

From the diffused new religious speech, to the secularized: the re-meaning of new religious terms in contemporary Greek language

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The influence of New Religions in modern culture:
the Diffused New Religiosity

When the term New Religions is used in Western religious studies, it usually refers to those which began to appear and spread in the Western world from the 1960s onwards¹. The main sources of the New Religions are two: a) the traditions of the world's great religions (Christianity, Hinduism, etc.) which, more or less, are subject to reinterpretation by them; b) certain expressions or manifestations of the Western culture, either non-religious (e.g., psychology, music genres), that they perceived as absolutely important for human life and thus are taking a religious character, or religious ones (mainly the pre-Christian European religions

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1. See for example, St. Papalexandropoulos, *Δοκίμια Ιστορίας τῶν θρησκειῶν*, Hellinika Grammata Publications, Athens 1994, pp. 151, 153, 155; D. Io. Bekridakis, «Ἡ Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα καὶ ἡ ἐπαναμάγευση τοῦ Δυτικοῦ Πολιτισμοῦ», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 94, 1 (2023), p. 166; J. G. Melton, "An introduction to new religions", in: J. R. Lewis (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, p. 19; J. G. Melton, "Forward", in: Chr. Partridge (ed.), J. G. Melton (For.), *Encyclopedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*, Lion Publishing, Oxford 2004, pp. 10-11; Chr. Partridge, "Introduction", in: Chr. Partridge (ed.), J. G. Melton (For.), *Encyclopedia of New Religions*, *ibid.*, pp. 14-5, 20-21.

and Western Esotericism)². Despite their great variety and number, it has been proved that they have many traits in common, which are quite different from those of traditional Western religiosity, as well as their sources. As a whole, those features have been called New Religiosity³.

We could trace the origins of the theoretical exposition of the Diffused New Religiosity (which, although was expounded very recently in a systematic fashion⁴, is at least thirty years old)⁵, to articles written by St. Papalexandropoulos, the proponent of the theory, who observed that the New Religiosity's real dynamic is not expressed through its organized agents –the neo-religious movements–, but through the infiltration of ideas, theories, and practices of various origins (e.g. from Eastern religious or esoteric traditions) in many different areas of modern culture (literature, cinema, health care, etc.), that are not connected with organized religious agents, and spread to large swathes of the world population⁶. In this

2. Our classification is very general, and it is based on the categorization made by Bekridakis (ibid., pp. 166-171), Partridge (ibid., pp. 25ff.) and G. D. Chryssides, *Exploring New Religions*, Continuum, London 1999, ²2001, p. 120 et seq.

3. Bekridakis, ibid., pp. 175-192; Papalexandropoulos, ibid., pp. 147, 153 et seq.; G. Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-first Century*, I. B. Tauris, New York 2007.

4. St. Papalexandropoulos, «Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα...», ibid., pp. 11-22. It was first mentioned by St. Papalexandropoulos in his article, «Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα και Έσχατολογία», in: P. Kalaitzidis (ed.), *Εκκλησία και Έσχατολογία*, Kastaniotis Publications, Athens 2001, p. 376, and again in his contribution: «Μία πρόταση ταξινόμησης των Νέων Θρησκειών», in a dedicatory volume: *Κύκκου μαρτυρία: Αφιερωματικός Τόμος πρὸς τιμὴν τοῦ Μητροπολίτη Κύκκου καὶ Τηλλυρίας, Ἡγουμένου τῆς Ἱερᾶς, Βασιλικῆς καὶ Σταυροπηγιακῆς Μονῆς Κύκκου, κ.κ. Νικηφόρου γιὰ τὰ πενήντα χρόνια ἐκκλησιαστικῆς του διακονίας*, Kykkos Monastery Research Centre Publications, Nicosia 2019, pp. 864-865. Other, equally recent theoretical observations about this subject can be found at two articles by Ioan. Xidakis: «Νεομυθολογία. Ἡ μυθικὴ ὄψη τῆς “Νέας Θρησκευτικότητας”», *Σύναξη / Synaxi* 151 (July-September 2019), especially pp. 64-6 and «Μετανεωτερικότητα καὶ Διάχυτη Θρησκευτικότητα», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 151-178 (especially p. 164 et seq.).

5. Bekridakis, ibid., p. 174.

6. See Papalexandropoulos, «Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα», ibid., pp. 11-12, 14-21. For the modern culture's different areas and aspects that the Diffused New Religiosity, and more generally the religious element, is present see P. Admirand, "Horror, Evil and Interreligious Dialogue: A theological analysis of *Gideon Falls* (First Story Arc: Issues 1-6)", *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 23-49; Ioan. Xidakis, «Ἱεροὶ χώροι στὸν κόσμο τῶν βιντεοπαιχνιδιών», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 51-83; D. Oulis,

sense, that is, the neo-religious elements can act autonomously –without excluding, of course, the case of theirs being present within organized religious establishments or institutions–, Diffused New Religiosity can be perceived as a distinct phenomenon, that by now represents a large part of the popular religion⁷.

According to the theory's proponent, for a neo-religious element to be perceived as being part of the Diffused New Religiosity, it must meet four basic criteria: a) to be autonomous, that is, to be present irrespective of its neo-religious source; b) to be widely spread; c) to be perceived as a given / a fact; d) to partially retain its religious status⁸. In the present article, by using the criteria mentioned above, we are aiming to apply this theory to the field of language: firstly, to locate and highlight the neo-religious linguistic elements that have infiltrated the Modern Greek discourse and possess different meanings than their original one, and secondly, to determine whether or not these meanings are relevant to the diffused neo-religious phenomena.

The influence of the religious language on the secular one: the example of Modern Greek

Generally, religious language is defined as the language or a whole set of linguistic idioms used within the context of overall religious activities (for liturgical or homiletic purposes, etc.) in a religious community⁹. Many examples from the Western world (Latin, Old Slavonic), but also

«Ἡ “διάχυση” τῆς θρησκείας στὸ κινηματογραφικὸ θέαμα: μία τυπολογία» *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 85-123; Zampia Agrimaki, «Οἱ ὑπεράνθρωποι ἥρωες: ἀπὸ τῆ ρομαντικῆ λογοτεχνία στὴν “ἐπιστημονικὴ φαντασία”· νέοι “μεσσίες” σὲ μία ἐσχατολογία χωρὶς τέλος», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 125-161; Bekridakis, *ibid.*, pp. 163-201; Loukia Roditou, «Ἡ γιόγκα στὰ διαδικτυακὰ μέσα ἐνημέρωσης ὡς μία μορφὴ Διάχυτης Νέας Θρησκευτικότητας», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 203-231; D. Soukis «Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα: τὸ σύμπαν ὡς ἀνώτερη δύναμη στὴν κοινωνία καὶ στὴν Πόπ Κουλτούρα», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 233-245.

7. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, p. 12.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

9. Br. P. Bennet, *Sacred Languages of the world: An introduction*, Wiley, Oxford 2017, pp. 4-9.

beyond this one (e.g. Ancient Hebrew) have shown that a) the religious languages are not only preserved in a more stable form than the secular ones but also that their influence on the latter ones is far greater than the one that secular languages exert on the religious ones, and b) that they channel through the secular discourse a great variety of terms, phrases, etc., that have been established and widely used, either in a literal or metaphorical sense¹⁰. One of the ways to realize the range of this influence is to use an indicative example which, due to the special subject of our article, will be Modern Greek.

Suppose someone would like to learn how many elements of the Modern Greek language originated in ecclesiastical life. In that case, he or she will be impressed by the multifaceted width and depth of this phenomenon. First of all, this covers all the aspects of ecclesiastical life, from the moment that the Modern Greek language has drawn elements from all its sources¹¹ (e.g., hymns¹², liturgical readings¹³, phrases, or words that can be found on icons or murals¹⁴) etc.; it is related with many different facets and tropes of the Greek language (proverbs, sayings, popular songs, riddles, chants, spells, etc.)¹⁵. The examples are many and can be traced in all the categories mentioned above¹⁶, with everyday speech in Greek being the most characteristic, as there are at least 550 cases of widely spread words, phrases, and names of ecclesiastical origin¹⁷. Again, the scale of this influence

10. J. A. Fishman, "A decalogue of basic perspectives for a Sociology of Language and Religion", in: T. Omoniyi & J. Fishman (eds.), *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*, John Benjamin's Publishing Company, Amsterdam – Philadelphia 2006, pp. 15-16, 23.

11. G. Ioan. Loupasis, *Επιδράσεις της εκκλησιαστικής φρασεολογίας στη νεοελληνική γλώσσα*, Smili Publications, Athens 2003, pp. 21-33.

12. For example, «ἀνάστα ὁ Θεός» (*Psalms*. 81, 8), «Κύριε ἐλέησον» (Chorus's responsory), «νικητῆς καὶ τροπαιοῦχος» (ἵχρος γ', Κανὼν ἀναστάσιμος Ὁρθρου, ὥδῃ α'); see *ibid.*, pp. 64, 154, 170-1 respectively.

13. For example, «ἐκ γενετῆς» (*John* 9, 1), «ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ» (*1st Corinth.* 15, 51-52), «συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος» (*Math.* 28, 20); see *ibid.*, pp. 109, 116, 209 respectively.

14. For example, a mural in the Holy Monastery of St. Varlaam in Meteora, in which The Three Holy Hierarchs are depicted, where the phrase: «θρονω καὶ ὀδύρομαι» is inscribed; *ibid.*, p. 27.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 26, 29, 36, 40.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 53 et seq.

becomes apparent because it covers all the possible human activities and situations¹⁸. Furthermore, these elements are used in every possible way, either by retaining their original religious meaning¹⁹ or by losing it (in a secular/metaphorical context)²⁰ and almost all Greeks are using them²¹. As far as the depth of the ecclesiastical language's influence on the secular one is concerned, we could observe that it is also multifaceted. This is a long-term phenomenon from the time aspect, as its presence harks back many centuries before our era²². In contrast, from another aspect, those elements have become inherent in Modern Greek everyday language²³. Finally, the depth of the influence becomes apparent from the fact that the knowledge of their religious origins has been lost²⁴.

In any case, if all the above could more or less be considered as expected, given the special historical circumstances under which Modern Greek culture and language have been shaped (as the position and the role of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Eastern Roman Empire and subsequently during the period of the Ottoman occupation)²⁵, the same cannot be said about the influence of neo-religious discourse in the contemporary everyday Greek language, which, as we shall see, has become prominent enough.

18. *Ibid.*

19. «ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους» (*John* 15, 17), «ὁργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ» (*Ephes.* 5, 6 and *Col.* 3, 6); *ibid.*, pp. 53, 178 respectively.

20. For example, the phrase «γῆς Μαδιάμ» (*Hab.* 3, 7 *passim*), is used to denote complete destruction. Again, the phrase «ἐπιφοίτηση τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος» (Service of Sanctification and Baptism), which is also used ironically, when someone cannot cope with the circumstances by using only his/her cognitive powers, or the name «Μαθουσάλας» (*Methuselah*) (*Gen.* 5, 21), which is used for a very aged person; *ibid.*, pp. 91, 124 and 240 respectively.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, 34-35, 41-43.

22. G. Io. Loupasis points out that there are many ancient Greek or more recent stereotypical phrases (e.g., «δοῦναι καὶ λαβεῖν», «βίος ἀβιώτος», «ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτόν», «ἐφ' ὅρου ζωῆς»), that have been absorbed from the ecclesiastical discourse and in that way, they spread into the popular language, while those proverbial sayings are a Greek custom that harks back to the most ancient times (see *ibid.*, pp. 21-3, 26-7).

