on by the assimilation into middle-class, bringing along the “neolog” movement of the Hungarian Jewry. Since then, there have been many changes – in the sense of orthodoxy taking on the full preservation of tradition – “facilitation”, which involves a number of changes in the liturgy of ritual life, in lifestyle, worldview, and in the change of attachment to Jewishness, to “Jewish identity”. What is commonly called as “dual identity”, “Hungarian Jewish identity”.

This cultural-cognitive content has changed significantly due to the tragic events of World War II, the effects of communist power and its atheistic ideology, and to the mass exodus which ended in 1956. Because of that, the relationship with the tradition has also declined significantly. But after the change of regime, some revival phenomena are experienced again, which incorporate both the earlier neologism, the orthodoxy of the present day, and the values of the Hungarian society of the past decades.

The visible, audible, experienceable revivals carry changed ritual-cultural phenomena. Understanding these, knowledge of the above-mentioned variables is essential. However, it is equally important to know the characteristics of these changes, which, however, can only be presented by interpretative descriptions of empirical and anthropological research.

And with this we come to the last aspect of our interpretation scheme:

What an anthropological analysis can tell about and add to Judaism (and, in our present case, to Hungarian society) and its research potential.

In the anthropologist’s results the complex specifics and their details are important. With the help of this long, mainly (though not exclusively) quality, highly participatory and almost obsessively detailed, study material obtained during field research in a limited area it is possible to lend a sense of actuality to those gigantic concepts with which today’s social science struggles: legitimation, modernization, integration... Because of that, it does not only become possible to think about them in a realistic and concrete way, but – what is even more important – that we concern with them creatively and imaginatively. The uniqueness and indispensability of anthropology is, therefore, due to the fact that it links the individual micro worlds that it explores to historical, philological or macro-scientific results, which by then can complement or show the insights of the above-mentioned disciplines in their flesh-and-blood reality and life. As much as the disciplines focusing on more general relationships might need an anthropologist the knowledge of these disciplines is also essential for an anthropologist, for anthropologists can try to link their research results to “intricate unique features” just to be able to draw meaningful conclusions from “seemingly insignificant but very densely woven facts”. (GEERTZ 1994: 96)

The work of an anthropologist, presenting worlds of individual lives, rounds the interdisciplinary circle of diverse sciences by promoting the thinking along and understanding of the “internal categories” of the community he explores.

Of course, it matters how we think about the “subject” of our research. For example, according to Miklós Rékai, a significant contemporary researcher of Jewish ethnography, “it is difficult... to determine its subject.”

Ethnographic terms are difficult to interpret when investigating Jewry:

“In our case, writes Miklós Rékai, the contrast between oral tradition and literacy would be completely ineffective, so would be treating the ownership of the land or other means of production as a *differentia specifica* of this group. So, the simplest, though inaccurate solution is: I consider my study to be a review of current archaic as often unutterably is the case with Hungarian researchers of this topic.” (RÉKAI 1997: 11)

The study mentioned by the researcher deals with, among other things, the local community the lifestyle, tradition, characteristics of community life of the local community through the presentation of the system of kosher customs of the Jewry of Mukachevo, Ukraine. Because of that, it is less understandable why he calls his work research of “current archaic”.

Because of the excellent results presented by him are not exactly “archaic”, for those are graspable phenomena of living people; phenomena that are as part of the living culture, reflecting precisely on the essence, the culture of Judaism. Not to mention that at the empirical research of a Jewish community we find similar living, recognizable, embedded in sign-meaning-systems culture, and as such it can be interpreted just as it can be in all other cases of research of culture and community.

Judaism as a complex system of Jewish culture is maintained by communicating with tradition and is divided into different historical-regional and subcultures (cf. RÉKAI 1997: 53). The latter’s cultural, identity and interactions are shaped by their relation to tradition and its changes.

When an anthropologist researches a Jewish community, he must know the characteristics of that relationship. However, the relationship with the millennial and codified tradition remains alive in all Jewish communities, thus it can be known as a living content, as a living phenomenon.

Thus, we are facing the different interpretations of the Jewish tradition and the lifestyles and value systems associated with it, when we examine the life of a particular Jewish community . Interpretation of their characteristics, meanings, appearance and then the “insertion” into the socio-cultural correlation context, finally, into the complex world of the Judaism is the task of the anthropologist concerned with Jewish culture.

From the above, maybe it can be why I chose a synagogue conversation as the basis of my analysis. The world of my research is the religious-ritual sphere of Hungarian Jewish culture.

It can also be seen from the above my research is just one possible approach to everyday culture of the Jewry. Other communities or other aspects of culture, are at least as important for understanding contemporary Judaism.

During my research, I have been trying to analyze primarily by observing the common ritual life.

The reason on one hand is that when we examine the rituals, we can experience phenomena from the whole culture by which, with follow-up and interpretation, we can understand many of the meanings of the culture.

In public rites, the rich meanings of the culture are concentrated, and – on occasion – “they get magnified”, which otherwise during the everyday activities would remain hidden from the researcher. Borrowed from the list of terms used for cultural anthropology, we could also say, “ritual is culture in action.” (cf. BOGLÁR 1995: 45, HAVILAND 1990: 369)

That is why such processes can be observed due to the complexity of the rituals, which can give rise to many conclusions. However, these conclusions only stand if the researcher supports each of his work research questions and insights with other observations, conversations with community members, interviews and background research. The research results thus obtained become verifiable again during the rituals.

To concretize, it may be worthwhile to present all of these in a specific example.

My fieldwork in the Bethlen Square synagogue in Budapest, and my meetings, conversations with the members of the community of the synagogue have actually created my views.

Why is Bethlen Square a great opportunity for such research?

One of the communities in the Hungarian Jewish culture can be studied here, which, without interruption, continuously and relatively (in comparison with most of the synagogues in Hungary), is experiencing the Jewish ritual practise. All generations can be found here, so their different characteristics can also be analyzed.

The community identifies itself as a non-binding “status quo” community, and accordingly it is composed of almost all “characteristic layers” of contemporary Hungarian Jewish society, presenting diverse identities and attitudes towards tradition. Conflicts or agreements in certain conversations between persons who are by the self- and community-based categories identified as “neolog”, “orthodox”, “zionist”, “conservative”, “agnostic” can reveal much of the characteristics of the living Jewish culture.

The importance of rituals is shown by the fact that the continuity of ritual life itself, the cultural practice, keeps and brings all these people together into a community. The result of it is the common “Bethlen Square entity” that distinguishes that community from other synagogues in Budapest. (Others also have a group consciousness and a common attitude towards the Jewish tradition).

By studying this community, we can find unique readings about Jewish culture, such as: the role of the religious leader in the life of the community, the attitude of generations to the world and to the Jewishness of those who have lived through the twentieth century in different ways, interrelations of these generations, the processes of passing on the “chain

of tradition”, the changes in the ritual roles of women, the “circles” of participants in the ritual life – which can also be drawn on the path to the connection to tradition – and their relationships, conflicts, the structures of Jewish time and space, the common cultural memory or the importance of humor in community communication. Therefore, we can look for answers to many such questions, which are the basic questions of the Hungarian Jewish culture as well.

Our knowledge of the Jewish culture itself can be enriched by presenting the phenomena, which should not lack the ethnographic level of research. It is worth mentioning here, that more people argue about the social importance of cultural anthropological works saying, by the introduction of the given culture, researched communities become “exposed” and “vulnerable”. The anthropologist does not only betray but makes those people “interpreted” vulnerable.

In my opinion, ethnic conflicts, stereotypes, hate (especially here in Central Eastern Europe) are mainly due to the fact that we often know nothing about people living together with us. Because of our ignorance, we have no vocabulary, knowledge that could refute the phrases of any extreme political opinion.

The anthropologist, like every other social- and human science representative, has the duty to bring light into this darkness. The purpose and quality of our work can be measured in the fight against vulnerability. To do this, we have to take another important piece of advice; of one of the late masters of anthropology, which sounds like this:

“We need to create a link between the reader and the culture.” (MALINOWSKI 1972: 67)

Without this connection, we can only increase the stock of libraries; therefore, it is imperative that our work would be comprehensible. Long-term coexistence, meticulous collection of details, acquisition and application of ethnographic knowledge during fieldwork, casting interpretative text on paper or rolls of film, bringing general insights to debate “braids” through over and over again “the anthropologist’s bread”, which must be made consumable for the expected “feast” of mutual recognition and understanding.

