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*Alternative Spiritualities, Czech and Worldwide, and Czech Academia**

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Traditional and Alternative Religiosity in post-Velvet Czechia

Being born in 1980, nine years before the Velvet Revolution, I lived through the last decade of communism and, as a young child, witnessed the fall of the regime and the birth of the young Czech democracy. As the reins of state-enforced atheism finally lifted, the religious/spiritual atmosphere in the 1990s was joyous. For one, the many churches and religions that suffered under the persecution of the state were finally free to teach and preach. At the same time, people finally celebrated freedom of speech, including the freedom of religious expression. The period's optimism is eloquently expressed in the Catholic Church's "Decade of Spiritual Reinvigoration". The program had already been launched in 1987 under the last vestiges of the regime, which scrutinized its early years with great suspicion and strongly discouraged people from attending its events. Naturally, the initiative grew even stronger in the early years after the Revolution in the newfound free-speech environment. And it was not alone: religious and spiritual themes spread far and wide in Czech culture. As I started university in 1999, I had enough time to witness the last throes of the nineties in Czech elite culture. While many atheists and materialists certainly remained in Academia, there was a rare openness to all forms of religion. Many elite intellectuals openly professed their faith (biologist and philosopher Zdeněk Neubauer being arguably the most notable), and many of my schoolmates and I converted to Christianity during their studies and actively, openly, and enthusiastically

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practised their faith. Zdeněk Nešpor, Czech sociologist of religion, insists that the spiritual reawakening of the nineties was preceded by about a decade-long resurgence of religious faith in Czech society, which was already somewhat reflected and discussed by the late communist-era scholarship.[1] One of the reasons for this was the undeniable moral credit the churches gained by being persecuted for so long by the state. All in all, there were high expectations of the return of religiosity/spirituality to the former atheist state. The first post-communist census confirmed these observations in hard numbers: 45 % of Czech society (that is, 4.5 out of 10 million inhabitants) identified themselves as affiliated with some religion (39 % with the Catholic Church, 2 % with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, 1,7 % with the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, and the remaining 1 % with other churches and/or religions).[2]

Alongside the reinvigoration of traditional religions, the early 1990s witnessed an equally important surge of alternative religious/spiritual forms. Again, the trend was certainly not born with the young democratic Czechoslovak state. There was a centuries-long underground presence of Western Esotericism in the Czech lands, which was suddenly able to enter the mainstream freely. Simultaneously, both the Eastern religions and the first vestiges of New Age spirituality started to gather more and more enthusiasts. Neither was fully new in the Czech environment; the Eastern sources had contributed to the Czech spiritual landscape at least from the late 19th century, and the New Age started appearing already in communist times. Nešpor[3] speaks about underground samizdat translations of Western alternative spiritualities sources and the fact that these sources were treated equally as those stemming from traditional religions (mainly Christianity), their ideas mixing freely and eclectically. They were, after all, "seen as suitable sources for and depictions of religious worldviews, or at least more suitable and authoritative than the official teachings of Marxism-Leninism".[4] Subsequently, the early nineties witnessed what can only be described as a giant boom of a wide range of alternative spiritualities – from Western Esotericism to Neopaganism (specifically related to the Czech Celtic past) to the broad and eclectic stream of "New Age"

1 Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Příliš slábi ve víře: Česká ne/religiozita v evropském kontextu* [*Too Weak in Faith: Czech Non/Religiosity in the European Context*] (Kalich, 2010), 94-95.

2 Dana Hamplová, *Náboženství v české společnosti na prahu 3. tisíciletí* [*Religion in Czech Society on the Verge of the 21th century*] (Karolinum, 2013), 41ff; see also Markéta Růžičková, „Religious Belief of the Czech Population in the 1991-2011 Censuses," Central European Journal of Contemporary Religion 2, no. 1 (2017): 29-46.

3 Nešpor, *Příliš slábi ve víře*, 96.

4 Nešpor, *Příliš slábi ve víře*, 96.

Spirituality (which I would call Alternative Spirituality, capitalized).[5] And while I can certainly testify to the newfound enthusiasm for traditional religions in Czech culture, I also witnessed first-hand the triumphant march of the alternative ones. I fell in love with them as a teenager at high school – astrology, Wicca, Aleister Crowley, shamanic practices, occultural motifs in metal music lyrics, and many more. If somebody had told me that not even a decade later that I would be baptized by a Catholic priest, I would not have believed it.