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-3, 38-9 *passim*.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 33, 38-9.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

The influence of the neo-religious discourse on the contemporary one: history and research methodology

Based on what we have found so far, the quantity of relevant religious studies on an international level has shown that it is an understudied phenomenon, even though it has already been observed during the last decades –if only in the form of a simple reference, at least to its secularized version²⁶. Generally speaking, scholars specialized in the study of new religions have not conducted linguistic-oriented research; on the contrary, there are a few linguistic studies regarding new religions, but they are either irrelevant to our research subject, or their writers seem to completely ignore the religious context in which they must place the subject of their investigations, for that to be completely analyzed and understood²⁷. Certainly, it has been observed that neo-religious terms whose origins are traced mainly in Eastern Asia have swarmed the West²⁸ and that many of the ideas, theories, and practices expressed by these terms are placed in a context that differs from their original one²⁹. Apart from that, the metaphorical meanings of some of those terms have already been recorded long ago. However, this was not based on a systematic (linguistic) study of the phenomenon – they have just been lexical entries (in English, French Lexicons, etc.)³⁰. In any case, we would like to quote a noteworthy general observation, even if it is an outcome of ethnolinguistic research (related to the presence of certain ethnic groups in foreign environments) and not from the field of neo-religious studies: “when a movable religion discovers a population hitherto unknown to it,

26. W. S. Bainbridge, “New Religious Movements”, in: J. F. A. Sawyer, J. M. Y. Simpson (eds.), *Concise encyclopedia of language and religion*, Pergamon, Elsevier, Oxford 2001, p. 81.

27. Gr. Meyjes, “Language and world order in Bahá’i perspective: A new paradigm revealed”, pp. 26-41 and Annabelle Mooney, “Maligned and misunderstood: Marginal movements and UK law”, pp. 291-305, in: Omoniyi-Fishman, *ibid.* It is indicative that, in both articles, the most commonly accepted technical term “New Religions” is absent.

28. Bennet, *ibid.*, pp. vi-ii, 17-8, 35, 39, 162, 186.

29. *Ibid.* and also in the pp. ix-x, 105-6, 112-3.

30. See Bennet’s relevant observation on the topic.

the entire sociolinguistic repertoire (i.e., above and beyond the religion itself) can also be affected and altered”³¹.

Even though the phenomenon of New Religiosity in our country is incomparably more recent than Orthodoxy –as we shall see, it first appeared during the 1970s–, it nevertheless has succeeded to acquire within a few decades a prominent position in the contemporary discourse. To describe hundreds of neo-religious groups, organizations, ideas, theories, and practices currently active in Greece³², there is already a great variety of relevant terms and phrases (loan words³³, translations,³⁴ mixed types³⁵) and ways of the latter’s use.

We have located those linguistic terms that are used quite often by firstly observing their presence in spoken language and secondly by others’ observations – recorded or unrecorded. The documentation of the relevant material was twofold: a) it is related to the data that the linguists have already traced their resignification process, therefore there was no need for us to use new sources to document our views; b) it is related to the symbolic meanings that have not already been identified, therefore we turned to the Internet to locate relevant source material during the last decade. We should note that our study was based on the

31. Fishman, *ibid.*, p. 19.

32. Bekridakis, *ibid.*, p. 172; Συνοδική Ἐπιτροπή ἐπὶ τῶν Αἱρέσεων, «Ὁμάδες ἀσυμβίβαστες μὲ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο πίστιν: Ἐξωχριστιανικὲς καὶ παραθρησκευτικὲς ὁμάδες», in: Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, Official Webside of the Church of Greece: https://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/committees/heresies/omades_outchrist.html, [accessed at 10.9.2023].

33. E.g., «γιόγκα», in: Chr. Charalambakis (ed.), *Χρηστικὸ Λεξικὸ τῆς νεοελληνικῆς γλώσσας*, Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν (<https://christikolexiko.academyofathens.gr/index.php>, 19.11.2023). Others, of western origin, are preserved and substitute their Greek translation, even if it faithfully reproduces their content, obviously because it is not considered particularly useful (e.g., the word «μέντιουμ», instead of the Greek word «διάμεσο»), «μέντιουμ», *ibid.*, [19.9.2023].

34. For example, the “Transcendental Meditation” movement.

35. By that we mean either the juxtaposition of Greek and foreign words, like in the case of «Παγκόσμια Ὁργάνωση γιὰ τὴν Συνειδητοποίηση τοῦ Κρίσνα» (“International Society for Krishna Consciousness”), or partly Hellenized words – especially their endings (e.g., the vernacular linguistic forms «Γιαχωβάς», «Γιαχωβοῦ», «Γιαχωβάδες»; see G. Babinotis, *Λεξικὸ τῆς Νέας Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσας*, Centre for Lexicology I.C.E., Athens ⁵2019, the entry «Ἰεχωβάς», pp. 895-6).

recording of the relevant terms and phrases for a period covering the last ten years³⁶

Due to the lack of studies from the Science of Religion's point of view regarding the Greek version of the neo-religious phenomenon, we focused on the extensive theological literature on this matter, which, although it has a different orientation than that of the Science of Religion, we think that it is reliable enough. Again, due to this very same lack of relevant published studies, we were forced to use more non-neo-religious studies regarding the history, theology, and literature of the Eastern Religions, which nevertheless can assist us in presenting certain Eastern neo-religious ideas, theories, and concepts, from the moment that these are by and large identical with the traditional ones.

A last thing we should note is that the presentation of the re-signified neo-religious vocabulary along with its origins and real meaning does not mean that the historical evolution of the new religions in Greece –or, to be more precise, their appeal– is causally related to the integration of this vocabulary in the popular Modern Greek discourse. A typical example of this is yoga; although its traditional agents, the Eastern religions, are not known to be flourishing in our country, yoga has been widely spread as

36. Our present study has been structured as follows: firstly, we have presented the concept of Diffused New Religiosity, as defined by its coiner, then we have referred to the impact of religion on non-religious language, both at a general level and at a more specific level, i.e. in Greek public discourse, and then we have referred to the relevant evidence we have found in the international literature. We develop our methodology in order to then introduce the main topic of our article, which is divided into four parts: in the first, which deals with terms and phrases originating from Eastern religions, we will provide an introductory account of the emergence and spread of Eastern religiosity in the West and Greece, and then we will examine these terms and related phrases; in the next part, which deals with linguistic elements originating from Western Esotericism, we will first give a definition and then present them, along with their neo-religious form and, where necessary, we will briefly refer to their Greek presence; in the third part, we will refer in the same way to those linguistic elements originating from various other new religions that do not generally belong to the previous categories; lastly, in the fourth part, we will refer to some general neo-religious characteristics, the terms of which have acquired a new meaning in Greek language. At the end of our study, we present the conclusions of our research, i.e. how the meanings acquired by neo-religious concepts, ideas, theories and practices in contemporary Greek discourse are classified in terms of their content.

a kind of bodily exercise through relevant –mainly nonreligious– agents. At the end of our study, we present the conclusions of our research – the classification, according to their content, of the re-signified neo-religious ideas, theories, and practices in the contemporary Greek discourse, as well as a testimony for the intertemporal and interlocal capability of New Religiosity terminology to diffuse and acquire new and persistent meanings in the popular and local idiomatic language³⁷. In any case, the research to locate the immediate, more recent, sources of the Diffused New Religiosity are a vast project, that completely exceeds the limits of a single article. Therefore, we limit ourselves here to outlining the first and most important proponents of those ideas, theories, and practices in Greece, from the 1970s to the middle of the 1990s, thanks to whom the Greek public came into contact for the first time with them.

At the end of our study, we present the conclusions of our research – the classification, according to their content, of the re-signified neo-religious ideas, theories, and practices in the contemporary Greek discourse, as well as a testimony for the intertemporal and interlocal capability of New Religiosity terminology to diffuse and acquire new and persistent meanings in the popular and local idiomatic language.

Neo-religious elements in the contemporary Modern Greek Language and discourse, and their re-signification

1. Terms and phrases derived from the Eastern religions

Within the context of the neo-religious movements, Eastern religions are called those that originated in Middle, Central, and Far East Asia (China, India, Japan, etc.), that first appeared in the West and began to spread there from the late 19th century, but especially after the mid-20th century³⁸. The Eastern religions were perceived as brand new –and they were–, not only because they were truly a novelty for the Western

37. See Roditou, *op.cit.*

38. C. Campbell, *The easternization of the West. A thematic account of cultural change in the modern era*, Routledge-Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York 2016 (=2007), especially pp. 24-29.

religious life – which up until then was exclusively Christian– but also of their ideas and practices to be understood from the Western public, they were often modified, and more precisely, “westernized”, both in terms of form and content; this resulted to become new versions of the Eastern religions from which they originate³⁹. To this process, a leading role was held by the Theosophical Society, which was founded in 1875 in New York; it was an esoteric, syncretic movement –of which Helena Blavatsky was one of its most important founding members and representatives– that brought the West into contact with major elements of the Eastern religions (e.g., the concept of Karma and Yoga)⁴⁰. Yet, their spread was further accelerated –especially in the U.S.A.– by the convocation of the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago (1893), where many of their representatives participated – most prominent amongst them was the Indian Swami Vivekananda [1863-1907], founder of the Vedanta Societies [in New York and San Francisco]. From then onwards, there began to develop an intense interest in the Eastern religious traditions (especially the Hinduist ones), mainly fueled by Asian spiritual leaders –the best known of them was Paramahansa Yogananda [1893-1952], founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF/1920)– but also some westerners who had begun adopting them (e.g. Aldous Huxley [1894-1963])⁴¹. This interest, as well as the East Asian missionary activity in the West, reached a peak during the 1960s and the 1970s. Thus, many traditions became widely known: Buddhist (mainly Tibetan and Japanese, like Zen), Hinduist (e.g. Transcendental Meditation), syncretic (like the Japanese religious movement Soka Gakkai, or the movement led by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, better known as Osho [1931-1990]), geomantic practices (like the Chinese Feng shui), therapeutic practices (e.g., the internal Chinese martial art tai chi), or other self-improvement techniques (e.g., martial arts, yoga), etc. Many Asian “missionaries” have contributed to this spread, like the Japanese Suzuki T. Daisetsu, who familiarized Zen, the Indian Maharishi Mahesh Yogi [1918-2008], creator of Transcendental Meditation (TM), his compatriot A.C. Bhakti

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 41-43.

40. K. Tingay, “The Theosophical Society”, in: Partridge (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

41. Campbell, *ibid.*, p. 24.

Swami Prabhupada [1896-1977], founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna), or the Tibetan Chögyam Trungpa [1939-1987], but also certain hugely influential emblematic personalities, like Mahatma Gandhi and Dalai Lama. Certain Westerners also contributed significantly to this tendency, either because they were very famous (like the actor Richard Gere or the members of the British music band The Beatles), or because they became familiar figures via their missionary action (like the Danish Ole Nydhal and the American Allan Watts)⁴².

In Greece, even though a brunch of the Theosophical Society was established in the late 1940s and had been engaged in various activities (speeches, publications, etc.)⁴³, Eastern religions became well known during the 1970s, and especially during the 1980s, through various Hinduist and Buddhist (Tibetan and Zen) traditions. At this point, there has been a constant flow of publications (journals, books, etc.), the establishment of teaching centers (yoga schools, places of worship, etc.), and the organization of public lectures, seminars, workshops, etc.), mainly in the major cities⁴⁴. The visit of important religious teachers and guiding figures in Greece, like Maharishi Mahesh in the 1960s and Dalai Lama in the 1970s, played an important role in further spreading Eastern religion⁴⁵. We must also refer here to some other organizations and associations officially recognized by the Greek state, like the Hinduist Brahma Kumaris

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-45, 76-126.