12 “Authenticity” of cultural anthropology and its relation to “general truths”

Many years ago, I wrote a study titled *Intuitive Anthropology* in a book compiled for the 70th birthday of Lajos Boglár (PAPP 1999: 251–262). In this methodology study, I have incorporated all that, I as a student of cultural anthropology, learned from Professor Boglár considering my fieldwork experiences. Since then, much has happened to me and to the anthropology department. After my graduation, Lajos Boglár “recruited” me into education, so for a long time I could share my fieldwork experiences with him as a colleague, until that irreplaceable gap his passing left behind. Since, as a teacher and instructor, I could and can follow my students through the challenging tasks of their researches. This paper is therefore a tribute to all that I learned from Lajos Boglár at that time, and to the supportive partnership of my students.

My views on “intuitive anthropology” have not changed essentially since I wrote my study, even though there has been more criticism given to my stated approach, claimed that to be “excessively subjective” and “unscientific”. Not once I have received these criticisms with a few angry commentaries: “There should be conventional studies and researches done, not intuitive anthropology!” – was said, for example, at an academic workshop, but I could cite many similar criticisms. Over the past years, those I have described earlier often

reformulated in me, but somehow at the end, influenced by my fieldwork experiences, I always returned to the subjective truth of my approach. I do not think (and I never thought) that I would describe the only effective methodological solutions for understanding a culture. However, if we accept that a cultural anthropological research is a common “product” of the meetings of the given researcher, the host community, and its current, sociocultural context, we can also accept the methodological insights of each anthropologist. Knowledge of cultural anthropological cognition cannot be separated from the researcher’s personality, research methods, and the fieldwork he performs. (CSÁKY 1994: 218, ERIKSEN 2010: 30–31)

In any case, despite all inconsistencies, its “proximity to experience” (GEERTZ 1994: 201–202) of my *Intuitive Anthropology* study, or perhaps because of it, communicating with this text, too (critically and in light of their own experiences) served more of our students, by forming their own tailored anthropological methods fit for their own researched community.

This is Professor Boglár’s assessment of my study, following its publication: “I give your writing to those who are walking in the same shoes as you do. I say to them, this young man is searching for and writing about where to find himself, and then when he seems to have found it, he moves on. In who I see this attitude of attributing vital importance to fieldwork, I will show this writing to.

Indeed, my fieldwork and my writings will not be objective “enough”, because the “existential moment” somehow always infiltrates my work, and thus I become part of my communities and my communities become part of my life and personality. Intuitive discoveries and feelings are impulses for reaching the utmost possible closeness, so they seem to come from my personality, so what has been further described, ought to be read accordingly. What is more, this exact attitude was the one that undermined my bondages of approach, the omnipotence of the “intuitive anthropology” relevant to me, once – after writing my study – I had the opportunity to do a longer fieldwork in an orthodox Jewish society in Jerusalem.

“I am surrounded by good people, the rabbis are nice, whom I meet every day, and the others too whom I go to interview or talk to, but they keep depreciating the books I brought with me, my thoughts about the Jews that I share with them, those that up until now I thought of relevant. It’s fine, it’s good that you are an anthropologist, they say, they let me take pictures, to interview, to ask, but then they note that this is not important, what matters is that you keep the Sabbath, eat kosher, and think like us. They don’t interfere, but they don’t accept me as I am, at the same time, I can’t fully accept their views either: why couldn’t I read what I want, and light a cigarette on Saturday when I am an anthropologist primarily and not an orthodox Jew. If I flip out, they smile, and say, but »potentially« I am an orthodox Jew, and in this they are happy to help ... So much for intuitive anthropology”.

The above lines are from my Jerusalem field diary, which – since I couldn't sleep at night – I wrote at dawn, thus they were quite sincere, for by then I had no energy to be the “wise guy”. Indeed, I felt a “split” between the existing ideas of my anthropological “manifesto” and my actual experiences. Even though, I had time to prepare for the journey to Jerusalem. By that time, I had been researching for several years in the Jewish community of Bethlen Square, where by then I was already a superior, in other words, I became a full-fledged member of the community. In addition, I started to attend the Rabbinical School, and studied the Torah and Talmud daily at the Orthodox Synagogue on Kazinczy Street, in Budapest. At Kazinczy Street, a young man taught Hungarian Jewish men the Halakha, the Laws and Rituals of Jewish life.

This young man grew up as a Hungarian Jew in Budapest, then moved (aliyah) to Israel at late adolescent, and there he lived as an orthodox Jew. He became a member of an organization the purpose of which is to teach and educate young Hungarian Jews based on the life-path defined in Torah. As a man raised in Budapest, he came to Budapest as a teacher, and soon found a common voice with the young Jewish men who visited his lectures at Kazinczy Street every afternoon. The environment where his teachings were held, community prayers that interrupted the lectures, invitation of the community members for Saturday increasingly deepened the knowledge of the young men involved in the Orthodox Jewish culture. This was also confirmed by the rabbis from Israeli, those who belonged to the organization mentioned, visiting on occasion for several days.

I belonged to the same group, so I got to know the rabbies from Israel, too. Finally, one day, I told one of the rabbis, I would like to go to Israel to do cultural anthropological fieldwork and learn more about Judaism that way. That's when I discovered that with the help of their organization each year young Jewish men are received in Jerusalem, where they could study at an advanced level orthodox Talmud school, and more than that, just now they are in the process of organizing a separate Hungarian Jewish education group, the core of which is where I study every day at Kazinczy Street.

The rabbi, foreseeing my anticipated excitement, nodded before my request, and said I could go, even if they must endure me as an anthropologist. I was surprised by his “enlightenment” (I also smile on my antirelativist assumptions afterwards) because he knew what an anthropologist was doing, and of course he accepted it on condition that I remain a member of the group as well, all the way. I got even more involved in the Hungarian Jewish world, studying from morning to evening, praying, practicing Hebrew, taking it in, experiencing the untranslatable “Yiddishkait”, the essence of the “Jewish sense of life”.

When the long awaited day came and I, along with five others, settled in our housing unit in the orthodox Jewish district of Jerusalem, I waited for more than a week in vain for the culture shock that many methodological manuals and reports of experience writes about. Although I found myself in another country, I felt like I was in the same environment as in Budapest, in addition, I can be much freer, because everyone here is Jewish, and even the weather is beautiful. After a week, however, this placidity slowly began to end, that is when I realized, it makes a big difference that I cannot go home in the evening if I had “too

much” of the Orthodox Jewish culture, I cannot “relax” to process that “concentrated” information and experience flow that is falling on me here.

In addition, after a while, I felt, in return to the research opportunity I was given, I was expected to make progress on the road of my halachic personality development. In hindsight, I see I was unfair, I was really free to do my research, everyone was willing and helpful to me, and in spite of it all, and I was not able to return their kindness by making them happy. The reason for it was probably that strange situation when, during our conversations, while they were patiently answering my questions, expanding my possibilities of interpretation, they were also changing the course of those paths; although they accepted my anthropological opposition, at the same time they fundamentally questioned, criticized all the things that were essentially important to me.

They have repeatedly expressed their regret that I live in Hungary, my favorites are the writing of Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, and Dostoevsky’s, and I do read the New Testament, or that I do not think there are “civilizational differences” between cultures, although these were vital values that I shared with them because they shared their own with me. I realized, in spite all their kindness, for the first time I was really “away” from my own culture. That’s why I felt, this is the end of my “intuitive anthropology”. What was even worse – although, I knew that a “methodology”, including that of my own, could not be fixed and be the definitive golden truth – I was afraid that the “thread” will break, and my cultural relativist approach would vanish. But if that ever happens, I will fail so badly that from then on, I will not dare go near the department.

That is when I talked to Professor Boglár on the phone... He said, I should either come home immediately, or should not bemoan, but be sensible, learn and gain experience. If I don’t write anything about it, it’s still worth it. We didn’t have to talk any more.