To sum up, the political turn of the tides brought about an avid interest in everything the former regime had fought against, including religion and spirituality. However, Czech scholarship agrees in unison that the immediate post-Velvet, wildly enthusiastic reawakening of traditional religiosity only lasted for a few short years. Again, the censuses speak for themselves. While in 1991, about 45 % of the population declared themselves as religious, ten years later, it was only about 33 %. Finally, in 2011, the number of Czech religious adherence reached their all-time low at merely 14 %, and more or less the same number were recorded in 2021 (19 %).[6] However, this seemingly steep drop is perhaps more or less illusory since the results of the first census can be considered less than objective, being heavily influenced by the atmosphere in the post-November society. "Declaring their affiliation to some church," writes Nešpor, "was for many people either mere seasonal conformism brought about either by political reasons and ideological cluelessness tied to the downfall of the communist regime, or by a newfound, but short-lived socially conditioned religiosity".[7]

The numbers we see in the last two censuses place Czechia among the least religious countries not only in Europe but also in the world. This highly publicized information helped to create the contemporary Czech religious (or, better said, non-religious) identity: the Czechs tend to identify their society as "atheist". However, this portrait of contemporary Czech religiosity captures only half of the problem. While the media and

5 I count myself among those scholars who avoid using the term "New Age" outside of the strict confines of the 1960s-70s counterculture. For the subsequent mainstream phenomenon, I strongly prefer to use the term "Alternative Spirituality" instead. And if we have difficulties with English terminology, the struggle with terms in Czech is even more complex and pressing. I have summed the Czech situation up in a short text published in 2023 in a thematic issue of *Dingir* dedicated to alternative spirituality: Zuzana M. Kostićová, "New Age, "ezo", alternativní spiritualita: Problém terminologie" ["New Age, "ezo", Alternative Spirituality: The Terminology Question"], *Dingir* 26, no. 2 (2023): 51, http://cz.scientologie-info.dingir.cz/cislo/23/2/new_age,_ezo,_alternativni_spiritualita.pdf.

6 Hamplová, *Náboženství v české společnosti*, 41. Among other reasons, the rise of the percentage in the last census was probably influenced by migration related to the Russian-Ukrainian war, affecting the numbers of adherents to Eastern Orthodoxy.

7 Nešpor, *Příliš slábi ve víře*, 100.

the public discourse in general ceaselessly repeat this popular cliché, they tend to overlook the second half, that is, the phenomena outside of what is usually considered "religion". We have seen how, in the nineties, the boom of alternative spiritualities in the broadest sense powerfully influenced Czech culture. They have remained a steady factor in Czech society ever since, and sociological research has repeatedly confirmed that. The fourth chapter of Dana Hamplová's 2013 sociological monograph about Czech religiosity is tellingly titled "What do the Czechs believe in? Is it God or is it horoscopes?"[8] Drawing on data from sociological surveys realized between 1999 and 2008, Hamplová shows that there is an interesting percentage of Czechs who adhere to phenomena connected to alternative spiritualities. In 2008, 16 % believed or tended to believe in reincarnation, 50 % in divination, 47 % in the power of amulets, 40 % in astrology, 46 % in the supernatural power of healers, and 11 % in nirvana. In comparison, only 21 % believed or tended to believe in God, 27 % in the afterlife, 24 % in miracles, 23 % in Heaven, and 18 % in Hell. Despite the popular Czech self-identification as "atheists", Hamplová insists that there are only about 6 % of true atheists in the Czech population, while 80 % believe in at least some "supernatural" phenomena.[9]

Further academic research has confirmed these facts time and time again. From the late 90s to the early 20s, article after article, both in Czech and English, states that while the Czechs are not "religious", they strongly adhere to non-traditional and non-institutionalized "spiritual" forms.[10] Moreover, the opposition between "spirituality" and "religion"[11] has deeply penetrated Czech public discourse, which is readily apparent to anyone who reads Czech and has some experience both with Czech media and Czech-speaking social networks. What is more, this applies both to