43. f. Ant. Alevizopoulos, *Γκουρουϊσμός, Αποκρυφισμός, Νέα Έποχή*, Dialogos Publications, Athens ³1993, p. 93.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 12 et seq., 168-184; *Μετενσάρκωση ή Ανάσταση; Όρθόδοξη θεώρηση του κακού*, Dialogos Publications, Athens ²1995, pp. 9-21, 29-30, 33, 40-41, 70, 89-90, 103-104, 120-126; *Διαλογισμός ή προσευχή; Όρθόδοξη Θεώρηση*, Dialogos Publications, Athens 1997, pp. 55-67, 77-83, 86-90, 96, 110 et seq., 153-185, 206-210, 216, 218-222, 225-229, 236-237, 244-147; *Βουδιστικές αίρέσεις στο φώς της Όρθοδοξίας*, Monk Arsenios Vliagoftis (ed.), Parakatathiki Publications, Thessaloniki 2007, pp. 28-29, 34-35, 46-60. The writer of these studies, to demonstrate the spread of the Eastern religious ideas, cites the results of a statistical survey conducted in 1989 by ICAP and published in the journal *Tachydromos / Ταχυδρόμος*; (Reportage by Pepi Ragousi, 5/10/89, pp. 32-34), among other things, this survey showed that 12% of the Greek population believed in reincarnation (*Γκουρουϊσμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 71-72).

45. *Βουδιστικές αίρέσεις...*, *ibid.*, pp. 34-5, 50-1; Roditou, *ibid.*, p. 206.

Spiritual Centre [the Greek branch], which organized three international conferences (1990-92) with the cooperation of the University of Athens⁴⁶, the educational foundation “Café-Ecole Constantin Foteinos” («Καφὲ Σχολεῖο ‘Κώστας Φωτεινός’»), named by its creator, a Greek overseas academician (ethnographer), where he adopted pedagogical methods influenced by the Eastern religion (especially Zen)⁴⁷ as well as individuals, like P. Asimakis, Professor at the University of Crete, who was a proponent of the Transcendental Meditation and taught its theory and practice in his lectures systematically⁴⁸. As far as the most recognizable figures of those movements, we should refer to Eustathios Liakopoulos, a Lama (teacher) of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition Nyingma, who established his foundation in the 1990s, by combining his status as a teacher with that of “Grand Master” within Greek Freemasonry⁴⁹. Finally, we should refer to two cases of Buddhist monasteries (following the Tibetan traditions), which were founded in the early 1990s in Halkidiki –its prioress was Hara Kalomoiri, the then director of the National Conservatory), and in a mountainous area of the Corinth prefecture⁵⁰.

Avatar: It is a metaphorically used term, and this meaning was taken as a loanword from the English language. Its original meaning was “the manifestation of an abstract concept or form”, but from the mid-1980s onwards, it had begun to be used in computing, denoting “a graphical representation of a user, the user’s character, or persona. Avatars can be two-dimensional icons in Internet forums and other online communities, also known as profile pictures, userpics, or formerly picons (personal icons, or possibly ‘picture icons’)⁵¹.

46. Γκουρουισμός..., *ibid.*, pp. 67, 75-76; Διαλογισμός..., *ibid.*, pp. 141-144. According to Alevizopoulos, the University of Athens cooperated with this organization without knowing its religious character, which was concealed by it, and having also deceived international forums and associations.

47. Διαλογισμός..., *ibid.*, pp. 122-123, 136-137.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-6.

49. Βουδιστικὲς αἰρέσεις..., *ibid.*, p. 49.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47, 50-60.

51. Charalampakis, «ἄβαταρ», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «ἄβαταρ», *ibid.*, p. 75. For another meaning of the term, related to a contemporary, constructed cinematographic myth, see

The Sanskrit word *avatāra* means “descend of the divine [Visnu] in the world”⁵². This notion can be found in Hinduist classic texts, like the Puranas, and is widespread in popular cult forms and religious art. According to it, in periods of moral disorder and disturbance of the universal harmony, Visnu, having acquired a bodily form, descends to the world wishing to awaken and spiritually uplift humans, by restoring the social order and the cosmic equilibrium. These descents can happen many times during one cosmic period –birth, rise, decline, and fall of a world– and through many and various forms (human or animal ones)⁵³. In the Puranas, the concept of *avatāra* is related to the divine “Trimurti”: Brahma is the Universe’s creator, Visnu is its preserver, and Siva is its destroyer⁵⁴.

Buddha: This name, or, more correctly, this title denotes metaphorically a person characterized by apathy and stoic attitude (e.g. “He was sitting still like a Buddha”)⁵⁵.

He is regarded as the founder of Buddhism; he was active in Nepal during the 5th century BC⁵⁶. According to the Pāli Canon, the earliest and most fundamental collection of Buddhist scriptures (4th-1st c. BC)⁵⁷, the religion’s founder is called Buddha, which is “the awakened”, the one that has acquired knowledge⁵⁸. The latter is perceived to be related to two major teachings of the Pāli Canon, and Buddhism in general: the recognition that pain is the major problem of existence and the process through which this is perpetuated – the endless knot of transformations

Oulis, *ibid.*, p. 111.

52. Ap. Michailidis, *Ἰνδουισμός. Καταβολές – Ἱστορική πορεία – Βασικὲς ἀντιλήψεις – Λατρεία*, Institute of the Book – Kardamitsa Publications, Athens 2022, pp. 134, 306, 377.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6, 307.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 137-8, 307, 377.

55. Charalambakis, «Βούδας», *ibid.*

56. St. Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός. Ἡ Ἰνδικὴ περίοδος*, Gutenberg Publications, Athens 2015, pp. 46-62. According to Buddhism’s second major existing branch, Mahayana (literally, “Great Vehicle”), Buddha is perceived as a supernatural being who inhabits a heavenly paradisiacal world (*ibid.*, pp. 123-124).

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-43.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

but also the means to overcome them. This in turn is related to the principle of karma –the term more specifically refers to a principle of cause and effect, [...] wherein individuals’ intent and actions influence their future (effect) Therefore, the principal aim is for humans to stop performing consciously bad deeds, caused by feelings of hate and desire; this can be achieved through the knowledge of *anattā* (Pali) or *anatman* (Sanskrit), “doctrine of ‘non-self’ – that no unchanging, permanent self or essence can be found in any phenomenon”⁵⁹.

Guru: This term is used metaphorically to characterize any sort of authority, expert, or connoisseur related to an economic sector, a profession, or a discipline (e.g. guru of management/fashion/information technology). In the Greek language, it came as a loan from French, where it was used metaphorically for the first time during the 1960s⁶⁰.

The term guru is first mentioned in the Hinduist literature between the 2nd c. BC and the 2nd c. AD, denoting the priest (brahman) who performs the rites and teaches the sacred scriptures. Nevertheless, the notion of the divine knowledge’s agent and transmitter is much earlier, and it goes back at least to the 8th century BC.)⁶¹. In Sanskrit, the term means “weighty”, “heavy with spiritual weight”, and synecdochically, a person his opinion is extremely influential. According to the Indian tradition, the term denotes someone who is an expert or master of a certain knowledge or field. Still, guru’s prevalent meanings are: a) the religious teacher who transmits the spiritual knowledge to his disciple, leading him to salvation, and b) the yoga teacher. Apart from that, in the various Hinduist traditions, a guru is considered in many different ways – for example, as someone who is almost identified with the divine essence and demands absolute dedication on behalf of his disciple, or someone who does not possess any divine quality. Still, he is simply the guardian of the traditions and a religious guide⁶².

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-71, 78 et seq.

60. Charalampakis, «γκουρού», *ibid.*

61. Michailidis, «Γκουρού», in: M. Begzos (ed.), *Θρησκευτικό Λεξικό*, Hellinika Grammata Publications, Athens 2001, p. 165.

62. Michailidis, *Ἰνδουισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 68, 141, 156, 159-160, 176.

Power/Force (the concept of the divine as an impersonal “supreme power”): It’s a very common term, that denotes every being or essence that surpasses the limits of human capabilities and is regarded as the ultimate cause of the creation and evolution of the world (e.g. Creator/God, the life-giving power”, “I do not know if God exists, but I do believe in the existence of a High Power)⁶³.

A fundamental difference between Indian and European polytheism can already be traced to Hinduism’s most ancient texts (2000 BC), but is formulated systematically and expressed unequivocally in the later and more philosophical collection of its texts (Upanishads, 100-800 BC): although there might be infinite deities, they all constitute expressions of one, supreme, absolute and eternal deity –Brahman– which could be either a personal or impersonal power⁶⁴. This conception of the “absolute” can also be traced to Mahāyāna Buddhism, where it is called Adhibuddha, Dharmakāya, etc.⁶⁵.

Zen: This term denotes a status of tranquility, apathy, and calmness (e.g., “the zen way of dealing with everything”, “whatever it might happen, keep meditating and be calm”, Zen is the person that is in peace with himself”)⁶⁶.

63. Babinotis, «δύναμη», *ibid.*, p. 622.

64. Michailidis, *Τνδουϊσμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 297-310.

65. St. Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

66. Maria Koutsaka, «40 “must” για σένα που θές να είσαι “ζέν”», in: *Savoir ville. Life’s special habits*, in: <https://www.savoirville.gr/40-must-zen/>, [24.9.2023]; Memaria, «Είμαι Zen, είσαι Zen, τί είναι Zen;», in: My trips on Blog, M’ ένα χάρτινο καραβάκι..., in: <https://mytripssonblog.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>, Δευτέρα 10 Ιουλίου 2017, 11:50, [24.11.2023]; G. Antonopoulos, «Άλλοι δεν κι άλλοι ζέν...», in: Boem Radio, <https://www.boemradio.gr/gr/el/news/alloi-den-ki-alloi-zen/>, [24/9/2023]; Grouporama, “MyZen”, in: My Zen, by Grouporama, https://myzen.gr/el/asfaleia-autokinitou?gad_source=1, [24/9/2023]; P. Drakakis, «Πώς θα είσαι cool ακόμη και στο πιο ζορικο περιβάλλον. Μερικές χρήσιμες συμβουλές για να πετύχεις τό “ζέν”, όταν όλοι οι υπόλοιποι γύρω σου ψάχνουν τρόπο για να βγάλουν τό “ζήν”», in: Askmen, <https://gr.askmen.com/career/1103755/article/pos-tha-eisai-cool-akome-kai-sto-pio-zoriko-periballon>, [23.9.2023]; Chr. Tsakiridou, «Υποφέρεις από άγχος και στρές; 7 χαλαρωτικές δραστηριότητες για να είσαι ζέν», in: Queen, <https://www.queen.gr/well-being/psychologia/story/242244/ypofereis-apo-aghos-kai-stres-7-xalarotikes-drastiriotites-gia-na-eisai-zen>, 22 Ιανουαρίου 2022, [24.9.2023]; N. Tsaliki, «Δέν είμαι όλη μέρα ζέν, προσπαθώ», in: NewsIt [Lifestyle], <https://www.newsit>.

Zen derived from the way that the Middle Chinese word chán [an abbreviation of chánà) which in its turn derived from the Sanskrit dhyana], and refers to the different theological schools within Mahayana –Great Vehicle– Buddhism that flourished in the East and North Asia, from the 1st century BC onwards)⁶⁷. To approach what each of its theological schools perceives as the absolute truth, Zen puts the emphasis not on theoretical knowledge or doctrines but on action and most specifically on meditation. Thus, through the purifying process of the believer’s soul and spirit from the various prefabricated notions and concepts they nurture about the nature of beings, as well as their feelings towards them, they attain illumination: the true nature and essence of things is revealed to them⁶⁸.