This is how I continued to write my diary, and I tried to stay with it later, too:

“What shall I do if I feel that my »field« is prejudiced, ethnocentric, or rather if it doesn’t match my value system? Can I “understand from within”, identify with the culture, according to the approach and method developed by my “intuitive anthropology”?! Can I position myself or at least put my world into brackets? (GEERTZ 1994: 187) For here is my personal truth with me that is open to the full truth of orthodoxy as much as it is to Christianity and other spiritual-religious possibilities. While I feel this openness has strengthened in me, my anthropologist identity has deepened, but then this is exactly what clashes with the »field« experience? As I see now, I must be inside, but stand outside, too, and look at their evidences like that of any other culture, but not to »believe« that they are right. My intuitive anthropology now as it follows: our methodology is written by the continuous fieldwork, even if we have previously developed our own anthropology that we consider irrefutable. According to this, we must feel ourselves »intuitively«, and then flexibly, but consciously adapt to the researched community so that we do not completely identify with them. That I could comprehend, feel, and experience this, I owe it to the

locals here. So I have to analyze their truths that are true for them, their myths (such as Jerusalem being the center of creation and that of the world, and therefore the light coming out of the Sanctuary illuminated the whole world) as myths that mean *to them* the total truth. And if this attitude provokes displeasure and rejection of the examined community, then I must examine these differences of values, their causes and meanings, too and I have to explain the meaning of it interpretatively. I believe, this is the task of the anthropologist, and not the complete acceptance or the complete rejection. The anthropologist is »a child of several worlds« (PRÓNAI 1995: 39), I knew that, but now I understand it, too. I'm staying to the end and finish it”.

From this point on, I have tried to view the world around me with “conscious empathy” by assuming the “anthropologist-open identity”. However, my research was determined by the experience I had described, since, although initially not consciously, my attention was focused on the differences in values that I have just mentioned, which gradually deepened more and more between the persons belonging to the Hungarian Jewish youths I was living with, and the persons representing the Israeli Orthodox Jewish norms, whom they were in intense contact with. I've discussed the events of the past few days with them every week.

We sat under a tree in a garden, and in the breezy cooling air one-by-one they described their changing feelings and insights about their stay in Israel. They often asked if the week had passed since they had lot to tell, lot to share. We then sat down and talked again. Soon they called these occasions “therapy”, and “treatment”.

It turned out, though they came to Jerusalem to experience the “real”, “true”, “authentic” Jewish-orthodox Judaism, and stay here in Israel to live as an orthodox Jew, or go home, and pass this value system on to other young Hungarians, but the debates and misunderstandings arising from the more frequent differences in values raised the value of their own Hungarian Jewish identity.

Accordingly, the minority Hungarian Jewish value system, previously classified as “ghetto Jewry” by them – in which the attachment, cultural background, mother tongue and ritual-emotional experiences related to Hungary are combined and placed over the halachic norm system (PAPP 2001) – became as “genuine” and “authentic” in their eyes as the Orthodox Jewish system of values was before. There was only one exception in the group, a “convert” from another religion. He was not socialized in the Hungarian Jewish culture, as members of his peer-group were, and in the course of this process he ended on the periphery of the group. Not like I, for my conversation partners have arrived to this realization on the road laden with conflicts and dilemmas just as I did, providing support to each other during our joint interviews. So, at the end, once again, the intuitive experience and identification became the basis for my researches, even though I only recognized that later.

One of the reasons why I could not identify with the Orthodox Jewish value system was, because in the meantime I identified with another community. However, this has led

to the realization that here I can observe and interpret the encounter of two cultures. So I identified with the community whose culture I have been researching in Budapest for years, in which I was preparing for my Israeli fieldwork and that identification actually “forced” me to write “my intuitive anthropology”. So, the root cause of my Jerusalem dilemmas was partly “my anthropologist identity”, and partly – at least as much – my “Hungarian Jewish” identity, added my self-knowledge. No wonder I wrote the case study about my fieldwork a lot later, three years after (PAPP 2004), which comprises the recognition – by now calm and “objective” admiration – of the differences in values as outlined above, and the diversity of the Jewish culture.

Professor Boglár was right, I became richer with the experience that has been part of me since, for by now I am prepared to encounter the dilemmas come to my way during fieldwork, those that later sparked my interest in other cultures. I wouldn’t have thought before Israel that other cultures could be interested after the Jewry, but my experiences there allowed me to further develop my “anthropologist self”, turning to other areas of interest, which then became a decisive part of my personality.

The previous longer “experience report” could reveal that my *Intuitive Anthropology* may be regarded as a “proclamation” that summarized the field experiences of my research and determined my later dilemmas during my fieldwork. Returning from Israel, I continued to explore the Jewish culture of Hungary, but in parallel I started my research for several years in Vojvodina, where I tried to interpret interethnic relations between Hungarians and Serbs primarily by researching the relation systems of religion and ethnicity. I have been researching in several communities in Bačka and Syrmia mainly among Hungarians, but I also tried to pay attention to the cultural meanings of Serb communities living with them.

The researches that I carried out in Israel, then again in Hungary, and finally in Vojvodina, have deepened in me experiences that have undermined all kinds of methodological dogmas, even those that I myself have prescribed. The research that I carried out in Israel, then again in Hungary, and finally in Vojvodina, has deepened in me experiences that have undermined all kinds of methodological dogmas, even those I have prescribed. Thus, I believe that all “methodologies” are just a snapshot of the state anthropologist is experiencing in the process of drawing on current experiences and the levels of understanding of the culture being researched. For example, during my Israeli research, I realized that the stereotypes and prejudices of Hungarian Jewish culture are much closer to me than the prejudices of Orthodox Jewish culture.

I realized that the anthropologist also carries a special form of prejudice that stems from sharing the worldview of his sympathetic communities.

In short, I’m also prejudiced. What I as an anthropologist can do in this situation is to try to relativize my intuitions, to leave the subjective context that I would otherwise experience during fieldwork. This seems to be a success mainly during ritual analysis, interviewing and journal writing. In the first two cases I try to objectivize, to see and analyze

the emerging issues from the outside, but while writing the journal I write everything honestly, and later select the publishable experiences, similarly to the interviews. That is why neither of my researches is “complete”, because on all of my research fields, there have been narratives and personal opinions that although, would be very interesting to publish and help to deepen the understanding of the given culture, but because of their “sensitive” nature could be used against them.

However, there are cases, when manifestation of prejudices in the researched community even for me, the “insider” gets “too much”, at times like that, it is very difficult not to argue with them, and I usually cannot stop, for I am an “included” and can have my own opinion. Interfering with the local culture did not always turn out to be a success, still I feel my strange and paradoxical application of anthropology was useful.

After all, we do not have to like their stereotypes, we have to like them, and if we understand them, we can turn to their prejudices without prejudice; on the other hand, if we expose their prejudices, they may also think and perhaps reconsider them.

With different intensity, every anthropologist will belong to his researched community, he will be part of the researched culture, and this mutual relation-system will get integrated into his personality.

With this in mind, reception of the anthropologist has two sides, not only the community accepts and includes him, but he also accepts his researched community. (cf. ZEMPLÉNI 2004: 90) These deepen through mutual, reciprocal reinforcing processes. For me, the first real moment of acceptance, and the most remarkable magic – that I desire to experience again and again (maybe that’s why I go to another field every four or five years) – is when I first find my way by myself to the place I stay at the field of research, be that in Jerusalem or a two-street village in Sirmia.

My acceptance in a community I usually becomes noticeable when other “outsiders” take part in an occasional meeting, as well as recognition of small signs and gestures that are twice as pleasing to me, for those show their acceptance, also show that I feel and understand their tiny vibrations.

When the rabbi of the Bethlen Square Synagogue presented me to a “high-level delegation” as the “a pillar of our synagogue”, when he first counted me in to the minyan, the quorum of ten Jewish adults required for certain religious obligations such as prayers and reading the Torah. Similarly, when one of my conversation partners from Vojvodina, Senta received a prize in Budapest, and noticed me being present at the occasion, he greeted me saying: “It is so good to have someone here from *home*, too.” I felt my acceptance and inclusion the same way in the small village of Dobrado (where I and my ex wife had been doing field research for two years) when we arrived at the village-hosted presentation of the surrounding “scattered communities”, our researched community *did not* introduce us on stage, as it did with other visiting guests (thus raising the prestige of the village holding the event). I didn’t have to represent myself during the ceremony, but instead my friend Putica called me to help feeding his animals, and then to visit his father, because – as he

said – “you belong here too, you are a relative of us, you finally came home, not just to show off like those others, I’m not even let you mingle with them.”

