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INTRODUCTION

'Re-enchantment' and religious change in former socialist Europe

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ABSTRACT

This essay presents the concept of 're-enchantment' as a useful heuristic tool to identify, analyse, and explain new forms of religious change in contemporary Central-Eastern and Eastern Europe. It seeks to understand new religious and 'spiritual' configurations in an area and in a period known as 'post-socialist'. It also attempts to map out the historical conditions structuring both patterns of religious change and scholarly output on the subject, which continue to be particular and at times unique in this region. In so doing, this essay also raises questions about the persistence of the East/West divide, problematising it and seeking to go beyond this binary. Some of the new religious phenomena studied in this essay as well as in the entire thematic issue seem to emerge independently from the once typical state-church dynamics and seem to be more related to the both specific local and general global trends. We argue that the concept of 're-enchantment' and a typology of the re-enchanted practices it encompasses allows to account for, analyse, and understand these dynamics and transformations.

KEYWORDS

Re-enchantment; secularisation; postsocialism; Central-Eastern Europe; religious change; spirituality; pluralism; religion and politics

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Central-Eastern European societies have been marked by several waves and forms of concomitant religious decline and revival which have constantly shaped and reshaped local identities, making them a fertile soil yielding new phenomena that defy the conceptual frameworks of the study of religion in this area (see e.g., Aitamurto and Simpson, 2014; Borowik and Babiński 1997). Indeed, the religious/secular divide prevalent in scholarship became increasingly problematic in accounting for the more recent germination of new religious phenomena nourished by wider, global dynamics. For example, in Hungary, from the 1990s onwards, congregations as varied as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, The Church of Scientology, a locally founded charismatic church, as well as different strands of Buddhism have gained social visibility, while alternative medicines and different forms of Neo-shamanism and contemporary Paganism have also become popular (Kürti 2001). At the same time, more recently, in different countries in the region, as also in the West, techniques of personal development such as relaxation, yoga, and mindfulness, have penetrated managerial practices, tinging working environments with a touch of

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spirituality. In Poland, where the power of Catholicism has been long uncontested, even during socialism, heritage sites have been appropriated for spiritual purposes: one example is the courtyard of the Wawel Castle in Krakow, where individuals seek to absorb the 'chakra energy' purportedly emanating from one of its corners (Niedźwiedź 2022). In the same vein, also in Krakow, historical re-enactment, in principle devoid of religious overtones, may merge and overlap with new forms of religiosity, notably contemporary Paganism (Baraniecka-Olszewska 2016; 2022).

However conspicuous today, some of these phenomena were difficult to record ethnographically when the 'post-socialist religious question' (Hann 2006; Rogers 2005) was raised some twenty years ago. This ambitious project of understanding changes in the religious field that emerged amidst the political and economic transformations in Central and Eastern European countries classified some of the emergent practices as ephemeral and bound to the so-called 'transition period', while identifying others, like ethno-national religious belonging, and its effect on national, regional, and global politics as more durable and relevant at that time (McBrien and Naumescu 2022).

This thematic issue attempts to place the study of religious change in former socialist Central and Eastern European countries in a novel theoretical perspective that allows us to account both for these new forms of religiosity and the shifts in traditional religious institutions. While religious alternatives also abound in the Euro-American world as corollaries of secularisation (see Hanegraaff 1999), in this context the place of religion in society was determined by a very specific political regime that promoted state atheism. Thus, Central-Eastern Europe appears to be a particularly fruitful area for exploring the dynamics of secularisation in the context of the complex ways in which the socialist past affects religious change. Relying on the Weberian concept of 'disenchantment', we propose to revisit the question at point with its binary notion of 're-enchantment', which the articles in this issue explore from a variety of methodological angles, but primarily from an ethnographic perspective.

As an outcome of the eponymous research project *The Re-Enchantment of Central-Eastern Europe*,[1] this issue stems from the conceptual and theoretical reflections pursued by the research team members. The region under scrutiny we refer to as Central-Eastern Europe (or, alternatively Central and Eastern Europe) is composed of former socialist countries from the Eastern Bloc. Although different from each other, these countries are nevertheless associated by the presence of democratic liberalism following a recent past under regimes of 'real socialism' (a short-cut term referring to historical communist regimes that intended to actually implement a politically viable form of socialism, whether this happened within or without the theoretical frameworks provided by Marxist-Leninist ideology and its variations and developments during the 20th century). Following the project's comparative intent, the papers gathered here attempt to cover at least a part of this area, including case studies from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Serbia. These countries have experienced various transformations since the 1990s. New legal and economic frameworks were introduced, notably due to the accession of most of them to the European

[1]This publication is the outcome of the ERC CZ project 'ReEnchEu' (n. LL2006), which was led by Dr. Alessandro Testa between 2020 and 2022 at the Department of Sociological Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague, and funded by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Union. Meanwhile, new public policies, such as cultural heritagisation, affected local memory politics. More recently, marketisation, consumerism, neoliberalism, and globalisation also exerted substantial impact on these societies.