Karma / karmic: This term is used as a noun to denote fate or destiny (e.g. “good/bad karma”) and as an adjective for every fateful event (“it was karmic for them to meet”). Apart from that, it was used as an adjective in English to designate a special kind of astrology, the karmic one⁶⁹.

The Sanskrit word Karma [Palli, Kamma] derives from the verb root कृ (kr), which means “act”, “operate”, or “proceed”⁷⁰; it is also related to that of Saṃsāra, which is one of the most ancient and emblematic Hinduist concepts (ca. 10 century BC)⁷¹, even though it cannot be traced to all of its different traditions and also its importance and scope vary between the numerous traditions that originated in India⁷². Nevertheless, it can reasonably be said that karma mainly denotes the law of retribution in the afterlife of human deeds and their moral “receptacle of works”

gr/lifestyle/natalia-tsaliki-den-eimai-oli-mera-zen-prospatho /3881788/, [12.9.2023], 18:13, [24.9.2023]; Papalexandropoulos, «Ἡ Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα», *ibid.*, p. 13.

67. St. Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός...*, *ibid.*, p. 120.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-122.

69. Chr. Charalampakis (ed.), *Χρηστικό Λεξικό της νεοελληνικής γλώσσας*, Ethniko Typografeio Publications, Athens 2014, «κάρμα», «καρμικό», pp. 775-776; Papalexandropoulos, «Ἡ Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα», *ibid.*, p. 14.

70. Michailidis, *Ινδουϊσμός...*, *ibid.*, p. 317.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 317-320.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 61, 174-175, 240, 259-261, 266-267, 317-325.

(Sanskrit, *Karmasaya*). According to this interpretation, human beings, based on the moral quality of their actions and deeds, both those that are related to worldly activities and those which are dealing exclusively with the deities (like rituals), that is, according to their accumulated karma, they either united with the absolute and thus avoid the fate of further reincarnations, or, having remained for a specific amount of time in some paradisial or punitive space where they receive retribution for their actions, they are reincarnated into another earthly existence – in human or non-human form⁷³. Within Buddhist schools, the semantic range of the word was further expanded: not only actions but also intentions (good or bad) and emotions produce karma, and this applies to all beings, not only human ones, irrespective of their form⁷⁴.

Reincarnation (periphrastically: “many lives”, “more than one life”, “previous life”, etc.) The first term is used metaphorically to describe the transformation of a thought or an intention to action, by substituting the equally metaphorical use of the term “carnation” (e.g. “pardon must be reincarnated into action”). Furthermore, in a periphrastic way, the same term is used metaphorically to denote a long period (for example, “one lifetime is not enough for him to...”)⁷⁵.

Reincarnation or *Transmigration* (Sanskrit, *Punarjanman*) is one of the most representative, ancient, famous Hinduist, and later Buddhist, concepts. According to it, every person whose good deeds or, for Buddhism, even predispositions, were insufficient to attain everlasting redemption after death (Sanskrit, *mokṣa*), a sort of perpetual state of bliss, cannot escape from the eternally repeated cycle of birth and rebirth (Sanskrit, *Samsāra*). Therefore, based on its actions or predispositions’ moral weight, it moves after its death, and for a certain period, to a place of reward or punishment; then, again, based on the same criteria, it reincarnates to another living organism –human, animal, or plant– or even to a demonic

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 174-175, 240, 317, 319-325.

74. Michailidis, *Τνδουϊσμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 317-30; Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός...*, *ibid.*, p. 75.

75. Charalampakis, «ζωή», *ibid.*, p. 660; «μετενσάρκωση», *ibid.*, p. 1013; «προηγούμενος», p. 1346; Babiniotis, «ζωή», *ibid.*, p. 865.

or divine being. The cycle of endless reincarnations is being abolished and the ultimate redemption is achieved when someone loses all traces of the negative “receptacle” of his or her actions or predispositions⁷⁶.

Nirvana: This term metaphorically denotes someone’s state of apathy, indifference, and ataraxia, as lack of conduct with the surrounding environment, often under the influence of hallucinogenic substances [e.g., “He/She has fallen into (total) nirvana”]⁷⁷.

Nirvāṇa is a Sanskrit Buddhist term that means “blowing out” or “quenching”, like “putting out a flame”⁷⁸; different Buddhist traditions have interpreted the concept in different ways: it denotes the release from *Samsāra*, the endless cycle of birth and rebirth, the quenching of desire in all of its forms, and the effacement of the ignorance about the true nature of beings –two karma producing states–, and, finally, the road of achieving the liberation from *Duḥkha* (“suffering”, “pain”), and the goal of the Eightfold Path (*āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*)⁷⁹.

The Third Eye: This term, which seems to act as a substitute for expressions like “a third opinion”), and especially “a third look”, denotes another point of view, apart from those that have already been suggested, which is usually more objective than the others (e.g., “A ‘third eye’ can spot errors in the text that have escaped”)⁸⁰.

The theory about the existence and function of a “third eye” can be traced back to a teaching that in many cases is common to both Hinduism and Buddhism⁸¹, that of the *chakras* (“wheels”), the so-called “sacred centers” of the human body. According to it, the purpose of

76. Michailidis, *Ἰνδοῦισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 317-30; Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός...*, *ibid.*, p. 75.

77. Charalampakis, *ibid.*, «νιρβάνα»; Babiniotis, *ibid.*, «νιρβάνα», p. 1407.

78. Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός...*, *ibid.*, p. 92.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-96.

80. Charalampakis, «μάτι», *ibid.* The origin of the expression from the relevant religious concept with which we are dealing is not only demonstrated by the two expressions’ morphological identity but also by the fact that if it were taken literally, it would be utterly meaningless.

81. Michailidis, *ibid.*, p. 203.

worship, the contact with the divine, can be achieved through certain Yogish practices; when they are performed successfully, they activate an otherwise dormant vital feminine energy (Sanskrit, *kuṇḍalinī*) located at the base of the spine. From the moment that the disciple manages to awaken it, he or she has to guide it through meditation and a specific course that passes from certain parts of the human body to the last one of them, *Ājñā* (“brow” or “third eye”), and thus attaining conduct with the divine. Each of these parts has its specific qualities; they correspond to mental, spiritual, and even bodily capabilities, that can be appropriated through *kuṇḍalinī*’s passage and maintenance. Of course, chakras, are not anatomic elements; rather, they are related to the ways that each yogi perceives the ways that his body functions during meditation. Their number and specific attributes vary among the different Hinduist traditions and correspond to levels of reality, in which man constitutes a microcosm⁸². One of them, which in traditional Hinduism symbolizes enlightenment and is located just above the center of the base of the human forehead, is the so-called “third eye” or, otherwise, “the third eye of [the god] Shiva”⁸³.

2. Terms and phrases derived from *Western Esotericism*

Western Esotericism or simply *Esotericism* is an extremely diverse movement in the Western world, the modern version of which can be traced back to the early 18th century⁸⁴. Its diversity is exhibited through the many different traditions it covers (astrology, magic, spiritualism, etc.) and the many different forms for which each tradition is distinguished⁸⁵. Nevertheless, we can proceed to define it, since many typical elements are present in all the theories and practices related to it.

Esotericism accepts the existence of an inner truth that is universal and can be traced in the dogmas of all the religions of the world, even

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 151, 206-210, 333.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 333.

84. W. J. Hanegraaf, *Western Esotericism. A guide for the perplexed*, Bloomsbury, London, New York 2013, pp. 7-8; R. A. Gilbert, “Western Esotericism”, in: Partridge (ed.), *ibid.* Another related term is “Western Mystery Tradition”, see: Gilbert, *ibid.*, p. 304.

85. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 33-44; Gilbert, *ibid.*, p. 308 et seq.

though their adherents, intentionally or unintentionally, seem to ignore it⁸⁶. This truth reveals the divinity's true nature, which, depending on the tradition, is perceived as possessing a personal character, residing outside the world, which it has created, or –mainly– an impersonal one, from which the world emanates. Therefore, God, the world, and humanity constitute an indivisible unity⁸⁷. The esoteric truth reveals humanity's true nature, the world, and the relations between them, which is being ignored by conventional science and permits the manipulation of their hidden (internal) powers (magic/witchcraft); thus, an esoteric person gradually increases its spiritual, mental, and in certain cases bodily powers and skills (e.g. as a healer or seer), while it also attains greater control over the conditions of its life⁸⁸. Apart from that, according to certain traditions, this knowledge is soteriological⁸⁹. As a whole, esoteric knowledge is attained through the understanding of the relevant teachings and the belief in them, through the performance of certain rituals that are more or less religious, and in certain cases via a divine revelation. In any case, this knowledge is transmitted in a closed (esoteric) cycle of initiates, from which everyone else is excluded – those who are not members, those who are not candidates, and those who have been judged as unfit for initiation⁹⁰.

Alchemy: Regarding its metaphorical use, the word *alchemy* is used in the plural number and means any complex, mainly suspicious, unorthodox action or method to achieve an objective (e.g., “He managed with different alchemies to climb to power”, “governmental/financial/party alchemies”)⁹¹.

Alchemy has become an esoteric, neo-religious tradition, and an extremely common subject in the relevant literature, through which it became well-known in the second half of the 19th century⁹². Its origins

86. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 10-11, 91-93; Gilbert, *ibid.*, p. 308.

87. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 70-71, 74-77; Gilbert, *ibid.*, pp. 304, 306.

88. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 5, 21-22, 76-77, 89, 91-93, 103-117, 124; Gilbert, *ibid.*, pp. 304-306.

89. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 18, 76-77, 86-87; Gilbert, *ibid.*, pp. 304, 306.

90. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 33, 69 et seq., 102-118; Gilbert, *ibid.*, pp. 304-305, 308.

91. Charalampakis, «ἀλχημεία», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «ἀλχημεία», *ibid.*, p. 174.

92. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 24.

can be traced back to the Late Hellenistic Period; it was a proto-scientific and philosophical activity, mainly aiming at the transmutation of the “base metals”, like iron, into “noble” ones, like gold⁹³. Yet, even from this period, it was marked by many religious elements, like visions or dreams, related to death-rebirth situations along with the progress of alchemistic procedures, and the conviction in the perfection of the materialistic humans, by transforming them into more spiritual, therefore superior, beings. Alchemy was forgotten during the early Middle Ages, but it was rediscovered via Islamic sources during the Late Middle Ages, and became widespread during the Renaissance and Early Modern Periods, up to the late 17th century. Similarly widespread have been its symbolic images, of Christian origin, which are used for the description of the transmutation process (e.g. the parallelism with Christ, who purifies human nature from its sins and leads it to its highest point of perfection, with the “Philosophical Stone”, the chemical agents which transform “base” substances into “noble” ones)⁹⁴. With its laboratory techniques, Alchemy during those periods had functioned as modern science’s precursor; from the mid-18th century onwards, it was vilified as pseudo-science and charlatanism and went into oblivion, but in the first decades of the 20th century, it reappeared to the foreground and left its imprint in the West, especially due to the use of their sources by the Swiss psychologist Karl Young⁹⁵.

In Greece, it seems that Alchemy became known through various publications, although there have been some groups –not extremely popular ones–, that incorporated it into their teachings in various ways (e.g., as a symbolical description of a psychological evolutionary process)⁹⁶.