8 Hamplová, *Náboženství v české společnosti*, 58-81.

9 Hamplová, *Náboženství v české společnost*i, 59-61.

10 I have already quoted some of those written in Czech. For some of those written in English, see e.g. Dana Hamplová and Zdeněk R. Nešpor, „Invisible Religion in a „Non-believing" Country: The Case of the Czech Republic," *Social Compass* 56, no. 4 (2009): 581-597; Roman Vido, David Václavík, and Antonín Paleček, „Czech Republic: The Promised Land for Atheists?", in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion, vol. 7: Sociology of Atheism* (Brill, 2016), 201-232; Zdeněk R. Nešpor, „Attitudes toward Religion(s) in a ‚Non-believing' Czech Republic", *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 19, no. 1 (2010): 68-84, among others.

11 While the two terms tend to be sharply distinguished in contemporary scholarly literature, I believe the way they tend to be pitted against each other is, more than anything else, a result of Alternative ("New Age") Spirituality's emic discourse seeping into the academic environment. For the whole argument, see Zuzana M. Kostićová, "Religions, Spiritualities, Worldviews, and Discourses: Revisiting the Term " Spirituality" as Opposed to „Religion", *Central European Journal for Contemporary Religion* 2, no. 2 (2018): 81-97.

the enthusiasts and the adversaries of alternative spiritualities: while the enthusiasts use "spirituality" (*spiritualita*) and "non-religious spirituality" (*nenáboženská spiritualita*) to characterize themselves, the adversaries tend to use the derogatory term *ezo*, a foreshortened version of the slightly less derogatory yet still somewhat pejorative *ezoterika*, which is perhaps best translated as "popular esoteric superstitions" (as opposed to the neutral scholarly *esoterismus*, "esotericism"). What is important is that both "*nenáboženská spiritualita*" and "*ezo*" are seen as located outside of religion. Many of the abovementioned phenomena (healers, amulets, astrology, and divination) would fall into this category. While there is likely a certain overlap with traditional religions, they are mostly located in the complex interrelated world of Western Esotericism, Alternative ("New Age") Spirituality, (Neo)Paganism, (Neo)Shamanism, and other currents. Perhaps except for some forms of contemporary paganism, none of these tend to be seen by the Czechs as "religion" – and some are even understood as radically opposing "religion" both by their adherents and adversaries (e.g. contemporary shamanism, psychedelic spirituality, etc.). This is a crucial point. It means that the Czech public discourse and Czech media suffer from a form of selective blindness, which once upon a time created the myth of "Czech atheism" and has sustained it ever since.

Alternative Spirituality and Czech Academia

Needless to say, Czech Academia is far more careful with the term "atheism" than the mainstream. Already in the nineties, Czech scholars started to research what by then was sometimes called "non-traditional religions", mapping the emerging spiritual landscape of the young democratic society. Here, I would like to make a brief and condensed summary of thirty years of Czech scholarship related to alternative spiritualities, since, to my knowledge, only short, scattered fragments of the history of Czech alternative spiritualities research exist both in Czech and in English. For a researcher, specifically for a researcher who speaks little or no Czech and is therefore reliant on automatic translators and AI, this greatly complicates the situation. I write this text in the hope that, in the future, it may serve as a starting orientation guide for those who wish to get acquainted both with the Czech spiritual landscape and Czech scholars who study alternative spiritualities.

First of all, there were the sociologists – most importantly, Dana Hamplová, Dušan Lužný, Zdeněk Nešpor, and David Václavík. Already in the nineties, but most notably since the turn of the millennium, there have been many important sociological surveys and projects directed both at Czech religiosity in general and specifically at alternative, "holistic", non-

institutionalized spirituality. Among them, the 2006-2008 project *Detratitionalization and individualization of religion* specifically targeted not only church-type religiosity but also the other forms; similarly, the *Czech Kendal* project was inspired by the British Project Kendal, analyzing the religious landscape in two small Czech towns, Mikulov and Česká Lípa.[12] While there were many other projects, these two shed the most light on the spiritual landscape of the early Czech 21st century and directly or indirectly inspired several important academic and popularizing/introductory publications. While some newer projects have emerged since, the earlier works of Hamplová, Nešpor, Václavík, and Lužný remain the core sociological sources concerning Czech alternative religiosity/spirituality to this day, which have turned their authors into the foremost authorities on the topic. Under their tutelage, a new generation of Czech sociologists of religion emerged, among which many focus on phenomena associated with alternative spirituality (Renata Sedláková, Marta Kolářová, and for some time also Michaela Ondrašinová, to name but a few). Dana Hamplová (Czech Academy of Sciences) later switched to other topics of study, mainly women, family, and wellbeing; Zdeněk Nešpor (Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, and Czech Academy of Sciences) remains one of the foremost experts both on early modern and contemporary Czech religiosity, focusing specifically on secularization, Czech Christian churches, and other themes.