Since the first decade of democratic transition, religious institutions have had to face increasing religious diversity, which could potentially undermine their political status and which has caused additional tensions where the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches have had dominant positions throughout history. At the same time, in Central-Eastern European countries this diversity does not seem to result from exogenous sources as these countries have not been the target of significant flows of immigration, unlike Western Europe where Islam has become a political concern (see Ahmed, 2018; Marranci 2012) . On the individual level, these new political and economic frameworks have given rise to new representations of personhood which intertwine with emergent religious and spiritual practices that also shape new forms of subjectivity. The articles in this thematic issue present case studies that aim to shed light on how these new frameworks and policies shape people's lives and religious experiences. We aim not only to document recent developments, but also to go beyond the hypotheses that have been offered during the last decade (for a recent overview, see McBrien and Naumescu 2022), notably by testing the heuristic value of the notion of 're-enchantment' in different contexts. In order to do so, we will, on the one hand, examine the conceptual tools of the study of religious change in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, most of which stem from the secularisation and desecularisation theses, and put them to the test with fresh ethnographic data. On the other hand, in this Introduction we will attempt to propose a new conceptual framework that may allow a better understanding of the shifts in the religious field and their relationship to social change in the region, but also in Europe at large.[2] As a result, we hope to contribute to better defining the sociocultural specificities of religious renewal in this region, but also to the methodological and conceptual decompartmentalisation of its study in Eastern and Western Europe.

From state atheism to religious liberalisation

The proximate historical background of Central-Eastern European countries is the legacy of real socialism as it was established in the Eastern Bloc after World War II. Communist state atheism sought to make religion disappear from society at least in its public expressions. Obviously, it was most strongly enforced in the Soviet Union, where churches were closed down, monasteries' properties nationalised, and so on, but in satellite countries a variety of legislative measures, repressive policies, and other forms of social engineering were also put to the service of the control of religion. These policies targeted educational projects, charitable projects, the confiscation of property, and the (re)construction of religious sites, and varied in degree of repression during the socialist period (for example, on the Polish case, see Pasieka 2015; on Hungary, Jobbágy 2016; Tomka 1997; Ungváry 2014; on Czechoslovakia, Minárik 2022).

State atheism was not only a manner of putting into repressive practice Marx's well-known position on religion as a means of social control and oppression: communist ideology also became a tool for occupying the 'superstructural' void that was to be left

[2]This task was also tackled in another recent article: Testa 2023.

by the dismissal of religion itself. It has even been suggested that Marxism itself could be thought of as a political or secular religion, or even, in fact, as a religion *tout court*, with its own charter myths, saint-like figures, rituals, eschatology, and *enchanting* power (this argument has been developed by a number of scholars coming from different methodological and ideological backgrounds: Gellner 1991; Gentile 2007; Kula 2005; Tucker 1958). If, in practice, Marxist–Leninist ideology attempted to eradicate the notion of the transcendent from human consciousness, it did not, however, despite all efforts, succeed in eliminating religion altogether. In fact, state atheism was never entirely successful. Anthropological studies show that there are many examples of how previous religious expressions were preserved under the guise of ethnic/national 'culture' and 'tradition' not only in Central-Eastern Europe but also more generally in the post-Soviet and post-communist space (Kratochvíl 2015; McBrien and Pelkmans 2008; Pelkmans 2007; Pelkmans 2009) or as 'folklore' (see e.g., Kligman 1988 on Romania; Kaneff 2004 on Bulgaria; Cash 2011 on Moldova; Miller 1991 on Russia; Pavlicová and Uhlíková 2013 on Czechia; Petrošienė 2016 on Lithuania). Some religious practices were openly and purposely perpetuated as a means of resistance against the socialist regime (Creed 2011; Köbel 2021; Pasieka 2015). The persistence of these forms may leave one to wonder whether they are alternative modes of social transcendence (see Luehrmann 2015) and, if so, how they relate to re-enchantment. However that may be, continuities were carried through the socialist period in a myriad of ways.

The unorthodox forms of religion developed under socialism are problematic to deal with from the (Western) social science perspective, relying on the secularist divide between public and private (Casanova 2001). While the secularisation of the public sphere, culminating in the retreat of religion from government, evolved gradually and voluntarily in the Western world, in socialism it was imposed as the atheist political project. However, as anthropologist Tamara Dragadze (1993) has shown in Russia, for Orthodoxy and Islam, religion was not exactly 'privatised' in the modern liberal sense, but 'domesticated'. In her case study, religious practice shifted from outside the home to its interior, and religious expertise was transferred from the hands of professional practitioners to the ordinary people. Among Greek Catholics in western Ukraine, a comparable dichotomy between the private and public spheres was noted by Vlad Naumescu (2007), notably in terms of routinisation and hierarchy. In the case of communities that operated underground before the 1990s, a strong demand from below helped maintain the charismatic features of previous religiosity, while re-entry into the public sphere required the replacement of formal hierarchical structures, which gave way to more routinised structures of authority and standardised rites. These few compelling examples show that religion persisted in many ways during socialist rule. It was on this fertile ground that religious liberalisation took hold after 1989.