It may be strange, but at time like this, I get tears in my eyes, as once again I experience the meaning of my “anthropologist existence”, the special feeling of “acceptance and inclusion”. Since our acceptances and our experiences of being accepted are examples and opportunities in our societies for the possibility of solidarity, for the practice of consideration and reaching out to each other. Therefore, it is essential to explore the meaning of inclusion during anthropological researches from epistemological perspective as well.

Inclusion is a sensitive process. It is better to wait for these signs with patience (I usually had to have one year of intense presence to reach that point) and tell honestly at the very beginning of our involvement what and why we do what we do in the community.

I remember it was uncomfortable for me when I first entered the Synagogue of Bethlen Square at 7 o’clock in the morning, where the older Jewish men wearing their *tefillin*, being wrapped in their *tallit* turned in my direction, watched me with mistrust and asked me why I came here. However, when I awkwardly explained the purpose of my visits, their eyes lit up and with an encouraging smile they said: “Aha, then this is good business to you, too right?”, and a few months later, together with the late, beloved Uncle Tibor Sterk, we decorated the synagogue and the Sukkan tent for the New Year, Sukkan. During my fieldwork in Vojvodina, Senta, Feketić, and Tornjoš, where I introduced myself in the same way, first as a Hungarian visitor who – who know why – is interested about what life is like here. As an “outsider” from Hungary, I have inspired confidence in them with my attitude of trying to bridge our distances.

My first encounter with my friend, Putica, was also a telling experience for me. Once again, my former wife and I happened to find ourselves in Dobrado. Even though we were outsiders, she was “taken away” immediately by the women, I was left alone with a man, ten years older than I. I only knew he was Croatian but, through his wife, he belonged to our Hungarian host’s family. I told him what I was doing, he then led me to the central square of the village, front of the shop, where he sat me down next to himself, offered a cigarette and told me about the life of the village. After we finished smoking the cigarette, I offered him one of mine. And with this, I unconsciously placed our relationship on a new ground, and from that point on, from the distance of my outsider prestige, I got closer to him and the community. He asked again, now more confidently what we wanted to do here, and from that point on, he stopped all those who were passing by (the farmers, one after the other, returning from the fields) and introduced them to me. Finally, one of the men presented turned out to have the same last name, Papp like mine, moreover, his full name was József Papp as of my uncle and brother of my grandfather. We found that we were “relatives,” and it turned out that Putica’s mother was the sister of Uncle Papp mentioned, so I too became a relative of Putica.

I thought this was going to remain at the level of kidding, but a few months later, an ethnographer colleague of mine happened to turn up in Dobrado, where Putica invited him in and asked whether he knows me. He was even more surprised when Putica described

him in detail what my profession was, that I am being an anthropologist in Budapest, saying that I am a relative, asking my colleague to tell me, he is hoping to see me soon. Over time, we discovered that I was *actually* a relative of my former wife, Virág Hajnal, since one of the three large families of the village was Hajnal and the other was Papp, and these families moved here from the territory of historical Hungary over a hundred years ago.

In addition, we do not behave like outsiders, we stay at their house, we live among them, and so our acceptance became well-founded from “all sides”. Our relationship with Putica is further strengthened by the fact that we both belong to the greater family of Hajnal through our wives, as Putica was also an outsider within the extended family of Papp, on his father’s Croatian side (who moved to the village as the only Croatian). And since on his mother’s side he did not affiliate with the Papps, and since his father, being a Croatian, was an “outsider”, under the protection of his wife’s family, the other strong clan, the Hajnals, he was accepted, just like I was. I was just a companion and helper of my former wife in Dobrado (this is the best position anthropologist may want), and since she is Hajnal, and I didn’t want to stray out on my own, even though I am well off with the Papps – a sort of link between them and the Hajnals – the Hajnal family “drew me in”, in which I was sharing the status and closest relationship with Putica.

No wonder, he was the one who first announced that out of “Hajnals”, I was a relative of his. And as we saw, he also described precisely what I was doing, why I was “by the way” there.

I keep very nice memories of Senta and Feketić, where they always greeted me with, “it is so nice of *you to come home*”, and where I could just leave “to work” with my friends any time I felt like it. In fact, after a while, members of my researched communities called me if something, related to my current research topic, was forgotten during my previous visit.

So, over time, I became a member of the community, who “by the way is an anthropologist”, but *really* is a relative, good friend, acquaintance. As I mentioned, this is a two-way process. To reach openness, it is essential to have honesty, disclosure of our anthropologist position, then wait patiently to be accepted. On top of it, as shown in the examples, much can be revealed about the community itself through the steps and elements of inclusion. The subjective experiences encountered during fieldwork move along the excitement of cognition helping, supporting, and “keeping those alive”. This is how the experiences shared with the community become our own experiences and thus the researched culture part of our own life. Our interpretations are based on this dual world of experience, provide the possibility to discover, present and give a chance to get a “feel” of the lives of our researched communities.

In this process, intuition naturally becomes part of our cognition, as *we live in* the vibrations of our examined culture. The socio-psychological function of culture is the creation and maintenance of a kind of harmony: through the culture we can find the answer to our questions about the meaning of our life. (BOGLÁR–PAPP 1999: 11)

The goal of the anthropologist is to find a place in this world, to be part of that harmony, worldview, anthropological, and cognitive context that surrounds the micro-society he has

researched. That's why it does matter how we enter the world of a culture, and the type of communication we create there where we want to detect the finest vibrations of reality.

During my Jewish researches, I came across a phenomenon called "Tzedakah", one of the most important aspects of community solidarity, which – using one of the most well-known books, considered a "guide to life" by members of my research community – I translated as "charity". (cf. DONIN 1998: 48–65)

I also raised my questions on the topic of "Jewish charity" for my conversation partners. The members of my researched communities, as well as *all* of my other Jewish respondents in Budapest, who – either kindly or pointedly – corrected me saying, mixing up charity and tzedakah is blurring the "essence": charity carries the "superiority" of the giver and the "defenselessness" of the receiver, while the tzedakah is a ritual command that excludes this division; it is a heartfelt obligation that strengthens the unity of the Jews, and thus to give and to receive both are "natural" responsibilities.

It was interesting to see how my community responds to such "incompetent", "outsider's" questions, but over time I was only inquiring about the "tzedakah" because I felt that I could lose their confidence I had acquired so far, since part of my fieldwork had been so far that I understand the insider meanings, and I am familiar with the evidence-system of the culture. In addition, I am not an advocate of "experimenting" in field work, so it is more important for me to experience confidence than to analyze different, consciously triggered reactions and effects. Therefore, during my research, I have sought to create and maintain a context where internal and hidden messages communicate meaningfully between me and the members of my community. So I had to learn the "Hungarian Jewish language", in which are mixed the Ashkenazi and (nowadays more and more) Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew, Yiddish words, expressions, and elements of a specific Hungarian stratum – which are usually the exact translation of Hebrew and Yiddish words and expressions mentioned above – or Hungarian words adopted by the Hungarian Jewish tradition to name the elements of Jewish life.

These include calling the synagogue a "temple," the "arrival" and "passing" of fast, of Saturday, of holidays, referring to God as the "Eternal", the "Creator", or jokingly mixing "Bibshow", and "Sanyec" (mixing of shammas and Sanyi). If one does not know and does not use – in accordance with the linguistic-cultural context – the "*lingo*", these expressions, or uses anything else instead, that is considered a testimony of him being an outsider. This is so, because the language repertoire is different in every synagogue and Jewish community. The way of learning this is not like taking a dictionary and memorizing the words one might need. Instead, we learn patiently the language usage of our community with the greatest possible participation in the culture and communication context. Language of the synagogue rituals is Hebrew, so it seems obvious that a thorough knowledge of this may be the primary level of linguistic aspects of inclusion. I admit, although I can read and recite prayers fluently, I can say the appropriate blessings, still I did not acquire the level of the language that I could read and understand fully and precisely the Torah text. At first

I was worried about these shortcomings, but later I learned that many people in the community are the same way, and when they realized that we were “on the same level”, they openly revealed their particular relationship with the Hebrew language and, through it, to the traditional Jewish culture. In connection with such conversations, I began to recognize, one of the most important characteristics of contemporary Hungarian Jewish culture is the priority of living the “Yiddishkait”, the essence of the “Jewish sense of life” over the halachic norm system and ritual knowledge (PAPP 2000, 2001, 2004, 2009, 2015).