In sociology, a specific place is reserved for the research of New Religious Movements, both quantitative and, most importantly, qualitative. While Nešpor did some work on them as well, the most important scholars who focused on them for decades were Dušan Lužný, David Václavík, and Zdeněk Vojtíšek. Lužný first helped to establish the sociology of religion at the Department for the Study of Religion at Masaryk University in Brno and then co-founded Religious Studies at Palacký University in Olomouc; throughout this time, he focused both on Eastern religions and contemporary non-traditional religiosity. Václavík (from Masaryk University, Brno) and Vojtíšek (affiliated to the Hussite Theological Faculty of Charles University), however, largely turned to the New Religious Movements and their work marks the real beginning of Czech scholarship dedicated exclusively to alternative spirituality, both in Bohemia (Prague) and in Moravia (Brno, Olomouc). While Václavík later turned his focus to atheism and non-religion, both of these scholars had a crucial influence on the new generation that started to research alternative spiritualities both in Czechia

12 Results of both projects are summarized in Dušan Lužný and Zdeněk R. Nešpor, eds., *Náboženství v menšině: Religiozita a spiritualita v současné české společnosti* [*Religion in Minority: Religiosity and Spirituality in the Contemporary Czech Society*] (Masarykova univerzita, Malvern, 2008).

and abroad – New Age, contemporary paganism, contemporary shamanism, the occulture, and other themes. This new generation of Czech experts on New Religious movements includes, among others, Martin Fárek, Jitka Schlichtsová, and Andrea Beláňová.

In 1998, Zdeněk Vojtíšek founded *Dingir*, a quarterly magazine focused on contemporary religion, which straddles the divide between academic and popular works. The huge group of authors that have contributed to *Dingir* includes some of the most important Czech Religious studies scholars as well as students, scholars from other fields, and general enthusiasts. *Dingir* has performed an outstanding service not only as a bridge between the academic world and the educated public – it has also highlighted new topics of interest for its readers and organized several big conferences, which have helped connect scholars from different fields, cities, or universities. A few years ago, Dingir launched its sister project, *Náboženský infoservis* [*Religious Information Service*], a popular online portal dedicated to current religious affairs.

Alongside work on the New Religious Movements, there are several other lines of alternative spiritualities research in Czech Academia. First, a special mention of Czech social geographers is in order: some of them are focused on Postsecularism and contemporary alternative spiritualities. The most important names here are Tomáš Havlíček and Kamila Klingorová, both from the Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague. Then there are experts on contemporary paganism – the most important ones are Pavel Horák, Matouš Vencálek, Michal Puchovský (a Slovak researcher who cooperates with Czech experts and compares Slovak and Czech paganism), Jan Reichstäter, and formerly also Kamila Bártová (n. Velkoborská). Third, there is a growing group of authors focused on the broadest context of Alternative ("New Age") Spirituality. Among them, Helena Dyndová and Kateřina Horská focus on contemporary shamanism, and Jan Kapusta researches the intersection between contemporary indigenous religions of Latin America and Alternative Spirituality. As my own focus is the nascent doctrine of Alternative Spirituality, I should also include myself in this little group. I am excited to notice a growing interest in these themes among Czech students, both in Religious Studies and neighbouring disciplines, and that many B.A. and M.A. theses have started to focus on topics related to these lines of research.