Indeed, while according to the typical local intellectual narratives current in the 1990s that the 'regime change' was abrupt and created an 'ideological vacuum' (see Batalov 1997), social scientific research showed, through varied examples, that this idea is hardly grounded in empirical evidence. Socialist ideology had enduring effects and its various cultural forms often found new purposes in religious life, generating continuities and unexpected forms of secularism. For example, in Russia, Sonja Luehrmann (2011) traces 'elective affinities' by looking at the relationship between didactic skills and habits of secular (especially of the Soviet era) and religious traditions. Research into

and among Orthodox teachers of religion demonstrates that Soviet pedagogical skills and the collective representation of female didactic authority were put into service in Orthodox education (Ładykowska and Tocheva 2013). In Bulgaria, Kristen Ghodsee (2009) accounted for modern Bulgarians' specific conception of the appropriate Church-State relations through the idea of 'symphonic secularism', based on the principle of *symphonia,* which denotes the harmony that is supposed to exist between spiritual and temporal authority. She shows that this conception is so ingrained in present-day Bulgarian society that it affects the legislation of individual religious freedoms and thus new religious groups, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the recent forms of Islam coming from abroad. Further east, in the Urals, Douglas Rogers (2009) identified the driving forces of the endurance of faith among Old Believers despite the adverse conditions they experienced under Soviet atheistic rule and even before. In this case, it is the generational differentiation of religious participation and economic activities (reserving the former for the elderly and the youngest and the latter for the generations in between) that allowed the successful reproduction of tradition. Similar dynamics have been recorded elsewhere in post-socialist Europe, notably in Estonia, where it is possible to speak of 'priestless Orthodoxy' (Ładykowska 2022) and in Romania, where this mechanism takes the form of 'temporary secularisation' (Naumescu 2016).

Post-socialist religious revival, triggered by the introduction of religious freedom, still presents a major methodological challenge. While in these countries secularisation occurred as an abrupt political project of state atheism, the process of deprivatisation of religion that followed the collapse of the communist regimes was also, just like state atheism, characteristic of that context.[3] Deprivatisation of religion, that is, the reemergence of religious traditions previously relegated to a marginal position in the private sphere (Casanova 2001), in the sense that the Western liberal model dictates it, rests upon the separation of Church and State and the right to freedom of religion. This right grants individuals the possibility of choosing their religion and equal rights of worship and public expression for any religious group. This premise requires a specific model of religious pluralism. However, in this regional context this new legal framework generated different configurations in hierarchy. Previously marginalised and institutionalised religions saw an opportunity to regain lost power and adherents. The revival of religious institutions in most Central and Eastern European countries (Tomka 2011) during the 1990s and 2000s was coupled with growing pluralisation and the development of alternative spiritualities and the rise of different spiritual figures. Yet, in the countries where a particular religion has historically made a major contribution to national identity, the State is confronted with a tension between the desire to secure the right to religious freedom and that of protecting those traditional religious identities (Hann 2000).

This phenomenon is described as 'hierarchical pluralism' in Poland (Pasieka 2015), denoting a configuration of social relations which allows plurality, while at the same time establishing one religious group as dominant and norm-defining. In other words, in this context, expressions of pluralism do not only conceal actual power relations,

[3]The question arises as to whether the socialist modernisation project was an example of alternative modernity, or not. Post-socialist scholars have long argued for this idea, undermining the ethnocentrism and universality of Western social theory and the way it renders the relationship between modernity and religion separate (Hann 2011; 2012; Ładykowska 2019; 2022).

but they also become a way for the majority to exercise symbolic power. As a consequence, despite religious liberalisation, in the case of post-socialist Central-Eastern European countries, the religious field is complexified by an interplay of informal hierarchies and formal (i.e., legally normative) pluralism. The case of Hungary is another compelling example of this. While the 1990 law on churches enabled almost 300 religious groups to register, the cardinal law regulating religious freedom and church-state relations in the new Constitution (or Fundamental Law) introduced in 2012 imposed much stricter conditions. The latter law established a hierarchy between 'historic' churches and more recent ones, resulting in the preferential treatment of Christian denominations, notably of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism (Uitz 2012; Ádám and Bozóki 2016). However, hierarchical pluralism does not come into play in all of the contexts explored here, as the example of the Czech Republic indicates, where a higher degree of religious individualisation prevails (Václavík, Hamplová, and Nešpor 2018). According to the latest census, 'non-believers' (atheists and agnostics) make up about 50% of the population, that is, more than three times of all religious affiliations and denominations combined (approximately 15%, of which 8% are 'believers not belonging to a church or religious society'). It has been observed that Czechs are proud of being considered as the 'least religious country in the world' to the point of using this consideration to convey and express national identity among foreigners (Nešpor and Nešporová 2009). Despite these overwhelming statistical figures that suggest that this region is particularly secularised, recent research (Bártová 2021; 2023) demonstrates that some modalities of religious transformation can go unnoticed in statistics. Further on in this Introduction, we propose the concept of re-enchantment to address both of these issues: the empirical landscape of the religious practices under scrutiny and the necessary adjustments to be made in the theoretical toolkit to enable analysis of them. What is at stake is how this notion can contribute to the understanding of religious change in this region and its relationship to wider global processes.