Star (phrase, “He/She has a star”): The word *star* is used in many ways, but the most relevant to our subject under investigation is the one

93. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*

94. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*

95. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

96. f. Ant. Alevizopoulos, *Ὁ ἀποκρυφισμὸς στὸ φῶς τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας*, τεύχ. Γ' *Ἀλχημεία (Φυσική-Πνευματική-Σεξουαλική-Ὁμοιοπαθητική)*, Panellinia Henosi Goneon, Athens 1995.

that is used to denote that someone has the favor of fortune (“I had a star! I had a car accident, and I came out of it unscathed”)⁹⁷.

Astrology, which has been playing a prominent role among many peoples from the most remote past, represents the by far most widespread and popular esoteric theory and practice in the West from the 1960s till nowadays, either as an autonomous field or organically integrated into other esoteric or neo-religious traditions⁹⁸. Its most fundamental assumption is that the movements of the celestial bodies, from which the most important are those that constitute the so-called zodiac cycle, the planets of our solar system and the Moon, are multifariously affecting the earthly world (on a natural level with the phenomenon of ebb and flow, on the human one, by affecting humans’ personality). This influence could be either direct –according to “scientific astrology”– that is, through the radiation of the celestial bodies, or indirect –according to “occult” astrology– that is, to cause a whole sequence of effects, initially in the natural world, and subsequently to humans. This sort of cosmic inter-connectedness presupposes the monist conception of the world⁹⁹. Yet, apart from its ordinary use as a “fortune-telling”, predicting device, under the influence of the New Age movement, it became a tool for “self-transformation”, self-healing, and self-evolution, through the study of the astral influences on earth¹⁰⁰.

In Greece, as abroad, astrology was the most popular “neo-religion” from the 1980s onwards. It indeed presents the most typical form of the diffusion of this phenomenon in the sense that, apart from its “natural” places, the astrological publications and the astrological institutes (or simply offices), it is present in many other places that are not directly related to it, like the Press or the Electronic Media. Furthermore, as it happens abroad, its agents, while performing it, are borrowing elements from other religious movements (e.g. spiritualism)¹⁰¹.

97. Charalampakis, «ἄστρο», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «ἄστρο», *ibid.*, p. 365.

98. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 24; Chr. Partridge, “Astrology”, in: Partridge (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 337-8.

99. Partridge, *ibid.*

100. Partridge, *ibid.*, p. 339.

101. Ant. Alevizopoulos, Ὁ ἀποκρυφισμὸς στὸ φῶς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας. Νεοαποκρυφισμὸς, iss. 11th-15th, Νεοειδωλολατρεία, Οὐφολογία, Πνευματισμὸς, Μεντιουμισμὸς, Μαντεία,

Aura / Vibes: It is a term that is used metaphorically to describe the sense someone or something exhales, the impression that they leave behind, or the feelings that they provoke (e.g., “positive/negative aura/vibes”, “I like him very much, our auras match”)¹⁰².

The relevant theory was predominantly developed within the “New Age” literature, also responsible for its popularization¹⁰³. It originated in East Asia, and found its expression and was spread through many therapeutical methods (e.g. reiki, tai chi), as well as scientific and pseudo-scientific ideas and attitudes, that were developed for tracing and describing it¹⁰⁴. Aura is considered the energy field that surrounds every material being. It has various shapes and colors, depending on the species of the thing or being that surrounds it and the state in which it is¹⁰⁵. Under normal conditions, the aura is invisible. On the contrary, this can be achieved if this rare ability is innate to someone, or he/she has been appropriately trained. Then, the aura can be seen as a luminous shield enveloping beings and things¹⁰⁶. Aure is usually connected with alternative healing practices, where the disease (bodily, mental, psychological) is due to the injury of it. Therefore, for the therapy to be successful, the aura’s reconstitution must proceed. As far as humans are concerned, it is assumed that the energy is supplied with energy by the sacred centers –*chakras*– of the human body and then it diffuses to the surrounding energy field¹⁰⁷.

Energy: It is a term with many metaphorical meanings. In the first place, it denotes the sensation someone or something exudes (e.g. a

Παραψυχολογία, Πνευματιστικές ομάδες στην Ελλάδα, Dialogos Publications, Athens 1996, pp. 243-50, 272-173, 323-327, 332-334; *Η αστρολογία στο φως της Ορθοδοξίας*, Dialogos Publications, Athens 1995, pp. 271-3, where someone can also find the relevant bibliography in the Greek Language.

102. Charalampakis, «αύρα», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, *ibid.*, p. 381.

103. C. L. Albanese, “The Aura of Wellness: Subtle-Energy Healing and New Age Religion”, *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10, 1 (Winter 2000), in <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1123890>, [20.9.2023], pp. 29-31.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 35-8, 52.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-35.

106. *Ibid.*

107. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-38.

place), that makes others have a good or bad feeling for him or her (he/she radiates positive/negative energy). A second meaning is the vitality that distinguishes a person (e.g., “he is extremely active, with large reserves of energy”). Finally, it has a third, colloquial, meaning; it is used as a substitute synonym for the word wish (e.g., “we are sending you all our positive energy”)¹⁰⁸.

The concept of energy is found in the new religions, yet it seems that it became more known via the New Age movements, in which it holds a central place. Up to a point, this concept is based on Modern Physics, which claims that there is no distinction between matter and energy since the former is a more concentrated form of the latter¹⁰⁹. According to the new agist theory, energy, through its constant flow, runs through the universe and its parts, connecting and making them alive. This theory is connected with various utilitarian practices (e.g. magic, nutrition, Mediums)¹¹⁰ and especially with healing practices, most of which originated in East Asia (e.g., tai chi), as according to this theory, every dysfunction of the human organism is caused by the abnormal flow of energy within it; thus, the relative healing methods are aiming to restore this flow with the use of natural (e.g. chiropractic) means¹¹¹.

Positive Thought: It is an expression that is used metaphorically, with the adjective “positive” substituting the adjective “optimist”, to denote this kind of thinking (e.g., “I’m thinking positively, I don’t make negative thoughts”)¹¹².

The concept and therefore the term *positive thought* originated within the context of the so-called *New Thought*, a sort of revision of Mesmerism or Animal Magnetism, a theory invented in the 18th century by the German physician Franz Mesmer (1734-1815)¹¹³. According to him,

108. Charalampakis, «ἐνέργεια», *ibid.*; Babinotis, *ibid.*, p. 711; Papalexandropoulos, «Η Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα», *ibid.*, p. 15.

109. C. L. Albanese, *ibid.*, in: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1465739>, 20/9/2023, pp. 310-311, 316.

110. *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308, 311-312, 317-318.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314, 317.

112. Babinotis, *ibid.*, p. 871.

113. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 37, 39; Chryssides, *ibid.*, pp. 77, 79.

every living organism is surrounded by – and consists of– an invisible, almost immaterial “fluid” – animal magnetism. A severe condition manifests itself in those parts of an organism where the flow of this fluid is disrupted¹¹⁴. Mesmerism aimed at rehabilitating this “liquid” or “field”, with the use of magnets and other objects, and curing each patient’s affected part¹¹⁵.

As far as *New Thought* is concerned, it was founded on the ideas of Phineas Quimby (1802-66), one of Mesmer’s American followers, who thought that the fundamental factor for the magnetic therapy to be successful was the patient’s positive predisposition towards it and life in general¹¹⁶. According to Quimby and especially his followers, man is a miniature copy of the harmonious universe, therefore he has to live in harmony with his natural and social environment, but also with himself (to be mentally balanced). Furthermore, because the power of mind is much greater than it is believed, and it directly affects, even before it manifests as action, not only our health but every aspect of our life (social, financial, etc.), and of our environment, we should seek before anything else to live a life based on the universe’s harmonious pattern through this power’s proper use, that is optimistic, “positive” thinking¹¹⁷.

New Thought, or “mind therapy”, became widely known and had a decisive and multifaceted effect on modern American culture (e.g. psychology, entrepreneurship), and as a result on the Western world, not only in its secularized form –the numerous “self-help”– but also within the New Age context¹¹⁸.

In Greece, it first appeared during the 1970s, but it was further developed, both as theory and practice, during the 1980s, through books and journals (e.g., the journal *Όλο και Καλύτερα Νέα*, which presents the views of those who follow the “Silva control method”), as well as seminars given by various foundations or organisms with different orientations (e.g. Eastern religions, New Age, Paranormal Psychology,

114. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 37; Chryssides, *ibid.*, p. 78.

115. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*; Chryssides, *ibid.*

116. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 39; Chryssides, *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

117. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*; Chryssides, *ibid.*, p. 86.

118. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*; Chryssides, *ibid.*, p. 324.

etc.) like that of «Ἀρμονικὴ Ζωή» (“Harmonic Life”), which expounded the views of Robert Najemy –inspired by the guru and fakir Sai Baba of Shirdi¹¹⁹.

Masonry (*Mason*, *masonic*, etc.): These terms are used to denote a group with common interests, that its members support each other and act in full secrecy (e.g., “political/journalistic/athletic masonry”, “all of them are nothing but masons!”), but also every single person who acts likewise, as well as any similar behavior¹²⁰.

Freemasonry or simply *Masonry* it’s one of the best-known and older esoteric movements; its origins can be traced back to 16th century Scotland or even earlier¹²¹. The noun «τέκτων» is a translation into Greek of “*mason*”, the equivalent noun in English, which also means “carpenter, builder”, and denotes the origins of the first freemasonry fraternal societies that can be traced to the Scottish stonemasons’ guilds. The first compound, the adjective “free”, derives from the liberties enjoyed by the members of the masonic “lodges” (social equality, freedom of speech, religious tolerance)¹²². By the 18th century, Freemasonry had already spread to many Western countries, having acquired many different forms, of which two were the predominant ones: the “English” version, more rational and humanist, and the “French” one, which had adopted many esoteric and occult elements (e.g., borrowed from Alchemy)¹²³. Nevertheless, irrespective of their theoretical and practical orientation, two elements are common to most of the masonic traditions and play a central role in them. The first one is the creation of a “myth-historic” background on which they are based. According to this constructed lineage, Masonry is related to some ancient religious sects (e.g., the Pythagoreans), and, finally, to the legendary stonemasons of the Solomon Temple –for them, the most perfect building ever–, to the construction of which the accumulated wisdom of the ancient Mediterranean people

119. [f.] Ant. Alevizopoulos, *Αὐτογνωσία – Αὐτοπραγμάτωση – Σωτηρία*, Publications of the Holy Metropolis of Nikopolis, Athens 1991, pp. 20-22, 41 et seq.

120. Charalampakis, «μασονία», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «μασονία», *ibid.*, p. 1259.

121. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 35.

122. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*

123. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*; R. Gilbert, “Freemasonry”, in: Partridge (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 314-316.

was put into service. The second element is “the use [of] stonemasons” customs and tools as allegorical guides¹²⁴. Although in most of the cases Freemasonry didn’t pursue specific political goals, due to its exclusive character, that is the exclusion from its lodges of those who are not members or deemed unworthy of initiation, from the mid-18th century onwards there have been accusations about their supposedly conspiratorial nature and corrosive role in the political and religious life of many Western countries¹²⁵.

Greek Freemasonry has also a long history. Its origins can be traced back to the 18th century when the first lodges (English, French, Italian) were founded in Ottoman and Venetian) occupied areas (Constantinople, Smyrna, Corfu); some of their members were Greek¹²⁶. The first Greek lodges were founded at the Seven Isles during the 19th century, and shortly afterwards at the newly founded Greek state. During this period, right up to the Asia Minor catastrophe the English and the French traditions either co-existed or alternated in the dominant position, until the definitive dominance of the English one¹²⁷.