Due to the boom of conspiracism both in the West and in Czechia, some Czech Religious Studies scholars have also started to focus on this topic. For Czechia, it was Zdeněk Vojtíšek who first brought attention to the religious aspects of the problem in 2016 in a special issue of the *Dingir* magazine; Kateřina Hlaváčová (then a PhD student) was the first Czech Religious Studies scholar focused entirely on conspiracism. However,

many others followed suit after the pandemic, most importantly Radek Chlup and Jan A. Kozák (but also Ph.D. student Hynek Bečka). I also have to mention Marie Heřmanová, an anthropologist focused mainly on digital anthropology, who, while not being a Religious Studies scholar *sensu stricto*, has published several articles about Czech Instagram influencers that focus on femininity, spirituality, and conspiracism. Another name to mention is Petr Janeček, an anthropologist and folklorist. Janeček is mainly known for his works on Czech urban legends, and has also touched upon the subject of conspiracism. While not a Religious Studies scholar *sensu stricto*, his work is nevertheless certainly relevant to the discipline.

Naturally, the theme of alternative spiritualities is closely connected to Western Esotericism. As I already mentioned, Czechia has a long history of Esoteric Traditions and magic, reaching back at least to Renaissance times. While everybody knows that Emperor Rudolph II moved his court to Prague and made it the literal esoteric capital of Europe, fewer are aware of how many medieval magicians there were in the 14th century during the reign of Charles IV. In the Czech scholarly tradition, Esotericism has mostly been studied from a historical and/or theological perspective (sometimes bordering the etic and emic perspectives); the connection to Religious Studies is relatively new. The most famous name that cannot be omitted here is psychologist and historian Milan Nakonečný, a practising esotericist and an author of several scholarly books on Western Esoteric Traditions, Czech Esotericism, magic, and other topics. However, in Czech Religious Studies, the topic has only been gaining traction in the last decade. The most notable names are historian František Novotný (an expert on medieval magic) and, to some extent, Religious Studies scholar Milan Fujda, who has touched upon the problem in some of his works as well.

In close proximity to Western Esotericism stands the phenomenon of "occulture", the intersection between Esoteric Traditions, alternative spiritualities in the broadest sense, and popular culture. First and foremost, there is a group of Brno scholars around Miroslav Vrzal that focuses both specifically on Satanism and on the intersection between esotericism, Satanism, religion, and popular music, specifically the metal subcultures. Matouš Mokrý, who emerged from this group, is also interested in the so-called "sinister milieu". Albeit an expert on Islam, Prague Religious Studies scholar Barbara Oudová Holcátová has also lately increasingly focused on the implicit religious aspects of fandom.

A special section should be reserved for theologians. There are two main figures who have exceeded the boundaries of theology *sensu stricto* and delved into the waters of alternative spiritualities – Ivan Odilo Štampach and Pavel Hošek. Štampach is an ex-Catholic theologian who switched his interest to Religious Studies and focused on contemporary

religion, becoming an expert on New Religious Movements and contemporary Christianity. He also co-founded the Religious Studies department at the University of Pardubice. Pavel Hošek is a protestant theologian with extensive interests which primarily dwell on the intersection between Christianity, alternative spiritualities, and popular culture. A very prolific author, Hošek has published, among other things, works on the spirituality of E. T. Seton, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and the famous Czech youth fiction writer and boy club movement founder Jaroslav Foglar. However, Hošek has also touched upon the problem of the post-modern religious landscape, including the formation and spread of alternative spiritualities.

Finally, an honorary mention of Tomáš Halík is undoubtedly in order. A theologian, psychologist, sociologist, priest, and internationally renowned Catholic intellectual, Halík is a famous Czech public figure frequently interviewed by the media in relation to contemporary Christianity and religion in general. For the past three decades, Halík has taught Religious Studies students at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, focusing mainly on the Sociology and Psychology of Religion as well as contemporary Christianity; he has also had a long-time special interest in secularization, atheism, and non-religion, both Czech and European. In 2014, Halík was awarded the Templeton prize, which he used, among other things, to organize a substantial international sociological project focused on religion in contemporary Central Europe. While he has never directly studied alternative spiritualities, his long-time interest in the disenchantment and re-enchantment of the West, his engagement with the Sociology of Religion, and his powerful, decades-long influence on Czech public discourse make him a figure that cannot be omitted here.