In general, societies classified as 'post-socialist' have attracted scholarly attention as compelling examples of social rupture and transformation. The case studies addressing the post-socialist religious question originally encompassed Central and Eastern Europe and almost all of Asia. However, the European countries progressively gained more recognisable characteristics, drifting away from the Eurasian model (exemplified by Russia and several Central Asian countries); yet, despite their accession to the European Union, some of them have not been considered fully integrated into the West.[4] If the interconnection of the idea of 'transition' with the label 'post-socialism' has been put into question (Cervinkova 2012; Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002; Müller 2019), former socialist Europe is still perceived, both in social scientific and common-sense thinking, along the East–West divide determined by the region's past. The challenge of the study of new religious phenomena in Central-Eastern Europe is thus to find adequate conceptual tools that allow to account for both local specificities, which can hardly be considered solely under the post-socialist lens any longer, and more general trends of

[4]We are fully aware of the problematicity of the notion of the West, and of the different connotations this notion acquires in different disciplinary and epistemological traditions. In this article, we use the term as a descriptive term to indicate the Atlantic geopolitical space that stood against the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War and into which many former socialist countries have been integrated – or are being integrated, also painfully, as in the case of Ukraine – after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

religious change in Europe at large. Some scholars argue that religion in the West has been less and less defined according to its relationship with the State and more subjected to the effects of globalisation and its corollaries (see Gauthier 2020a). Is it possible to directly apply these findings to address religious change in this region without overlooking the particularities of the national contexts?

Indeed, this region seems to raise methodological, epistemological, and conceptual challenges stemming both from the specificities of the local developments of religious change and from the scientific approaches devised to address them. For example, do the different forms of spirituality, body techniques, and alternative therapies that have become particularly popular in most Central-Eastern European countries since the 2000s, and have also been present in the West for some time (meditation, yoga, reiki, etc.), usually related to consumer culture and the educated middle class, have the same socioeconomic bases in this region? Do other New Age practices inspired by traditions originally remote in space and/or time, such as Neo-shamanism and contemporary Paganism, acquire the same political significance in this region as in the West? The relevance of these questions may be evidenced by methodological constraints that stem from different epistemological traditions. State atheism imposed a gap that lasted decades in the study of religion in this region in two major ways. For obvious political reasons, the region was inaccessible to foreign researchers. Due to the theoretical and ideological restrictions directed against religion, and strictly delineated topical areas of study, native scholarship focused on folklore and so-called 'folk religion' (Lubańska and Ładykowska 2013). In turn, these differences have had a persistent effect on the choice of research questions, case studies, interpretative frames, and so on, between Western and local scholars. This can be illustrated by the scholarly literature on Pagan revival. While the data mustered in the diverse studies on Western forms of contemporary Paganism is vertiginously rich, this field of study as a whole remains fragmented and few attempts have yet been made to theorise this phenomenon and to introduce a comparative perspective (e.g., Pizza and Lewis 2009; Rountree 2015; 2017; York 2003). This may be due to the singularity of Western forms of contemporary Paganism and contemporary spirituality in general, which imposes immediately the methodological constraint of participant observation (or 'observant participation') upon the researcher (Salomonsen 2004), which encourages what may be called a 'religionist approach' (Davidsen 2012) disposed to convey the internal concerns of these religious movements, as well as the consideration of the lived experience of their participants. In contrast, relying mainly on textual sources, the methodological approaches developed in the study of contemporary Paganism in the Central and Eastern European region strongly differ from those of Western scholars. An inadvertent result of the conditions structuring the patterns of anthropological, and more generally, social scientific output are hierarchies of knowledge production (and dissemination) that have been discussed already for some time, but with relatively little resonance (e.g., Buchowski 2004; 2012; Hann 2005; Pasieka 2014). Thus, the issue of religious and spiritual revival invites a renewed problematisation of older conceptual dichotomies, while taking into account various kinds of continuities and changes. Can Central-Eastern Europe still be distinguished from the 'West' on the basis of its communist past associated with (state) atheism and the retreat of religion from the public sphere?

The redefinition of the public/private divide since the 1990s does not mean that states no longer exert control over religious practices in this region. State secularism, even if

only nominal (especially in the case of Poland and Hungary), understood as a mode of governing religion, continues to shape religious subjects' room for maneuver, delineating distinctive ways in which re-enchantment can operate. As the case studies in this issue show, while on the one hand states continue to provide legal frameworks for religious practice, on the other hand re-enchantment, in the sense we propose in this Introduction, happens in the niches overlooked by those policies. Moreover, it seems to be more connected with global trends (e.g., Gauthier 2020a) rather than stem from local particularities. However, it is important to take into account the entanglements between the different (macro, meso, and micro) levels of analysis and their respective methodological, conceptual, and epistemological implications as well as the singularity of the local manifestations of religious change. Indeed, when thinking with re-enchantment, they may shed new light on elusive and/or emergent aspects of the questionable yet unyielding East/West divide. The question arises as to whether it would then be more judicious to think of multiple re-enchantments, considering that this notion can have both analytical and descriptive applications. The existence of religious practices that escape the gaze of the State and nuance the picture delivered by the statistics prompts us to move our discussion away from the issues of the role of the State and secularism towards the theory of secularisation.