During this long period, Greek Freemasonry had many important moments: the reinforcement and promotion of the Greek War of Independence, and then of the Greek irridentism¹²⁸, its systematic and continuous social action from this period onwards¹²⁹, the official recognition of the Greek lodges from the international Freemasonry (1924) and then from the Greek State, as a philanthropic-philosophic agency (1927)¹³⁰, as well as from the Teaching staff of the Athens University’s Theological School (1932)¹³¹; the increase of its membership from the beginning of the 1950s through the 1970s (from 2000 to 7500 members) and the reopening of most of the Lodges (approximately 40) after the

124. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 36; Gilbert, *ibid.*, pp. 314-315.

125. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, pp. 35-6; Gilbert, *ibid.*, pp. 316-7.

126. Ioan. Loukas, *Ίστορία της ελληνικής Μασονίας και ελληνική ιστορία*, Papazisis Publications, Athens 1991, especially pp. 40-50.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 73 et seq.

128. *Ibid.*, especially p. 63 et seq.

129. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 254-255, 295 et seq.

130. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

131. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.

end of the Occupation and Civil War era¹³², and the multiplication of anti-masonic activities and the relevant conspiracy theories (e.g., John Fourakis)¹³³ Finally, we should mention the important influence exerted by certain Freemasons in the shaping of some, at least for a period of time, popular neo-religious movements in Greece. Best known of them are the antiquity lover Spyridon Nagos, whose books and articles greatly influenced Modern Greek polytheism¹³⁴ and E. Liakopoulos, who, apart from being Great Lodger of York's masonic tradition (est. 1976), also held a similar position in the Tibetan Buddhist one¹³⁵.

Medium: This word has come into the Greek language from French and Italian sources and is used metaphorically, especially in everyday speech, to describe someone who knows something that under normal circumstances it would be impossible for him to know (e.g. "How on earth did you know it, are you a medium?")¹³⁶.

Spiritualism or *Mediumism* is a movement that began to appear in the U.S.A. during the mid-19th century, and by the beginning of the 20th century, it had already spread throughout the Western world¹³⁷. It's a multifarious movement either regarding the way it is organized (small groups, populous international or national churches, etc.) or its theory and practice¹³⁸. In any case, the first and most important feature of the spiritualistic groups or organizations is the conduct with spirits during "seances" and through "mediums", that is persons who can carry out this sort of conduct¹³⁹. Even though it expresses itself in many ways (e.g., with the medium possessed by the spirit, by moving objects, with

132. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-337.

133. *Ibid.*, pp. 295-296. K. Kouros, *Tò αἰνίγμα τῶν Ἑψιλον*, Esoptron Publications, Athens 2001, pp. 56-69.

134. V. Xydias, «Οἱ "Ἕλληνες" ξανάρχονται», *Σύναξη / Synaxi* iss. 69 (January-March 1999 / Special Issue: Greek Neo-paganism), p. 13; Kouros, *ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

135. Loukas, *ibid.*, pp. 349-62; Alevizopoulos, *Βουδιστικὲς αἰρέσεις...*, *ibid.*, p. 49.

136. Charalampakis, «μέντιουμ», *ibid.*

137. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 38; N. Scotland, "Spiritualism", in: Partridge (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 319-320.

138. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*; Scotland, *ibid.*

139. Scotland, *ibid.*, p. 319.

the creation of sounds without the mediation of a natural cause, or with the creation of “ectoplasm”, that is a substance emanating from the medium while it’s in a state of hypnosis and soon evaporates), the method followed to manifest itself is relatively easy (e.g. hypnotism), and it doesn’t presuppose the knowledge of a complex theological or cosmological system¹⁴⁰. Finally, the second most fundamental and common element of the spiritualist traditions is the belief that, after death, the soul “is free to roam and can either choose to go on a higher spiritual level, or reincarnate or become a spirit guide to the living”. Therefore, Spiritualism’s major goal is to put the members of the different congregations in touch “with spirit guides who will then be of assistance to them in life”¹⁴¹.

Spiritualism in Greece also appears to have a long history, as during the 1920s and the 1930s many societies were established to research the spiritualist phenomena. It seems that one of the most important of them was the “Society of Psychic Researches” («Ἑταιρεία Ψυχικῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1923-50»); this was due to having a more official character, as Angelos Tanagras, a chief military medical officer, established it. Longest-live was the “Greek Parapsychic-Sociological Society” («Παραψυχο-Κοινωνιολογικὴ Ἑταιρεία Ἑλλάδος», est. 1932), which was founded by Paulos Pissanos, an Angelos Tanagras’ associate, after a rift between them, which was active till the 1990s, will equally well-known was the “Giorgos Vouloukos Parapsychology Institute” («Ἰνστιτούτο Παραψυχολογίας Γιώργου Βουλούκου»), where alien spirits quite often replaced the earthly ones¹⁴². Nowadays, the medium status seems to retain a certain relevancy, though it is usually connected with other, neo-religious ones (e.g., the astrologist)¹⁴³.

140. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*; Scotland, *ibid.*

141. Scotland, *ibid.*, p. 320.

142. Alevizopoulos, *Γκουρουισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 57-61, 71-72, 191-192; *Νεοαποκριφισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 272-274, 293-305, 332-336.

143. Alevizopoulos, *Νεοαποκριφισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 272-274. This is the only way to explain the rather large number of 100.000 mediums that appeared to be active in Greece in the late 1980s (pp. 191-192).

New Age: It is an expression that is used to denote any period characterized by important events or persons, that radically differentiate it from those that preceded it; therefore, it is perceived in a much more positive light by the latter one¹⁴⁴.

New Age is the most multifaceted movement within the neo-religious context. It can be traced back to the late 1960s when it became extremely popular during the 1980s when it acquired its basic form¹⁴⁵. Its great diversity is because it includes a multiplicity of heterogeneous theories, practices, and religious currents which are often mixed with modern Physics: Theories about alien and ancient civilizations, alternative therapies (e.g., chromotherapy, acupuncture), divination methods (e.g., astrology), psychotherapy approaches, Eastern religions and mystical beliefs, ecology, esoteric and neo-pagan traditions, quantum physics, etc.¹⁴⁶. Per this variety, the “movement” has been perceived in many divergent ways, even by its followers. Some think that the New Age is the current bimillennial period under the astral influence of the sign of Aquarius; it would be a period of universal prosperity and progress, therefore it differs completely from the previous bimillennial period, which was under the influence of the sign of Pisces, dominated by Christianity and was ripe with conflicts (on a personal, social or national level). This astrological perception might be expressed in eschatological terms –the New Age is the end of human history’s linear, evolutionary course–, as a framework for the cyclic conception of time –the New Age as a period of acne before another one of the world’s decline, destruction, recreation, etc. or in a way that combines those two previously mentioned¹⁴⁷. Finally, this phrase may be used metaphorically without any astrological connotation, only to describe a new start or endeavor¹⁴⁸.

144. Charalampakis, «ἐποχή», *ibid.*

145. St. Papalexandropoulos, «Νέα Ἐποχή: ἡ θρησκευολογικὴ ταυτότητα ἐνὸς κινήματος. Α' μέρος», *Ἑξοδος/Exodos* 6 (10) (1991), pp. 19-21, 26; M. Lacroix, *To New Age*, transl. Photeini Tamviskou, Travlos Publications, Athens 1997 (1996), pp. 13-18.

146. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 20-21, 27-28; «Νέα Ἐποχή: ἡ θρησκευολογικὴ ταυτότητα ἐνὸς κινήματος. Β' μέρος», *Ἑξοδος / Exodos* 7 (11), pp. 54-5; Lacroix, *ibid.*, pp. 8-10, 21-24, 38-41, 50, 52, 55-58, 61-69, 74, 103-105, 117-122.

147. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 19, 23, 25-7; Lacroix, *ibid.*, pp. 25-30.

148. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, p. 26.

Irrespective of which of those interpretations is put forth by its followers, New Age's Cosmology, identified with its theology, is unified: the divine is contained in all its parts, therefore also in man, and it constitutes a thinking, immaterial form of energy which turns into increasingly material forms, creating the matter and the world, which are visible to us, as its parts¹⁴⁹. The divine element inherent in every human being is identified with the highest level of consciousness, which nevertheless is in a state of hypnosis. The New Age techniques intend to awaken this element and thus broaden the human consciousness to the point that the divine element reapproaches its source of origin¹⁵⁰. Nevertheless, both the divine element in the world and the world itself constitutes an infinite, integrated size, it seems that the New Age aims at the "infinetization" or, according to Papalexandropoulos, the "totalization of man". Consequently, the New Age is a movement aiming at man's deification through his totalization, by using cognitive technique¹⁵¹.

In Greece, the New Age became widely spread in the 1980s¹⁵², and the term seems to have become commonplace in politics, journalism, and advertisement¹⁵³. The spread of the new agist theories, ideas, and practices has been channeled through the publication of books and specialized journals – *Ἀνεξήγητο* / *Anexigito* ("Inexplicable", 1988-2006) was the most prominent among them¹⁵⁴, as well as periodicals, shops selling relevant items and societies [(e.g. the "Institute of Paranormal Psychology George Vouloukos" («Ἰνστιτούτο Παραψυχολογίας Γιώργος Βουλούκος»)], representative of the US new agist "Edgar Cayce Institute" – [Edgar Cayce (1877-1945) was an American attributed clairvoyant who claimed to speak from his higher self while in a trance-like state]¹⁵⁵.

149. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23; Lacroix, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38, 40.

150. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 22-25; Lacroix, *ibid.*, especially pp. 43-54, 73-86.

151. Papalexandropoulos, «Νέα Εποχή... Β'», *ibid.*, pp. 41-43, 46-50, 60 (the quote in p. 46); Lacroix, *ibid.*, pp. 33, 36-40, 43-54, 73-86.

152. Alevizopoulos, *Γκουρουισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 3, 8-10, 53-9, 68 et seq.

153. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-7. The author mentions that the term had infiltrated even the ecclesiastical phraseology, and this had led to confusion even among the flock.

154. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, 55-59, 157-160, 188, 333-338; Esoterica.gr – Periodiko Anexigito Publications, in: <http://www.esoterica.gr/specials/anexigito/anexigito.htm>, [27.9.2023].

155. Alevizopoulos, *Γκουρουισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 7, 58-59, 68-70, 138, 140-144, 186-189.

3. Terms and expressions coming from other new religions

Voodoo (see the phrase “I make a voodoo”): This African-origin word came into the Greek language through French and English sources (Fr. *vaudou*, Engl. *voodoo*). The phrase “I make voodoo” is generally used as a substitute for the phrase “I do sorcery” («κάνω μάγια»)¹⁵⁶.

Voodoo (more correctly “Vudu” or “vodun”) is a syncretic religion that began to develop in the 17th century, when the traditional religious beliefs of the slaves on the West Africa Coast coalesced with those of the Roman Catholic Church in the West Indies, in the Colonies of the American South and southern Brazil, where they have been transplanted¹⁵⁷. The ritual and the other rites were taking place under the aegis of a priest (*oungan* / *hungan*), a priestess (*mnabo* / *mambo*), and some auxiliaries. The central ritual revolves around the practitioners’ possession by the spirits (“*loa*”) – of the ancestors, African deities, saints, etc., through which they perform divination. The spirit-possession is achieved through songs, drumming, dance, and incantations, and is a three-stage process: the believer is possessed by the spirit, *loa* is expressed through him, and finally, it is separated by him¹⁵⁸.

Goddess (see the phrase “The Goddess hidden in you”): It is a very common phrase, frequently encountered in advertisements and refers to the appearance of the most beautiful female figure possible with the aid of cosmetics¹⁵⁹.