Since I was not – as one of them put it – any more of a “Hungarian Jew” than they were, they openly, without loss of prestige shared with me other aspects of their world, “teaching” me, and not being “judged” by me.

A few years later I had a similar experience in Dobrado. Due to my participation in a research project, I also had to go to Syrmian settlements around Dobrado, where Bajec, head of the Hajnal clan, accompanied me. Walking around in a nearby town, in Ruma, in the building of a cultural institution connected to the Catholic Church, I just noticed a picture painted by children, in the middle of which the word “uskrs” was painted in big red letters. Pointing at it, I asked Bajec if this word could be pronounced at all, and then I tried what seemed impossible to me, which resulted a heartfelt laugh of Bajec and our conversation partners in Ruma, wiping away the tears of laughter for several minutes. As we got home to Dobrado, Bajec immediately told the others about it, and ’til the end of my stay, I had to pronounce “uskrs” hundreds of times, never failing to entertain them.

Even years later, when we chatted over the phone, they asked me again and again: “say it, say that word,” and even though, after repeating it so many times, I probably could have pronounced it better, I still said it the usual incorrect way while gladly acknowledged that I was able to give the gift of a joyful laughter to my relatives in Dobrado. My unfamiliarity with the language helped to dissolve the barrier between us, I only realized that later as I reconsidered, reevaluated my event with “uskrs”.

The meaning of “uskrs” is Easter in Serbian, and for us, Hungarians, it is difficult to pronounce, because in the Serbian language the letter “r” in some cases acts as a vowel. Bajec and the Dobradoans have first-hand understanding of this, as the forty-year-old Bajec and his classmates were the last ones to attend the Hungarian-language elementary school. Their use of language has since become “mixed”, according to their own definition, which results in “we are better off with the Serbs than we are among Hungarians”. My former wife wrote about her thesis and several studies (HAJNAL 2003, 2004; HAJNAL–PAPP 2004: 124–162), so I wouldn’t want to interfere.

What is important from the point of view of this case, that Bajec and the Dobradoans have experienced most of their encounters – quoting their words – with “pure Hungarians” feeling “inferior” and stressed. In this complicated and sensitive system of relations, I fell into as the “teacher from Budapest” – as they identified me. My former wife, being from Voivodina learned the “mixed” language of Dobradoans in no time, but I, as they said, “used such a fancy language” that “it was often impossible to figure out what he was saying.” On top of it, I was a “teacher”, whose prestige was inherited from Mr. Mókus, the teaching

authority who used to live in the village, added to my “northern”, “pure Hungarian” origin. Not even being accepted by the Hajnal clan could help in this. They were kind and liked me, but the partnership, the confidentiality was still to be developed. The last barriers were dissolved with the “usrs”, when they found out that I am inexperienced in such an intellectual territory in which they feel at home, furthermore, they are in much better command of Hungarian, then I am of Serbian.

During our communications, my inexperience helped to balance our statuses. Then came the offer to learn from each other, they to learn Hungarian from me, and I Serbian from them, even textbooks were exchanged, and we took language lessons amid great laughter. Later, when I became more and more successful using the Serbian language, each “progress” was recorded as their personal success.

Along with my language inadequacy, my ignorance and inadequacy related to the Dobradoen gender-roles and ‘masculinity’ also came to light. There was an evening when, as always, girls, women, and boys, men chatted separately after dinner, Putica, Bajec and their sons called me out to the yard. The kids pulled a rifle from under the haystack, handed it to me, pointed to a pigeon perching on a nearby tree, and told me to shoot it. “I’m not shooting at a bird,” I replied. “It’s not a bird, it’s a pigeon,” they said. Disappointed, seeing that I really can’t shoot the pigeon, took the rifle, fired it, the pigeon dropped silently from the tree, they picked it up, and head lowered, disappointed, they wandered away. Putica, who watched all this, tried to help, “Come on, at least butcher that piglet!” And took a piglet and a knife into his lap. I refused the request again and again, then Putica slit the piglet’s throat, then went in and told everyone what happened. They’ve been laughing at me since, and accepting my inabilities, I laugh along.

I tried something to regain my male prestige and offered them to play soccer. Soccer games carry an important role in the local value system. During the “golden age” of the settlement, while the *zadruga*, the cooperative, operating at the outskirts of Dobrado – which, as they consider, was the “heyday” of these years – created relative prosperity for the people living here, included the success of local soccer players and regular village derbies. As I am a fairly good player, I managed to balance the evaluation of my male prestige. What further internal meanings this has, once again, I have discovered in an indirect way.

I have heard that they are praising my Serbian language proficiency to an “outsider”. At another time, a friend of mine, János Bali, who once visited Dobrado, now doing ethnographic research at the nearby Maradék, got into a conversation with the Dobradoens involving me. It had to be a strange enough encounter for both, the ethnographer and the Dobradoens as well, that I got mentioned during their conversations. And when the ethnographer jokingly said something about my soccer playing ability, the community withdrew from him. During our following visit they told me all about János, warning me, “watch out for him”, “he only pretends to be your friend”, adding “not to worry, we stood up for you... it left him speechless.”

So, while I can be ridiculed within the community (since our statuses balanced, I have become one of them) “outwardly” they defended me and stressed that I do have “positive

qualities”. In fact, they were even more protective and showed more appreciation to the outside worlds, as they did regarding my language skills, while they were aware of my imperfections, which internally they considered amusing.

However, neither it is irrelevant what we communicate toward our researched communities. It is no coincidence that in Bačka my (former) wife and I did our field research separately. Because in Dobrado – albeit differently – we both came “in” from the “outside”, from the “northern”, “Hungarian” worlds to Syrmia. In Bačka, however, my wife had been researching at “home-turf”. She had relatives living in Senta and Feketić, and she grew up there from birth, thus she was considered a “native” in these communities. However, although, after a while I was accepted, and through my former wife, became a member of the Vojvodina family kinship system, still, my original position was defined by my “Hungarianess”, something I did not want to deny either.

This is how I could understand that double, sensitive relationship that ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina hold against native Hungarians. The essence of this is the dominant identity of attachment to the universal Hungarians thus to the “motherland”, the decisive role of attachment to the “Southern territories”, and the regional identities “good Balkan”, “southern”, “Voivodian”, “true Hungarian” within it, which expresses the differences, the otherness of Hungarian minorities in Vojvodina, next to the Serb majority, and toward the Hungarians in Hungary. This relationship is burdened with historical and current political conflicts, the feeling of neglect and negative experiences behind them.

In this situation, it is important for the researcher to be aware of his or her “given” positions and be able to convince through communications: (s)he is *really* interested in the everyday life-situations and problems of the research community. I had to earn this confidence over and over again and had to tell them that I am *the kind of Hungarian* who would like to enlighten precisely the other (native) Hungarians about their lives. Until this became evident between us, I never learned anything about the negative experiences and evaluations that, out of consideration, they previously held back, those that they formulated among themselves toward ‘native’ Hungarians. It is no coincidence that over time, I focused my attention and research on the relations between Hungarian national identity and local-ethnic identities in these communities.

Professor Boglár once told us, he knew when he was truly accepted, and was conducting a reasonably “realistic” research, when he reached that point with his conversation partners that he was just turned on the tape-recorder and his partner began to talk. After many years in Senta and Feketić, I got to this point, when most of the time my conversation partners wanted to teach or “frankly tell” me something, and then I just switched on the recorder, reached for the glass they offered, and listened to them. Experiences similar to that only related to my research at Bethlen Square. In both communities, it took about four years of constant presence and coexistence to develop such a relationship.

When we enter the communication medium where our field work takes place, we inevitably find the answers to the social and political contexts that our community formulates

based on its historical-sociological positions. During my research, I met with a whole range of reactions given to the “macro-events” related to the Carpathian Basin and Hungary within. During my research in both Bethlen Square and Vojvodina, I met the negative perception of political powers in Hungary and Yugoslavia before the change of regime. However, I could not analyze these seemingly similar phenomena in the same way.