From secularisation to re-enchantment

Until recently, the conceptual frame of the secularisation paradigm prevailed in the understanding of religious change in modernity (Tschannen 1992). The decline of institutional religion on political, cultural, and individual levels during the modern times was interpreted as forceful empirical evidence of the inevitable abandonment of religion as such. Without challenging the secularisation paradigm, Peter Berger (1999) coined the concept of 'desecularisation' to understand the rise of institutional religions and the flourishing of individual religiosity. The notion of post-secularisation or post-secular society posits a subsequent stage that follows secularisation while questioning both the idea of religious decline and that of secularity (Nynäs, Lassander, and Utriainen 2012; Parmaksız 2018). As a descriptive term used for periodising the late-modern times, it also attempts to account for neoliberal capitalism and its contractual and managerial approach towards religion in the public sphere (Possamai 2017). The religious/secular divide is thus conceived as a separation between politics and religious institutions. Other theoretical assumptions such as 'sacralisation' (Demerath 2007), or 're-sacralisation' tackle more specifically the emergence of new forms of religiosity without disproving the idea of religious decline (Bruce 2017). Moreover, the category of 'sacred' has a heavy hermeneutic stratification, having been used and theorised about in modern scholarship for more than a century (Otto 1917). Having being defined as opposed to that of the 'profane', it shows, according to some authors, a tendency towards essentialisation (Husser 2017).[5] Some of the concepts used in scholarship on secularisation/desecularisation are 'alternative spirituality' (Huss 2014), 'secular spirituality' (Fuller 2001), 'cultural

[5]Despite this kind of criticism, the sacred remains a fundamental category in the scientific study of religion. As such, it has never ceased to inspire new avenues of research (see Stausberg 2023). Indeed, one of the articles in this issue attempts to analyse the late modern experience of the sacred as a specific modality of re-enchantment (see Rejowska 2023).

religion' (Demerath 2000), 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1990), 'belonging without believing' (Marchisio and Pisati 1999), and 'religious without religion' (Berzano 2019). Since the semantic nuances between them as well as the difference between the empirical phenomena to which they refer is debatable, some of them are not only operationalised but also reformulated and problematised in this issue.

Indeed, most authoritative conceptualisations of religious change in modernity have been developed in the 'Western hemisphere'. Therefore, the use of these concepts in Central and Eastern European contexts requires caution, as it may lead to the presupposition that they have undergone the same religious transformations. Furthermore, the secularisation paradigm has also raised criticism. Hence, some authors, like François Gauthier (2020a; 2021), have even proposed to abandon it altogether[6] and focus instead on understanding religious life in the neoliberal, globalised world (and therefore in former socialist Europe, too) in its own terms.

A promising way of understanding religious change in Central and Eastern Europe can be through the concept of 're-enchantment'. For Weber, disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) signified scientific and ethical rationalisation leading to the loss of meaning and magic in the world. Used metaphorically, the idea of disenchantment does not however imply that it should eclipse enchantment from the span of Western human experience altogether and may even be considered a myth of modernity (Josephson-Storm 2017). Indeed, this well-known Weberian interpretative paradigm has its counterpart in the term 're-enchantment', which has inspired studies in philosophy (Scruton 2014), art (Elkins and Morgan 2009), religious studies (Landy and Saler 2009; Partridge 2004), history of religions (Asprem 2019), sociology (Jenkins 2000), and ethnology (Isnart and Testa 2020; Margry 2008; Testa 2017). Richard Jenkins argues that disenchantment, that is, the decline of magic and the expansion of formal-rational logic and processes, lying at the heart of the Weberian understanding of Western modernity, has been subverted and undermined by a diverse array of oppositional '(re)enchantments'. He proposes to see it in these two linked tendencies which encompass, on the one hand, 'everyday explanatory frameworks of luck and fate; long-established or "traditional" spiritual beliefs; "alternative" or "new age" beliefs; and "weird science"', and, on the other, 'collective attachments such as ethnicity; sexualities; intoxications and ecstasies; the escapism of television, computer games, and the internet; and consumerist cultural hedonism' (Jenkins 2000, 12–13). Clearly connected with Western modernity, the idea of 're-enchantment' is decidedly open-ended, and can be thought to include virtually all cultural practices that are somehow opposed to rationalisation: religious fundamentalisms, alternative lifestyles, anti-globalisation, tourism, Neopaganism and other spiritualities, but also psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (Jenkins 2000, 18). While Jenkins' idea of re-enchantment describes late-modern experiences at large (and not necessarily exclusive to religion) from a sociological perspective, that of enchantment, as Alfred Gell (1992) develops it in anthropology regarding art, technology, and magic, is clearly used outside the Weberian framework, which is less pertinent in non-Western contexts. The applicability of re-enchantment in the post-socialist area was already noted by Gerald Creed (2011), in his original study of Bulgarian mumming in

[6]The question of the usefulness of the secularisation theory for explaining various phenomena studied quantitatively and/or qualitatively has been a matter of contention among a number of scholars (see Gauthier 2020b).

the 1990s and 2000s. His analysis shows that the practices involved had been reinvested with supernatural connotations that had been previously denied. Creed attributes this to concomitant trends of modernisation and de-modernisation, typical of the post-socialist transition, and particularly illustrative of the complexity of social relationships in this period. For all these reasons, this work was a major source of inspiration in our reprise of the concept of re-enchantment. Considering the multiple possibilities of its use, we take advantage of the malleability of the notion of 're-enchantment' in our attempt to better understand recent religious phenomena. As the articles in this issue illustrate, religious change is undoubtedly taking place today, and it shows interesting common patterns both within Central-Eastern Europe, and between Central-Eastern Europe and the rest of Europe.