156. Charalampakis, «βουντού», *ibid.*

157. Th. Paradellis, «βούντου, βόντουμ», in: Begzos (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 147.

158. *Ibid.*

159. *Mixcoco*, ‘Ηράκλειο Κρήτης «Ανακάλυψε τη Θεά που κρύβεις μέσα σου, επιλέγοντας τη body lotion που σου ταιριάζει σε συνδυασμό με το αντίστοιχο body splash», https://m.facebook.com/mixcoco_heraklion/photos/a.613961712883409/616347022644878/?type=3&rdr, [21.9.2023]; You weekly, «Δείξε πόσο Ύπέροχη είσαι! Βρες και αγάπησε τη Θεά που ... κρύβεις μέσα σου με 4 απλά βήματα», You weekly, <https://www.youweekly.gr/article/family/relationships/14832-deikse-po-so-yperoxh-eisai-bres-kai-agap>, 18.3.2014, 12:03, [21.9.2023]; The Beauty and the Body, «Κρύβεις κι εσύ μία θεά Αφροδίτη μέσα σου!», Lady Times, <https://lady.cyprustimes.com/beauty-and-well-being/all-about-beauty/kryveis-kai-esy-mia-thea-afrodit-mesa-s/>, [29.03.2021, 12:10], [21.9.2023]; My beauty box, “Acamnia Goddess Aura Body Perfume Mist 120ml”, «...Απελευθέρωσε τη Θεά που κρύβεις μέσα σου...», mybeautybox.gr, <https://www.mybeautybox.gr>.

Typically, the terms god/goddess are used metaphorically in Greek to describe an exquisitely beautiful person or someone extraordinary on other grounds¹⁶⁰. Yet the origins of this advertising campaign are different; it comes from the so-called “Goddess Spirituality”, the viral neo-religious movement in the U.S.A. and the English-speaking world, a combination of neo-paganism with neo-feminism in the 1970s¹⁶¹. The specific use of the word/phrase in Greek comes directly from the US advertisement industry, as this particular movement never became popular in Greece¹⁶².

“Goddess Spirituality’s” origins can be traced back to the 1960s US feminist movement and the appearance of Wicca, a modern pagan syncretic religion during the same period¹⁶³. In the first case, the feminist critique against patriarchy was expanded to also cover Christian theology. Thus, there was a demand for the rejection of all the theological elements that support the superiority of the male gender over the female one (e.g., God Father, and Son), and for the exclusive use of female images for the representation of the divine¹⁶⁴. At the same time, the first exclusively female groups within the Wicca movement began to be formed; males were excluded from their rituals and ceremonies, either in the form of

mybeautybox.gr/peripoiisi-somatos/acamnia-goddess-aura-body-perfume-mist-detail, [21.9.2023]; Maya Zoulovits, “Athena Earrings”, «...σοῦ θυμίζουν τῇ θεᾷ ποὺ κρύβεις μέσα σου!», Maya Zoulovits, <https://mayazoulovits.gr/eboutique-shop/skoularikia/gold-earrings/athena-earrings/>, [21.9.2023]; Sabahat, «Ἀρωματικό σαποῦνι σώματος Divine Feminine», «...ἀναδεικνύει τῇ θεᾷ ποὺ κρύβεις μέσα σου!», Sabahat, <https://sabahat.gr/product/ἀρωματικό-σαποῦνι-σώματος-divine-feminine/>, [21.9.2023]; Ἑλ. Τσούτση, «Τὰ bronzers ποὺ θὰ σοῦ δώσουν τὸ ἡλιοκαμένο look ποὺ ὀνειρεύεσαι», «...πῶς νὰ ἀναδείξεις τὴν bronze θεᾷ ποὺ κρύβεις μέσα σου!», Jenny.gr, <https://jenny.gr/omorfia/mallia-nyhia/417332/ta-bronzers-poy-tha-soy-dosoy-niliokammeno-look-poy-oneireyesai>, [11/06/2012], [21.9.2023].

160. Charalampakis, «θεός», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «θεός», *ibid.*, p. 865.

161. W. Griffin, “Feminist spirituality and neo-paganism”, in: Shelley Tsivia Rabinovitch (ed.), *Encyclopedia of modern witchcraft and neo-paganism*, Kendall Hunt 2011, pp. 101-105.

162. See As far as Greek polytheism’s rise and spread is concerned, see Xydias, *ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

163. Xydias, *ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

164. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

worshiped deities or devotees¹⁶⁵. During the same period and within the same ideological framework, it began formulating and promoting the theory about the so-called “Goddess Culture”, a global prehistoric culture of well-being and peace, when women were the dominant element within society, and which was gradually extinguished by warlike, patriarchal populations. This theory functioned as the necessary scientific basis for the feminist theoreticians and as one of their main arguments, to explain historically the process of submission of the female gender to the male one. Furthermore, they relied on this theory to argue for the possibility –or, better, the necessity– of replacing the dominant global male theological model with a female one, as the first one is deemed responsible for contemporary civilization’s socio-economic, political, and ecological deadlock, while the second one is more capable in promoting healthier relationships between human beings, and between humans and the world¹⁶⁶. Within this context the phrase “the Goddess within”, refers to the divine element inherent in every person, that is a part of the Goddess herself, who is identified with Nature, the creator of everything¹⁶⁷.

Mujahideen / mujahidin: This term is used metaphorically and has negative connotations; it describes persons with a rebellious disposition who act accordingly (e.g., “the intellectuals mujahideen”)¹⁶⁸.

The word –of Arabic origin– (singular: *mujahid*) literally means the “one who strives in the path of God”; it often refers to those who undertake holy war on behalf of Islam”¹⁶⁹. The different movements under this common semantic umbrella are of a revivalist of liberating (anticolonial) nature and they have been nourished and developed in areas of Central or Eastern Asia, the Middle East, and Africa from the

165. *Ibid.*

166. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

167. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

168. Charalampakis, «μουτζαχεντίν», *ibid.*

169. St. Cory, “mujahid (pl. mujahidin)”, in: J. E. Campo (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Infobase, New York 2009, in: [PDF] *Encyclopedia of Islam*: Juan Campo: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive, p. 498.

18th century onwards, while they became widespread after the mid-1970s¹⁷⁰. Their increased activity in the last decades (along with that of the Taliban – see below) coincided with the resurgence of the interest in the West for religion in general and, as far as Christianity is concerned, with its mystical and fundamentalist traditions. This is the reason why their study is related to that of the wider neo-religious phenomenon, and they are perceived as one of its historical stages¹⁷¹.

Fundamentalism, when defined as “religiously motivated political activism”, has as its point of departure the late 1970s, both in the Christian (mainly in the U.S.A.) and the Muslim world, while it appeared later in other religions as well. As Harriet H. Harris notes, “a single core definition of fundamentalism is not possible now that the term is applied so diversely. But the groups we call ‘fundamentalist’ do overlap with each other in various respects [...]; yet, “there are nine characteristics that recur in fundamentalist groups (but which may not all be found in any one group”. Those are the following: “reactivity to the marginalization of religion; selectivity about the traditions and writings of one’s religion; moral dualism; absolutism and inerrancy; millennialism and messianism; elect membership; sharp boundaries; charismatic and authoritarian leadership; behavioral requirements”. In any case, “fundamentalisms are movements with absolutist belief structures which can, but may not, engender political activism”¹⁷².

A basic novelty within the theological framework, on which a large part of the mujahideen’s motivation and actions is based, was introduced by Muslim scholars in the mid-20th century; it is related to the reinterpretation of the notion of *Jihad* (in the sense of war), and the redefinition of the term *kafir* (“disbeliever”). Therefore, the last term does not only cover those who resist Islam’s spread or oppress its believers but extends to include “Muslim political leaders who fail to implement Islamic law and whose practice of Islam is deemed to be insufficient by the Islamists. As a result, radical organizations claiming to be *mujahidin* have increasingly attacked secular Muslim leaders, intellectuals, or

170. *Ibid.*, pp. 498-499.

171. Papalexandropoulos, Δοξίμα..., *ibid.*, pp. 154-156.

172. H. A. Harris, “Fundamentalisms”, in: Partridge (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 409-414.

writers, along with the usual colonial or neocolonial targets¹⁷³. In their pursuit of war, these groups undertake terrorist actions while justifying their deeds in Quranic terms”. Relevant and familiar enough examples of relevant actions are the resistance to the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979, the armed support to the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1978, the resistance towards Russian authorities in Chechnya and Israeli ones in Palestine, the kidnapping and murder of Westerners in war-torn zones (e.g. Lebanon, Iraq), etc.¹⁷⁴.

The universe has conspired: This phrase has a metaphorical meaning and it refers to the factors, phenomena, or situations that contributed to the success or the failure of a plan that someone had tried to put in motion (e.g., “The universe has conspired to get what you want”)¹⁷⁵.

This phrase can be found in the novel *The Alchemist*, a fictional work written by the Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, one of the biggest bestselling books of the last decades¹⁷⁶. In this book, where at the center of its plot lies the spiritual quest of a young Spanish shepherd¹⁷⁷, this particular phrase is repeated many times verbatim, and many more, it is implied¹⁷⁸. In his book, Coelho reproduces the typical neo-religious view that the divine creator is the universe itself and that each creation brings within it even a tiny part of the divine essence¹⁷⁹ (the “Soul of the World”, according to Coelho). From the same intellectual context comes also his theory that, from the moments of its creation, everything holds a “Personal Myth”, that is a purpose to fulfill, as well as the “absolute desire” for it to accomplish¹⁸⁰. – the “Thelemic magic”, as it was called by the English magician and occultist Aleister Crowley, who emphasized the importance of the development of an absolute will for achieving utilitarian

173. Cory, *ibid.*, p. 498.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 499.

175. Charalampakis, *Χρηστικό λεξικό...*, *ibid.*, p. 1538; Papalexandropoulos, «Η Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα», *ibid.*, p. 15.

176. Soukis, *ibid.*, p. 241.

177. Paulo Coelho, *Ο Άλχημιστής*, transl. M. Chidioglou-Ferreira, Ang. Filippatos, ed. Tz. Saranti, Livanis Publications, Athens 1996 (1988).

178. Soukis, *ibid.*, p. 242.

179. Papalexandropoulos, *Δοκίμια...*, *ibid.*, pp. 159, 174-175.

180. Soukis, *ibid.*

causes through magic ceremonies and rituals. According to Crowley, the magician's ultimate purpose is the discovery of his "real will", that is, his real self, that potentially exists, to turn into actuality, within a process of spiritual-psychological evolvement¹⁸¹. It seems that, for Coelho, the universe is set into motion all of its parts in such a way, i.e. consciously, from the moment that everything is animate and endowed with reason – as the universe itself; thus, every human being –if it wishes so– will eventually manage to fulfill the purpose for which it was created¹⁸².

Taliban (*Talibanism* etc.): This term is used metaphorically to denote a dogmatic person with embraces extremely conservative positions and equally extreme practices, either being laic or clergyman (e.g., "the information-Taliban", "scientific / party Talibanism", "pre-elections 'Talibanisms'"). The term initially appeared in the US Media in 1992, and a few years later (2002) it was used by them metaphorically¹⁸³.