An example: after one morning prayer at Bethlen Square, the *hazzan* – an elderly man leader of public prayers – sat down on a chair and quietly began humming *The Internationale*, (French: “L’Internationale”) the left-wing anthem. No one seemed to notice, it bothered no one, while it would have caused a shock in a Hungarian community in Vojvodina, and if it hadn’t been a joke, because of this, he could easily find himself on the periphery of the community. “Leftism” for the majority at Bethlen Square means similarly positive values as “national commitment” means to the majority of Vojvodina Hungarians. Knowing the “macro-historical” backgrounds, it is not surprising, however, interpretation of these events need much attention while writing of the studies.

In the specific state of political and social systemic changes in Hungary and in the Carpathian Basin, also in the communication media infiltrated by various hate and distrust (BOGLÁR 1993: 99–107), interpretations of the anthropologist are often misunderstood. I myself have been called a “chethnic”, “Zionist”, “nationalist” when in my writings or lectures I discussed internal categories of Serbian, Jewish or ethnic Hungarians. With the assumption of cultural relativism and “intuitive anthropology” this is understandable, and so I have been striving and trying to interpret community responses to macro-phenomena, common issues, current (even political) conflicts ever since, to think and discuss these issues more in their complexity, along with the realities we have experienced and with the people who live in these realities. To do this – along with acceptance of the subsequent misunderstandings – we need to implement a detailed and thorough interpretation that clearly and comprehensively reveals the worldview of our communities. All this belongs to the other side of communication related to field work, to the domain of our attitude toward the “receiving” medium of our research.

The basic momentum of understanding and interpretation is the application of cultural relativism, which is – through empathy and intuition – the acceptance of the experience and phenomena to be interpreted, and the explanatory, evaluating narrative of those as *rationality*. In parallel with this stance, an anthropologist tries to provide a holistic view of the world of the researched community and its specific characteristics.

Religious phenomena have always been the focus of my researches, on the one hand because of personal motivation and interest, on the other hand (and I only thought about that later) because the research of religion can reveal the complete-holistic system of culture that we want to understand, since the religious meanings in addition to social, economic, political components can also give an insight into the cognitive, ideological, and ontological dimensions of a culture. (cf. GEERTZ 1994: 63–104) Looking at it from the perspective of the members of the researched community, the search for religious meanings is able to approach and interpret the full spectrum of identity, as the latter can lead us from hidden-

personal identity through elements of sociological content, to the question of ontological “sense of certainty”. (cf. CSEPELI 2001: 517)

I don't think the only way to explore the holistic “overview” of culture and identity would be through religion, but I wouldn't have recognized many relationships during my fieldwork – not even in the case of my conversation partners identifying themselves as “non-religious”, “unreligious”, or “atheist” – if I am not familiar with the religious meanings. On the other hand, as we will see – even if my research later took other directions – religious phenomena proved to be “useful” starting points.

While maintaining my views on the subjectivity and living “micro-realities” discussed above, during my fieldwork, I have tried to implement as detailed as possible a holistic approach to research. Thus, *in addition* to gathering religious institutions and related people, related cultural practices, and sacral-theological-religious ethnographic knowledge, I sought to get to know and understand the fullest socio-cultural life of the community.

This was not a particular problem during my Israeli fieldwork, as the religious-ritual context as a decisive cultural integrating field was given, and as I mentioned, with my recurring interviews and my group, I was able to monitor every moment of their lives, their momentum, as I had the opportunity to talk to, and interview more than once all who were in contact with them (teachers, rabbis, earlier and recent young Hungarian arrivals, relatives, acquaintances, etc.).

My researches at Bethlen Square had similar results, for I was researching members of the “inner circle”, those who regularly attended the synagogue. Here, the only difficulty was just a matter of how (as the life of this community focuses on the synagogue and the institutions of ritual Jewish life) to gain acceptance into their private, more personal home spaces. Over time I not only have succeeded, but it also provided a very interesting learning experience, as I have witnessed how homes become a representative part of the public ritual space, and what are those spaces that fall out of this ritual field, and thus the rules of behavior and obligations that correspond to the traditional rabbinical standard system.

Just as in Dobrado, where I didn't have much trouble with a holistic view, as it is a village with fewer than 100 people and I had connection to two of its large families, so almost everybody in the village expected me to meet them. Researching religious life in Dobrado at first time seemed to be a dead-end street, since outside of a narrower circle of elderly women, religiosity did not appear to define the village community. They mentioned they were Catholics, but they added, because the language of the liturgy is Croatian, the holidays and the worship are “keep for us” by the elderly women, meanings of religious manifestations are not relevant to them. Over time, however, researching the social anthropological components revealed that conflicts between extended families and solutions to problems within families are surrounded by such elements of magic that everyone treats as reality. However, I could not write about it, because in this kind of reading of the reality I would have brought a curse upon the members of the community.

The situation was different with my other researches in Bačka, where the population of settlements I worked in were over thousands. In agreement with Geertz, I think this is not

a “tragedy,” as anthropologists do not research “villages” (or cities, neighborhoods etc.), but they conduct their researches “in villages”. (GEERTZ 1994: 189) Nevertheless, during my long stay, I have attempted to set up an “appropriate” representative background behind my research topics.

Therefore, in addition to active participation in everyday life, I tried to take part in every decisive ritual, then based on the experience, discuss those with the participants and non-participants equally. I have tried to discuss my interviews and conversations with people of all ages, social strata, people of different statuses, ethnic groups. Therefore, during my research years, several chests and boxes were filled with cassettes, photographs, written sources, and notes. Of course, I will never process all of these, but for each case study I needed, and may need my documentations, through gatherings of which I gained the knowledge that enabled me to move about comfortable in the lives of my researched communities.

I also tried to objectivise my results by having my studies reviewed before publication by my “main informants”, with whom I was in daily contact and with whom I have regularly discussed my experiences during fieldwork. Many of my studies include segments of interviews in which my conversation partners have commented on my previously published studies.

Thus, the cornerstones of the “objectivity” and “comprehensive nature” of my work were again found in the “subjective moments” within the reality of the researched community.

That is why the question of how an anthropological research can be “authentic”, why is it “good” if a society tolerates and sometimes even supports “field researchers” arises.

Let us find the possible answers to the questions together with Lévi-Strauss, since his thoughts (LÉVI-STRAUSS 2001 [Vol.1]: 270–285) convey the insights of an “authentic” objective-analyzer: Lévi-Strauss observes the relationship between ethnographic, ethnological and anthropological disciplines in their methodological context. According to this, he calls ethnography the first phase – the observation and description, which includes fieldwork – of research, as the set of methods and techniques for interpreting specific cultural phenomena. Thus, ethnographic research refers to a “well-defined group” in which the researcher “gathers most of his observations collected during his personal experiences.” Compared to this, ethnology is the “first step” towards synthesis. Ethnology takes steps towards this “synthesis” by using the results of ethnographic observation as a “continuation” of them. The three possible directions of this “synthesis” are geographical (combining knowledge of neighboring groups), historical (“if we want to reconstruct the past of one or more populations”), and the systematic (“if we try to separate a particular type of technique, custom or institution to devoting special attention to it”) approach and analysis. The inherent and criterion of all these “syntheses”, along with field-based research results, is the way in which “all aspects of social life – economic, technical, legal, aesthetic, and religious – form a meaningful system, and none of them can be understood without that we should not put it among the others “. With this, according to Lévi-Strauss, we arrived to the

anthropological phase. The social and cultural anthropological “phase” is the above-mentioned holistic combination of ethnographic and ethnological conclusions. In light of this, the prestigious researcher states that “anthropology is aimed at gaining a global understanding of man” and thus “seeking conclusions that apply to all human societies from modern big cities to the smallest Melanasian tribe”. Anthropology in this endeavor discovers those “levels of authenticity” that only it can provide relevant interpretations: “... anthropology being increasingly interested in modern societies, recognizes and separates levels of authenticity in them. For an ethnologist it is what makes it possible to move about in familiar terrain, when he observes a village, a company, a metropolitan neighborhood that everyone knows or almost knows everyone in them.” The “level of authenticity” consequently refers to “entire societies ... or kind of social activities”, “which are always characterized by specific psychological depths and where the system of interpersonal relationships and social relations fit into one single whole”. From all this, the “authenticity” of anthropological cognition can also be recognized, since out of “these distinctive features arise an immediate conclusion: such forms of social life can never be known from the outside only. In order to understand them, it is necessary for the researcher to succeed in creating the synthesis characteristic of them, that is, not to be satisfied with the theoretical analysis, but integrate them into a coherent unity through personal experience: namely, through his own personal experience” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 2001 [Vol.1]: 270–285). Thus, this is how an anthropologist can contribute to the “global understanding” of our world and ourselves.