The authors in this collection investigate the wider, structural reasons and cultural conditions that may have led to 're-enchantment' in Central and Eastern Europe. It is used, on the one hand, as a descriptive term to accommodate the analysis of various new religious phenomena observed in this region. On the other hand, it is a fresh and theoretically intriguing analytical category capable of addressing the puzzling concomitancy and interplay of religious decline and revival. Mindful that both disenchantment and re-enchantment were concepts constructed in relation to Western specificities of religious change, we aim to test it in Central-Eastern Europe, also in order to assess the conceptual and epistemological implications of the East–West divide. Hence, the articles in this thematic issue, by mobilising the concept of re-enchantment for a variety of empirical case studies and for the theoretical framework developed in this Introduction, contribute to strengthen its explanatory power vis-à-vis the question of religious transformations in contemporary Central-Eastern Europe.

The workings of re-enchantment as a heuristic tool are certainly multiple, and they raise further epistemological questions. Considering the divergence of the historical, intellectual, and epistemological backgrounds of local and Western scholars of the region, it may potentially contribute to altering the hierarchies of knowledge production mentioned above. If the existence of the latter and/or their extent as well as the idea of colonial power relations they imply are matters of debate, and some may consider this question overrated in Central-Eastern Europe, re-enchantment could be an answer to these issues, as it has a potential to encompass both Western and post-socialist experience. Its explanatory power should be assessed by interrogating whether the use of this notion yields the same insights as in its original Western context. What is at stake is understanding religious change in former socialist countries while avoiding both an excessive differentiation of this region from other European countries and an overemphasis of similarities over differences among them.

In our understanding, 're-enchantment' refers not only to the emergence or re-emergence of religious phenomena that are less structured and less formalised than institutional religions, but also to their ongoing transformation. In other words, even though the term might lead one to think of a process of 're-making', its actual ambition is to encompass concomitant social continuity, discontinuity (historical ruptures), as well as slower transformations. It is in any case a concept asking to be problematised, as the papers in this issue aim to do from an ethnographic perspective.

In fact, if on the one hand 're-enchantment' is not necessarily more precise than the concepts stemming from the idea of secularisation previously evoked, on the other it

seems adequate for our purposes for semantic reasons, as it is less theoretically used than those. It also suggests a process of active re-acquisition of something that was perhaps lost, dormant, prohibited, or simply forgotten, and it lends itself better to be used to indicate beliefs and practices that are related to magic or other forms of alternative, non-official, and/or non-institutionalised religious practices, and 'spiritualities' (Isnart and Testa 2020; Partridge 2004), but also to creative religious expressions in the public sphere (Chlup 2021; Lackenby 2021), or unprecedented examples of 'lived religion' (Bártová 2023).

The case studies investigated in the articles in this issue as well as those that inductively informed – and can be inferred from – our typology delineate the scope of a rather evident religious trend. However, this consideration does not imply that such a trend be the major or most significant one in Central-Eastern Europe, for there are other religious configurations in these late modern societies. Nonetheless, re-enchantment remains not only empirically ascertainable but also partly visible from the statistics themselves, if one takes care to read and interpret them correctly (see Václavík 2014; some re-enchanted phenomena and practices such as modern Paganism, 'Western Buddhism', invented religions like Jediism, practices of being 'spiritual but not religious', and others are indeed reported in the already mentioned 2021 Czech Census and in the wider survey published in PEW 2017). This does not mean, however, that all the types of phenomena we consider re-enchanted are visible and recordable through quantitative research methods such as statistical surveys.

The various empirical cases discussed in this issue may seem at first sight disconnected, but in fact they involve specific cultural and religious patterns. At closer scrutiny, even a typology which clarifies both its descriptive and analytical potential can be attempted here. First, we refer to the re-appropriation of autochthonous religious representations and practices that had existed and/or are held to have existed before the modernisation of these countries. These can be established vernacular traditions (Bowman and Valk 2012; Primiano 1995), for instance, mumming, Carnival, and carnivalesque festivities, or other folkloric forms bearing evident religious connotations, such as Advent and pre-Christmas ceremonies, or springtime celebrations. A second set of phenomena are the new religious movements and other recently invented or re-invented practices, such as diverse strands of contemporary Paganism and Neo-shamanism. A third one encompasses various uses of magical practices, as in different currents of modern witchcraft. Fourth, there are those phenomena that evoke the ideas of 'cultural religion' (Demerath 2000) or 'belonging without believing' (Marchisio and Pisati 1999), but also non-religion (Quack 2014). These are generally not considered religious by social actors themselves but are dependent on religion and/or religious references. They include new forms of civic rituality, social memory, and/or cultural heritage fruition. These instances are the religious aspects of cultural heritage making and usage, especially of the kind labelled 'intangible', or also religious cultural heritage proper (Badone 2015), but also humanistic weddings (Rejowska 2021). A fifth strand of empirical data concerns contemporary forms of spirituality evolving outside any institutional frame, articulated by social actors as 'believing in something', 'being spiritual', or believing in God but without following any church. Finally, new forms of religious revival within traditional religious denominations are also included, especially Orthodoxy and Catholicism, which contest or enhance the previously established practices and meanings. These

types can overlap in specific cases. This typology may thus be considered as a tentative mapping of the empirical territory we are exploring and does not aspire to be final or exhaustive. The following section explores some of the directions the notion of re-enchantment may orient us towards in the shifting landscapes of religious change in Central-Eastern Europe.