2024 Alternative Spirituality Conference and this Religio Special Feature

When Jan Kapusta, Helena Dyndová, and I were awarded funding for our project "Key cultural sources, ideas, and practices of Western alternative spirituality and medicine" in 2022, we decided that it was time to establish an annual event that would gather Czech (and, hopefully, also some Slovak) experts on alternative spiritualities and give them a platform to meet and present and discuss their research. In early 2023, we launched a call for papers for a conference titled "Alternative spirituality: 'New Age', (Neo)paganism, and (Neo)shamanism", which took place later that year at the Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague, featuring both famous names and new and fresh faces. After the keynote by Zdeněk Vojtíšek, which compared the early Czech "New Age" of the 1990s with the contemporary situation, there were six panels dedicated respectively to

Czech spirituality, alternative spiritualities' environmental aspects, the development of core doctrinal aspects of Alternative Spirituality, psychedelic spirituality, the intersection between Alternative Spirituality and New Religious Movements, and Alternative Spirituality and the Visual Arts.

Out of these six panels, the three following papers made their way into this special feature. First of all, there is Klára Kubalková's study which focuses on the Universe People. This Czech New Religious Movement is a UFO religion with strong millennial and conspiracist traits: their teachings emphasize the existence of good and benevolent extraterrestrials led by Ashtar Sheran as well as the evil reptilians Ashtar helps us fight. The group also focuses on the oncoming ecological apocalypse and the necessity of personal spiritual growth. Their leader, Ivo Aštar Benda, is a contactee who transmitted the channelled message from Ashtar Sheran himself. While the group's apogee is long over, and the movement is now largely defunct, it still counts among the best-known and strongest examples of Czech UFO religions. Kubalková, a cognitive scientist from Masaryk University, Brno, analyzed the reasons leading to the group's loss of popularity from the perspective of Minimal Counterintuitive Ideas Theory.

Second, Dagmar Civišová's study of the Kambo ritual leads the reader out of the confines of Czechia into the Amazon. In the last thirty years, the popularity of indigenous religions of the Americas has been a steady, strong feature of the landscape of alternative spiritualities, most notably in contemporary shamanism and psychedelic spirituality. It is important to understand that there is a long tradition of appreciation of all things related to the indigenous groups of the Americas, starting with the mid-20th century popularity of Karl May's youth fiction featuring a romanticized image of the Native American. This accounts for an overwhelmingly positive, even utopian understanding of Native cultures of the Americas as well as their spiritualities. This is naturally a powerful catalyst that magnifies and intensifies Czech society's receptivity to motifs stemming from indigenous religions. For this reason, some researchers (most notably Jan Kapusta) study the intersection between them and Czech alternative spiritualities; many others, however, turn their attention directly to the indigenous religions of the Americas themselves. Civišová's text is based on her field research in the Amazon among the Matsés. She studied the famous Kambo ritual, which features a psychotropic secretion of *Philomedusa bicolor*, a local species of tropical frog.

Finally, my own text stands at the intersection between Alternative ("New Age") Spirituality and popular culture, focusing on *Tomb Raider*, a famous transmedia universe featuring Lara Croft, the archaeologist. While

there has been a plethora of gender-related analyses of Lara's world, the phenomenon has barely incited any interest among Religious Studies scholars. For one, I believe that the problem of Lara's gender tends to obliterate other avenues of possible research; however, another reason for this is that much more attention is directed at the *Indiana Jones* universe, and *Tomb Raider* is intuitively understood as following in Indy's footsteps, the only big difference being the gender of the protagonist. I believe that is not the case. Following Cornelius Holtorf's studies of popular archaeology and Christopher Partridge's concept of occulture, I analyze the religious/spiritual motifs in *Tomb Raider.* I conclude that compared to a strongly Christian influence clearly visible in the *Indiana Jones* movies, *Tomb Raider* instead shows a powerful and growing influence of Alternative ("New Age") Spirituality and Western Esotericism.

I hope that both the Alternative Spirituality conference and this thematic issue of *Religio* will help support the fast-growing interest of Czech Religious Studies scholars (as well as experts from other fields) in contemporary alternative spiritualities. We have seen time and time again for the last twenty or so years that alternative spiritualities (specifically Alternative or "New Age" Spirituality) are, without a doubt, a potent feature of the Czech religious landscape. Moreover, due to the depth and scope of the secularization process, Czechia may be one of the few countries in the world with Alternative ("New Age") Spirituality as its predominant religion. This makes research of Alternative Spirituality in the Czech context all the more important – and I, for one, believe it has a bright and promising future.