In the Pashto language –an Eastern Iranian one– which, among other areas and populations, is used by the Pashtuns, the dominant ethnicity in Afghanistan, *ṭālibān* means "students", and it is related to one of the largest groups that comprised the Taliban movement – the students of religious schools (*madrāsas*)¹⁸⁴. The Taliban movement, like the Mujahideen one, has its origins in the same period that appeared the wider phenomenon of the "turn" to religion and the new ways of perceiving it¹⁸⁵. They first appeared during the period of Afghanistan's occupation by the USSR (1979-89) and the chaotic civil war that broke between the different Mujahideen warlords after the Soviets left the country; "some five million Afghans had to flee their country during these troubled times, most of them going to neighboring Pakistan. There, a generation of Afghan refugee children grew up knowing little of the world around them but conflict and poverty. They were indoctrinated with radical Islamic ideology in schools founded in both Afghanistan

181. Hanegraaf, *ibid.*, p. 106.

182. Soukis, *ibid.*, pp. 242-3.

183. Charalampakis, «ταλιμπάν», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «ταλιμπάν», *ibid.*, p. 2006.

184. J. G. Melton, "Taliban (Pashto: "students"; also Taleban)", in: Campo, *ibid.*, pp. 657-658.

185. Papalexandropoulos, *Δοξίμια...*, *ibid.*, p. 154-6.

and Pakistan”¹⁸⁶. and with Saudi Arabia’s economic assistance. In a civil war-torn Afghanistan, where corruption reigned supreme, the largest part of the local population, having been exhausted by this chaotic situation, supported the Taliban as a trustworthy choice for the creation of a stable Islamic state. Thus, the Taliban managed to prevail over their opponents and to obtain power after two years of clashes¹⁸⁷. From then onwards and until their overthrow by the US-led invasion and the demise of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban created a regime of terror, persecuting the dissidents and degrading women’s and smaller ethnic groups’ social status, forbidding all Western products and promoting jihad, by offering shelter to Usama Bin-Ladin and other al-Qaida members and creating training centers for them¹⁸⁸.

4. Terms and phrases originated within the neo-religious movements

Holistically (adverb) – *Holistic* (adjective): These are derivative terms from the word “holism”, first appeared in 1926 (French, “globalisme” / 1923, “holisme” / 1939). As far as the adverb is concerned, it is used instead of the phrases “in total”, “overall”, or “as a whole” (e.g., “I examine a subject holistically”). As far as the adjective is concerned, it is used as a homonym of adjectives or phrases like “total”, “all-encompassing”, “comprehensive”, etc., to denote the study of a subject matter in its entirety and not partially (e.g., “the holistic approach of the learning process”)¹⁸⁹.

Even though *holism*, both as a term and as a theory, is related to philosophy¹⁹⁰, it nevertheless constituted –for many decades– the dominant framework both of the exact sciences and the humanities, in the sense that they all promoted the research of the underlying structures of every topic under discussion instead of focusing on its individual parts. In any case, though it seems that science prepared the ground for the

186. Melton, *ibid.*, p. 658.

187. *Ibid.*

188. *Ibid.*, pp. 658-9.

189. Charalampakis, «όλισμός», «όλιστικός», *ibid.*, pp. 1152-3; Babiniotis, *ibid.*, p. 1475.

190. Charalampakis, *ibid.*, p. 1152; Babiniotis, *ibid.*

spread of the concept¹⁹¹, that of the derivative words should be attributed to two distinct, but also complementary, currents, actually developed in opposition to it: the first one is the holistic or alternative medicine, which first appeared in the U.S.A. during the 1960s; it claims that every person exists as a totality (mental, psychological and corporeal) and that all illnesses are the result of the rupture of the harmonious operation of the human organism as a whole, even if it manifests itself on the local level. Indeed, the origins of all illnesses must be sought in human organisms' mental-psychological dysfunction; this is the reason why our first concern should be the latter's rehabilitation through various methods (e.g., "positive thought", meditation). According to the same theory, human beings possess inherently the capability of self-healing, which can be aided by various natural methods – often of East Asian origins (e.g., acupuncture, massage, herbal therapy, aromatherapy, etc.)¹⁹²; the second current that the derivatives of the word *holism* have as their source is that of ecology, which even from its first appearance during the 1980s identified the similarity of its ideas with the holistic paradigm and stressed the need of its adoption, as a method of grasping the environmental problems but also of solving them¹⁹³. Thus, holism can also be defined as "Social Ecology" or "Depth Ecology"; according to this approach, human beings are just one of the infinites, interdependent parts of an organic whole – nature. This organic whole is in an equilibrium state, securing the continuous existence of all of its parts (all the species); therefore, men are obliged to act in such ways as to not disturb that equilibrium¹⁹⁴. According to the supporters of this theory, humans have to act holistically, and that refers to the whole of the human civilization and consists of the promotion of organic crops and alternative sources of energy, direct democracy and communal autonomy, the equality and solidarity among the different genders, races, ethnic groups, and nations, etc. As it is easily understood, it is an entirely different way than the one

191. Lacroix, *ibid.*, pp. 9-10, 55-6, 74, 103-7.

192. Campbell, *ibid.*, pp. 110-117.

193. Ch. Spretnak – Fr. Capra, *Η πράσινη πολιτική. Μία παγκόσμια υπόσχεση*, transl. D. Garoufalas, Orora Publications, Athens 1986, pp. 23-24, 298-300.

194. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-73.

that is prevalent nowadays (dualistic), which due to the discrimination and hierarchization of the different parts of the world into more or less important and useful for the endless human progress, has led on a large-scale impoverishment and degradation of billions of people around the world, the destruction of the environment, armed conflicts and the threat of a nuclear war¹⁹⁵.

Nevertheless, although both currents constitute fundamental parts of the neo-religious movements¹⁹⁶, holism, regardless of this fact, is the main cosmological concept within them; it can be traced back to the Eastern religions that spread into the West during the 1960s. According to it, the divine creates the universe through emanation, and the latter one constitutes an extension of it. From this, it follows that the two are inter-embracing and interdependent; therefore, they constitute a single and unique entity, despite the latter's endlessly different forms¹⁹⁷.

Spirituality: This term refers to someone or something distinguished for its profoundly spiritual qualities. More specifically, if it is related to a person, this term is perceived as synonymous with the term *religiosity* (e.g., “his appearance and his manners brim with spirituality”, “Orthodox spirituality”)¹⁹⁸.

The widespread use of the term, its meanings, and its function as a substitute for others is very interesting; if we assume that it refers to something that has “deep spiritual content”, that means that there must be other related terms that do not possess such a “content”. This sort of reasoning about the term in question can be initially traced to the religions of the Indian subcontinent, China and Japan that greatly influenced the Western neo-religious movements in the 1960s, but also to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism¹⁹⁹. One of the term's core meanings

195. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

196. Papalexandropoulos, *Δοξίμια...*, *ibid.*, pp. 156-157; Bekridakis, *ibid.*, pp. 169-70, 195.

197. Papalexandropoulos, «Ἡ Διάχυτη Νέα Θρησκευτικότητα», *ibid.*, p. 21; Papalexandropoulos, «Νέα Εποχή... Β' μέρος», *ibid.*, pp. 41 et seq.; Bekridakis, *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

198. Charalampakis, «πνευματικότητα», *ibid.*; Babiniotis, «πνευματικότητα», *ibid.*, p. 1674.

199. Papalexandropoulos, *Δοξίμια...*, *ibid.*, pp. 146-147, 153-156, 159.

within the neo-religious context is that religion, as a way for humans to get in touch with the divine, cannot achieve its goal by observing customs, morals, or rituals, or even by believing in dogmas, because all these are of secondary importance. On the contrary, religion can achieve its ultimate goal through the believers' direct conduct with the divine, that is the mystical experience, which is possible due to the "openness" of human beings' inner depths towards it²⁰⁰.

This last conception about "openness" comes from the Hinduist notion that *Brahman* is the Ultimate Reality of the Universe, with the latter emanating from it; therefore, every single part of the world contains a part of the divine essence. The Brahman's part contained in every human being is called *Ātman*, and it cannot be perceived through the senses from the moment it resides in human beings' innermost depths or resides above them. Nevertheless, through the right (religious) knowledge and action, men can grasp it, and eventually achieve their salvation by realizing their true, divine nature²⁰¹.

Within Orthodox tradition, the notion of spirituality, influenced by the Eastern religions, had already expressed itself during the 1990s, by preferring mysticism over eschatology, as the immediate (temporally) contact with the divine (God) – the experience of mystical life as a foretaste of the believer's eventual participation in a life renewed in Christ in the world to come²⁰².

200. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-160. From the same source comes the notion of all religions' equal value, which is expressed with phrases like: "all religions are saying the same things", from the moment that mysticism is their common thread. See Bekridakis, *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

201. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 159; Michailidis, *Ἰνδουισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 304-305, 323-324, 326-327; Michailidis, «Ἄτμαν», in: Begzos (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 82. This notion can be traced within Mahayana Buddhism: the correspondent divine element which has been derived from the impersonal absolute and inhabits every living being and in every place of the world is called "Buddhist nature" (see St. Papalexandropoulos, *Βουδισμός...*, *ibid.*, pp. 121-122).

202. *Op. cit.*, pp. 160-162. This conversion has been described as the substitution of "theosiology" for theology; Bekridakis, *ibid.*, p. 186.

Conclusion

We've already proceeded to classify 25 phrases and terms, based on the material we've managed to gather and according to their neo-religious origins. In this section, they are classified according to their new content – if it is religious or not, that is if it consists of part of the diffused religiosity or not, with the possible further creation of categories that contain or exceed the two previous ones.

The first of our categories, which contains the most linguistic elements, is the secular one: “avatar”, “alchemy”, “guru”, “new age”, and “the Goddess hidden inside you”, words and phrases related to the “reincarnation”, as well as “masonry”, “third eye”, “holistically”, “positive thought”. In these cases, the terms and phrases have completely lost their neo-religious meaning and have become instruments of various discourses –political (e.g. “new age”), journalistic (e.g. “third eye”, “masonry”, guru”), advertising (e.g., “the Goddess hidden inside you”), as well as the discourse related with the Digital Media. (“avatar”). It is worth noting that most of those elements are used in more than one of the subcategories mentioned above, while only a few are found in just one of them, that is, they have one exclusive use (“avatar”, “the Goddess hidden inside you”).

Our second category contains the elements connected with the diffused New Religiosity – those that have lost their original religious meaning and have acquired a new, neo-religious one. They are the words “Buddha”, “voodoo” “karma”, “spirituality” and the expression “higher/ultimate power”. Although some may feel that the word “Buddha” should not be included in this category, due to its metaphorical use, we are dealing here with a self-evident cult-image, therefore the same goes for its metaphorical use; thus, it is quite legitimate for us to include it in this subcategory. As far as the other elements are concerned, some are related to traditional, although marginal, phenomena (e.g., the word “voodoo” that substitutes the word “magic”), while the rest of them refer to more general notions about the divine.

The third and shortest category contains terms that belong to both two first categories, in the sense that they are used in all the cases mentioned above, either in secular or religious contexts. To this category belongs

the term “Taliban”; it is used to describe all sorts of fanatics, and in a religious context it is used metaphorically to describe intolerant bigots.

Lastly, the fourth category contains elements that are presented as borderline ones: words or phrases that, while they delineate secular situations, also keep their transcendental qualities. We are talking about words like “aura”, “energy”, “Zen”, “medium”, and “nirvana”, and the phrases “it has a star”, and “the universe has conspired/is conspiring”. Some of them refer to the luck factor (“it has a star”, and “the universe has conspired/is conspiring”), while others to unpredictability under normal conditions (“medium”), to an unusual, almost otherworldly, state of calm (“nirvana”, “Zen”), and to an intuitive capacity related to whether a contact with someone or something can prove to be beneficial or harmful (“aura”, “energy”).

All the above confirms something that applies in general to the religious language: the neo-religious language, as the traditional one, is distinguished by its remarkable ability to deeply penetrate the secular discourse and transform it, while simultaneously transforming itself, either to other religious forms, that express the diffused New Religiosity, to non-religious ones, or to forms that represent a combination of the two previous ones.