From the perspective of his field works, this is how Professor Boglár saw this all: “Foreign colleagues raised the question, if I spend so much time on a tribal »love«, is it possible to have any generalization besides the intensive subjectivity? Can we reach universal values without comparison? My answer is very simple: more field experience we have, more likely we are to see / find the general behind the unique, since our experiences help us to recognize and point out the peculiar, the specific, the essence-bearer from the chain of phenomena.” (BOGLÁR 2004: 1)

Thus, the “authenticity” of cultural anthropology lies in its “particularity”, for it allows and provides insight into the flesh-and-blood realities of local cultures, giving us the opportunity to think about not the worlds of others, but along with those who live in, who are part of these worlds. (cf. GEERTZ 1994: 170–200)

In connection with this, however, I believe that cultural anthropological researches can provide tangible knowledge for comparative analyzes, “syntheses”, too, whereby we can deepen our understanding of wider historical-social relationships as well. Identification of the “particular” realities also essential for our region burdened by historical, social, ethnic fractures and unprocessed traumas.

With my researches, I have tried and try to contribute to the recognition and further consideration of these “deep” reality contents in a wider context.

The life of our region was determined and shaped by the intersection of the crossroads of many cultures. Inherent to the diversity of cultures, the “multicultural” coexistence that

religions and denominations are inextricably linked to the belonging to their own communities. The “own religions” define the deepening of attachment to ethnic cultures along with the sacred reinforcement of “survival”, creating a wide range of knowledge about each other’s religion and culture, and thus (in the practice of cultural symbiosis and tolerance) the promise and possibilities of peaceful coexistence. The reality of interethnic relationships, even along the tragic events of recurrent historical political conflicts, has lived on in Eastern-Central Europe over the past centuries.

The history of the Carpathian Basin has consistently stood in the crossfire of the aspiration of major powers, in the lives of the peoples and religions existing here, all that had been accompanied by the mythical-sacral reinforcements of the pursuit of survival strategies, as well as with the “ethnicization of providence”. However, coexistence, the symbiosis of everyday life, also allowed that these ethnic-sacred and mythical identities should be of universal importance at the same time, in accordance with the universal religious content behind them. As I mentioned above, however, it also deepened the expression of distance from each other. These “distances” were also exploited by current political and diplomatic interests.

The questions I researched are similarly determined by recent historical events, political-social system changes, form of government changes, which, in addition to the conflicts of recent decades and the concretisation of ethnic fractures, have brought about the intensification of traditional and religious revival phenomena. All in all, the new contexts and opportunities of coexistence can be just as much of a given to us as the intensification of social conflicts and nationalist ideologies. However, to do this, we need to recognize and understand each other’s realities. Getting to know each other’s cultures and, in particular, religious characteristics, can bring us closer to our understanding of ourselves and each other.

The aim of my researches is to contribute to this social goal.

Returning to research methodology questions, I am trying to combine the approach of ethnography, ethnology of religion and sociology of religion with the perspective of cultural anthropology. The possibilities of interpreting the phenomena I have observed are therefore primarily applied to the present, the aspects of the living culture, but not without paying attention to the historical, ethnographic, sociological, religious, theological aspects, since without these the phenomena that can be explored in the present could not be understood and interpreted.

By studying religious phenomena, we can gain in-depth knowledge of the entire system of the cultures studied, so we can analyze the issues of sacredness as a function of the holistic interpretation of culture:

“Religion itself is an important factor in the identity of both the individual and that of the group. Religion should also be mentioned at the first place in the context of national identity. Religious traditions are the pillars of preserving nationality. In the

rhythm of sacral life, national identity is periodically renewed and strengthened. This is enhanced and deepened when the tradition is maintained in the mother tongue. In the religious tradition, we find the most important elements that define the folk, national and ethnic identity in relation to ethnicity. Examination of all these is a complex task.” (UJVÁRY 1991: 16)

Therefore, the meanings that can be explored thus require several years of research, participant observation and background researches: “In fact, each ethnicity, ethnic groups, or sometimes the smallest unit of society, the family, must be examined separately. Different problems arise in case of ethnographic groups belonging to the motherland and other problems in relation to groups living as nationalities in a foreign state” (UJVÁRY 1991: 15).

Ujváry also mentions – among other things, in addition to ethnic Hungarians living beyond the border – the culture of Jewry as the “extension” of the issue mentioned above, since the Hungarian Jewry is such a particular example of the Carpathian Basin culture, “whose language is the language of the nation-founders, but that does not play a role in the identity consciousness of the Jewry ... even with the disappearance of the language, for centuries – this is shown by the perhaps mysterious Jewish examples – ethnic identity can be alive”. (UJVÁRY 1991: 15)

Accordingly, issues related to what appears to be “mysterious”, “intricate” problems of religion, ethnicity, and identity can be interpreted in detail only through the careful “inside” examination of the comprehensible realities. In it lies the potential and responsibility of ethnography and cultural anthropology on the way to understand our world, our region, and our cultures.

A special example of the comparative approach, based on cultural anthropological knowledge, is Lajos Boglár’s doctoral dissertation, *Myth and Culture. Two Cases* (1996). Like Lajos Boglár – who analyzes the relationship between myth and culture in the context of two South American Indian cultures, the Piaroa and the Guarani communities – I analyze the issues – systems of religion and minority-own culture, tradition, identity – related to a more general religion in different cultural contexts, with the same – ethnographic-cultural anthropological – methods and interpretation practice.

In my endeavors, I have found confirmation by the well-known social anthropologist Evans-Pritchard, according to who the aim of the anthropologist conduction research is to “reveal the structural patterns of a society”, its meanings, and its cultural systems (EVANS-PRITCHARD 1997: 569–574). After the “exploration”, using participant observation and microanthropological research is completed, and the researcher systematized, interpreted the results of his collection of empirical data, he may compare or encourage others to compare his research results with other interpretations. This way the anthropologist can also contribute to the comparative understanding of cultures. “Studying every new society increases his knowledge of basic social structures and offers him a better chance to determine... their essential features and variations of their causes”. (EVANS-PRITCHARD 1997: 569)

In this sense, the purpose of our research – in conjunction with Evans-Pritchard’s point of view – can also be called “examination of the common”. However, this can only be achieved by following Franz Boas’s still relevant basics that the primary task of cultural anthropology is to study individual cultures and communities, that is, “generalizing” comparisons can only follow after and based on already interpreted particle research. (BOAS 1997: 131–146)

The researched (and possibly later compared) system of meaning is “studied in a particular society. If we want to know more about these social phenomena, we can examine it in a second, then a third society, and so on. Through each study, as our knowledge grows and new problems arise, research is deepening and we are learning about the essential features of what we have studied, whereby “individual investigations are given a new meaning and perspective” (EVANS-PRITCHARD 1997: 572). Thus, the research carried out in this way can give a “new meaning and perspective” to the findings of previous and / or other scientific methods. “This will always happen if we fulfill a necessary condition ... if the conclusions of each study are clearly formulated so that they not only validate the conclusions from previous research, but also lead to new hypotheses that can be broken down into problems to be investigated in fieldwork.” (EVANS-PRITCHARD 1997: 572–573)

This reflexive and creative attitude to previous research results and to the ever-changing reality of cultures does not allow an anthropologist to achieve a science-based, “retraceable variable” rule or system. Instead, adapting to the “subject” of his research, its comparative results are intended to be further considered work to stimulate new research and perspectives. However, this does not mean that we do not get “further” knowledge of a particular “general” anthropological issue, since by interpreting the meaning of cultural or social anthropological “states of existence” in different cultural contexts, we can also get to know and understand the “general” features in their imaginative, diverse actualities and realities. (cf. GEERTZ 1994: 217–239) In this way, it is not only possible to think of them “realistically and specifically”, but to think “creatively and imaginatively along with them”. (GEERTZ 1994: 191)

Based on what has been said, “comparability” itself may cause additional problems, in fact, parallel presentation of “similar” phenomena and their interpretation within their own cultural contexts is realized in our case studies. Therefore, these researches are strings of specific case studies primarily, pointing to the cultural backgrounds, characteristics, and various appearances of particular problems, at the same time (along with it) they wish to refrain from the influence of any specific theory. Without the latter attempt there would be a chance that the individual examples explored will be “dominated” by a given theory or hypothesis, losing their meanings originated from their cultural and social contexts. (cf. TURNER 1997: 699)

We may contemplate on the comparative relationships even during our fieldworks, however, these should not be determined by the researcher’s hypotheses, so we need to let our researched communities reformulate and lead our questions to other directions. Thus the “emerging”, comparable phenomena become even more interesting and relevant, as they stem from the “spontaneous reality” of the culture and not from the ideas of the researcher.