The articles in the issue

In his article for this thematic issue, Gerald Creed ('Avenues of Re-enchantment in Bulgarian Mumming', Creed 2024) begins with a re-consideration of his research findings stemming from his long-term ethnographic fieldwork in post-socialist Bulgaria. Creed's case studies fit aptly in the first and third types of phenomena described in the last paragraph of the previous section, namely vernacular religiosity and beliefs in superhuman or magical efficacy triggered by ritual practice. Creed speculates about three dimensions through which, as he writes, 'the idea of re-enchantment could be applicable and revealing', in the context of Bulgarian folk rituality involving mumming and carnival-like performances aimed at, among other things, exorcising evil and bringing prosperity. The first and third of such dimensions concern the relationship of ambivalence and discontent (or indeed disenchantment) of rural Bulgarian communities vis-à-vis the Western models imported into the country after the fall of Communism, namely decollectivisation and neoliberalism, and the way such local responses have been both influenced and reflected by the ritual practice. The second dimension has to do with re-enchantment proper, and concerns yet another kind of ambivalence: the belief and/or disbelief about the efficacy of said ritual practice. Though pointing at different aspects, all these dynamics have in common, however, the possibility of thinking about Bulgarian re-enchantment in the light of a localised and vernacularised reaction to Western models of modernity, for instance, as a form of symbolic resilience against the partially unfulfilled promises of neoliberalism. This seems to be particularly true in the rural communities left behind during the post-socialist transition, people for whom ritual continuity provided and still provides a strong cohesive and familiar cultural element in the face of economic and social disruptions.

Although the author's analyses and conclusions are deeply grounded in his own ethnographic practice in Bulgaria, they appear to be highly compatible with what has been observed in other European former-socialist contexts, for example in the case of folk rituality in Eastern Bohemia (Testa 2017).

Agata Rejowska's article ('Humanist Marriage Ceremonies in Poland: Re-enchantment and Four Social Constructions of the Sacred', Rejowska 2023) explores the contexts and forms of humanistic rituality in Poland, problematising the concept of re-enchantment differently, and stressing that the process of secularisation does not necessarily entail desacralisation, and that patterns of 'cultural religion' (Demerath III) or 'soft atheism' (Herbert and Bullock 2020) suggest a reconsideration of the traditional binary 'enchanted vs disenchanted'. The author, for instance, opts to work with an old conceptual acquaintance in the field of religious studies, the notion of the 'sacred', theorising it anew and breaking it down into four different phenomenological types (religious sacred, spiritual sacred, secular sacred, and non-religious sacred). These types are constructed inductively on the basis of the author's first-hand case studies of

humanist wedding ceremonies. Certainly, the 'sacred' is a problematic, if controversial, concept. However, it is also true that, as Durkheim already claimed in the green days of the sociology of religion, it can be a very plastic and adaptable concept, just like the social dimensions that it aspires to represent.

Unlike Creed's mumming rituals, Rejowska's humanistic celebrations seem to fall rather easily into the fourth and fifth typology of re-enchantment previously developed. They point at forms of rituality that demonstrate an unwavering appetite for meaning-making, cultural continuity (within religious discontinuity), and the need of interpersonal bonding among contemporary young Poles. They also demonstrate how novel religious and spiritual transformations in former-socialist Europe do not necessarily have to do with the supernatural, the more-than-human, and the transcendental. In fact, in line with what is claimed in this introduction concerning the conceptual scope, breadth, and adaptability of the idea of re-enchantment, the typological variations of sacredness articulated by Rejowska can indeed be subsumed into this idea, and that in spite of the manifest or implicit 'irreligiosity' of humanist ideals and practices.

The two articles dealing with Hungary in this issue tackle esoteric and contemporary Pagan reappropriations of history that cater for re-enchanted modes of knowledge production and new forms of rituality that interlace religion and politics. In his article ('"One Crown to Rule them All … " An Investigation Into Para-scientific Imageries and Esoteric Nationalism Around the Cult of the Holy Crown of Hungary', Povedák 2023), István Povedák documents the development of what he labels the cult of the Hungarian crown (also known as the Holy Crown), a historical object and major national symbol originally associated to the foundation of the state. The different meanings ascribed to it generate non-official, diffuse, and polysemous discourses and practices catalysing a process that can be understood as re-enchantment by nationalism, pointing to the complexity of the political entanglements of religious change. Povedák highlights three waves of reinterpretation of this symbolically charged object. These suggest that the cult of the crown results from different episodes of political and economic change in recent Hungarian history which galvanise renewed understandings of its origins and purpose. Interestingly, socialist rule and state atheism did not eradicate the ultra-nationalist and esoteric ideas the crown inspires, but rather placed them in a state of incubation. This indicates, in turn, that esoteric thinking may be associated to political dissent in this context. The regime change enabled the hatching of what Povedák calls 'mass mysticism' during which the cult of the crown acquired new ramifications, being reappropriated by far-right organisations, and associated not only to the revival/reinvention of shamanic beliefs and practices but also to popular Catholicism. The most recent developments attesting to the strength of this cult, notably its increasing presence in the public space and the support some of its ideologists receive from the current right-wing government, raises the question of whether esoteric conceptions of history will eventually become normative.

Viola Teisenhoffer's article ('Pagan revival, re-enchantment, and new forms of rituality in Hungary: the case of the Kurultaj festival' 2024) explores another manifestation of the increasingly widespread appeal of the re-enchantment of history in Hungary, namely a large cultural revival festival called Kurultaj. Intended to celebrate the supposed 'Hunnic' and 'Central Asian' origins of present-day Hungarians, this public event enacts ethnicised conceptions of history. The diverse actors involved in the festival

and their respective means of engaging with ancestry show a similar ramification of Pagan reappropriations of history in Hungarian society as Povedák (2023) notes regarding the case of the esoteric cult of the crown. Teisenhoffer attempts to understand this appeal of the past through the ethnography of the spaces of the festival and of the ritual activities proposed, focusing on the milieu of Pagan revival they are intrinsically linked to. Ranging from political discourses, historical reenactment, and archaeological lectures to folkloric shows and Pagan/(neo)shamanic rituals the festival's attractions indicate that, here too, re-enchantment operates through a subtle combination of the secular and the religious. This coexistence is apparent in the different means of making the past present or, as Sharon Macdonal writes, 'past- presencing' (Macdonald 2013) which display ambivalence and underdetermination that enable a ritual frame, generating awe, reverence, and a sense of belonging, in a seemingly secular context. The paper suggests that re-enchantment may be understood not only through the beliefs that characterise it and its socio-cultural implications, but also through the ritual forms it creates.

The articles by Zuzana Bártová and Nicholas Lackenby rely on different theoretical conceptions of re-enchantment, yet, interestingly, they both touch upon the same issue of self-development and identity production. Ideas and practices of identity development and assertions actually underlie all the types of phenomena in the above described typology, although implicitly.

Bártová's case study ('Personal Development and Religion at Work in Slovakia: from Life Meaning to Religious Selves', Bártová 2023) is located in Slovakia, a postsocialist country. The context of her research is the work environment of employees and CEOs in enterprises, considered as a part of the global consumerist environment. She sets out with complex theoretical background concerning the relationship between work and religion in an attempt to emphasise their potential as meaning-making devices in the individualised consumer culture of late modernity. Clearly confronted with religious change in this otherwise postsocialist country with vivid overrepresentation of the Catholic Church, she adopts 'the theoretical force of the concept of re-enchantment as "rearticulation of enchantment for the 21st century" (Poveda 2021). It is an undergoing process that does not follow any previous disenchantment and goes beyond the religious-secular divide.' She finds the challenges, hopes, expectations, and pressures exerted by consumer capitalism on individuals-as-workers a powerful set of forces pushing them to seek self-fulfilment and happiness through personal development. This focus on the self is certainly a novel cultural trait in this country, generating new practices and influencing the way the religious dimension can be understood both etically and emically. Bártová's analysis is a creative way to speak not only about religious change, but also about work as a meaningful practice of personal development, and new soteriologies of the 21st century.

Lackenby's analysis ('A technology of re-enchantment: Reading, referencing, and redistributing Orthodox "spiritual literature" in post-Yugoslav Serbia', Lackenby 2024) of Orthodox objects of 'spiritual literature' in post-Yugoslav Serbia makes creative use of Alfred Gell's conception of re-enchantment. Lackenby argues that the reading, referencing, and redistributing of Orthodox texts and writings functions as a 'technology of enchantment' allowing people to grow as Orthodox Christians in postsocialist space:

> reading 'spiritual literature' is more than instructions about when to wear a headscarf or how to venerate an icon properly. Through reading, his interlocutors have developed a new conceptual repertoire with which to narrate, analyse, and respond to the reality of living in post-Yugoslav Serbia. The printing, consumption, and circulation of spiritual literature is one of the ways in which people actively re-enchant social worlds in the wake of ideologically atheist regimes.

In a thickly described ethnography, he demonstrates how specific post-materialist and post-atheist context propels novel and regionally unique ways of engagement with religious texts – distributed as physical objects and as ideas circulating in speech – through which they learn the categories with which to frame everyday life in terms of mystery and divine agency. This overall process leads to refashioning the nation in Orthodox terms, but also to self-development as a Christian person. Lackenby's case is illuminating in its take on materiality, and it follows an intriguing chain of works situated within the 'post-socialist religious question'. Both Bártová's and Lackenby's articles reveal how new conceptions of the self emerge in the wake of religious change, and give the notion of re-enchantment new registers to think with.

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