The internal categories of my researched communities made it possible for me to create comparable categorizations along the researched religious phenomena. Intertwining of religions and own culture, tradition, ethnic identity, its inseparable reciprocity, determinative meaning of ritual space and time in the life of the given ethnic religious communities, as well as self-defined unity and diversity of minority, existential positions in light of religion I “learned” and systematized all these one-by-one during the course of my fieldworks. These structures were not, therefore, “forced” onto my researched communities, but they highlighted the determinant natures of these issues, and thus I conceived the possibility of comparability as well. In addition, my examples and interviews can, in themselves, contain many criticisms of Hungarian public life, as many insights and negative experiences of my fieldwork speak about the minimal existence of our social sensitivity and solidarity. Many times, during my fieldwork, the question of how we accept and include the people we live with, and thus ourselves, arose in me.

With the application of cultural relativism – I believe – we can present the phenomena we are researching in their own reality, and thus make the seemingly hidden worlds of own cultures open to anyone who will be glad to have each other as guests in our world.

Considering what has been described, cultural anthropological cognition and method is not to be “dogmatized”, not even in terms of the individual’s personal experiences, since they are constantly changing, even in the course of their various fieldwork. What is common to all of us is trust in the intensive empirical research and its results. Although in a special way, but the “authenticity” of the cultural anthropology transpires from this.

13 Epilogue: Anthropology of Lajos Boglár, 'Many Faces of Culture' and *Ephemeral Reality*

In all the chapters of this book, the question may have arisen, and how can, or can one learn at all empathy towards other cultures? Can one learn the basic momentum of cultural anthropological research, mutual trust and willingness to accept? Is there a methodological “key” that could be applied to all cultural anthropological research?

“Regarding the theoretical debates, as well as the question of fieldwork methodology, I believe – as many wise men say – the key that opens all locks can only be a skeleton key!” – summarized Lajos Boglár his experiences of fieldwork during his lectures. Professor Boglár prepared hundreds of anthropologists for fieldwork at the ELTE Cultural Anthropology Department. He taught, persuaded and encouraged fieldwork, but he did not teach “the” methodology of fieldwork. We, his students, are committed to making that a success through our research work and by passing on the lessons we learned from him.

I cannot talk about Professor Boglár in past tense. On the walls of the rooms of our department we can still see the pictures he took, his books and video cassettes lined up in

the closets. His ideas, words, love and humor continue to surround the corridors, the halls and the hearts of his students and colleagues. What is certain, that the books he wrote *Among the Tropical Indians*, the *Wahari*, and *Pau Brasil*, will pique the interest of many generations in cultural anthropology and the South American Native cultures, much like Lévi-Strauss: *Szomorú trópusok (Tristes Tropiques)* edited by Boglár, or Franz Boas: *Népek, nyelvek, kultúrák (Race, Language, and Culture)*, compiled and prefaced by Boglár). Only few people know, but Boglár, in addition to the books mentioned, also contributed to the provision of knowledge of Latin American culture and worldview with the translation of Borges' works, and (together with Péter Kucka) of *Popol Wuh*, a text that recounts the mythology and history of the K'iche', one of the Maya peoples. With dozens of scientific publications, *Vallás és antropológia (Religion and Anthropology)* notes, *Mítosz és kultúra (Myth and Culture)*, and with his books, *A kultúra arcai (Faces of Culture)*, he has provided indefinite help for national and international social discourse and education. And I have not yet spoken of his exhibitions, albums, and films, the introductions of Native Latin-American art.

In addition to the above, Lajos Boglár's lifetime achievement, what close to his heart was to establish and develop the Cultural Anthropology Department in Budapest, nowadays known as the "Budapest School" in its time the first in Hungary. There, in addition to the criterion of intensive and direct knowledge of the communities we want to research, we have also learned solidarity and responsibility toward them. Professor Boglár passed it on to us that we can only understand the different cultures and the science of anthropology itself, if by setting aside our prejudices, we live together with the researched community, and try to understand them by understanding their concepts and their own interpretations.

Professor Boglár did not want every student to be a practicing cultural anthropologist; he sought to make the students situated at the most diverse areas of society impregnate with the world view of cultural relativism, empathy and solidarity, which also feeds on experience. As their disciples and colleagues, we try to preserve, pass on, and keep this spirit alive. That is why I present a methodological course plan inspired by and developed together with Professor Boglár, which can form the basis or supplement the work of other cultural anthropology courses, specializations and workshops.

The specific social science paradigm of cultural anthropology includes the approach of *cultural relativism*, the *holistic interpretation* of researched communities and the use of *participatory observation*. Accordingly, anthropologists are trying to explore the realities of cultural-social meanings through active, living participation in the everyday lives of the communities they research. The theoretical trends and works of cultural anthropology are not known or understood without individual field work experience, since the decisive theoretical works are born along with such experiences, and consequently, they have been thought through or communicated later by anthropologists doing fieldwork. Therefore, one of the basic goals of field work training is to acquire this communication through theoretical literature and independent field work. We believe that our students can only understand and apply the approach and methodology of cultural anthropology through this commu-

nication. All this follows the research and methodological principles and practice developed and implemented by Lajos Boglár. This is how Professor Boglár summarized this during one of the interviews:

“We do place great emphasis on fieldwork and want our students to build their theoretical knowledge on this base. However, we must know that this profession would not have been if Malinowski, Boas, Mead and their peers did not come up with their theories after conducting fieldwork. Just as Clifford Geertz is unimaginable without Morocco and Bali. This is true for education, too. In this profession the theoretical presentation of a teacher can only be credible if it is based on fieldwork. And, for the student, the theory is only important if it can be put into practice. We only grant a diploma to those who complete a minimum of one hundred and thirty days of fieldwork. Of course, there is an exception for student with physical disabilities. In general, students who do fieldwork generally know much more than the others.” (CSÁKY 1994: 218)

Therefore, our curriculum is based on students’ fieldwork. The lectures and practical seminars that have been attended during the semesters are designed to help students’ research. Students adapt and modify, even supplementing both theoretical insights and methodological techniques to their field research experiences. Therefore, all students have the opportunity to have personal and systematic consultations with the instructors of the department, during which they can think together about the professional and human challenges of research. Our department’s educational philosophy, based on the legacy of Lajos Boglár, is founded on the mutual partnership that characterizes the relationship between the student and the instructor as well as the researcher and members of the researched community.

Exercising empathy during fieldwork or in the everyday life of education cannot be taught and learned for everyone, but at the path of Lajos Boglár’s anthropology, we have the opportunity to feel and understand: to accept and understand each other, there is no other way for an anthropologist.

The more general topics analyzed in the book are also based on the results of these meticulous field studies and interpretations. My writing, following the perspectives of cultural anthropology, tried to contribute to the recognition and understanding of the faces of culture.

Culture is a constantly changing reality. “Our flashes” in the worlds of diverse cultures are therefore similar to the moments of “ephemeral reality”. Cultural anthropology attempts to preserve these moments, these “snapshots”, without which we would miss the opportunity to marvel at each other’s differences and similarities. The truth of “ephemeral reality” is that we can understand what is common in us by discovering our differentness.

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How is *Man* to be defined?

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