

Repositório ISCTE-IUL

Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2023-04-03

Deposited version:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Panagiotopoulos, A. & Roussou, E. (2022). We have always been transreligious: An introduction to transreligiosity. *Social Compass*. 69 (4), 614-630

Further information on publisher's website:

10.1177/00377686221103713

Publisher's copyright statement:

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Accepted Version for Publication

Panagiotopoulos, Anastasios and Eugenia Roussou. 2022. 'We have always been transreligious: an introduction to transreligiosity.' *Social Compass*: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00377686221103713>

Abstract

The paper is a proposition and exploration of the term 'transreligiosity'. We argue that transreligiosity is more apt to describe the transgressive character of religiosity, focusing more particularly on the transversality of spaces, symbolic or otherwise, which are created in religious phenomena. We examine the porosity of religious boundaries and, ultimately, propose the term transreligiosity to embrace them, placing emphasis on their transreligious character, while perceiving them as a pivotal fragment of transreligiosity. We take some of Latour's key concepts on 'purification', to argue for the ultimate impossibility of it in the sphere of religiosity. While processes of purification have been powerful through efforts to institutionalize and centralize religiosity, on a vernacular level, this has had a contrary effect. Religious subjects have been distanced from a more direct participation ('mediation'). Hence, they are constantly creating transreligious instances in order to abolish and transgress those rigid borders.

Keywords: Bruno Latour, contemporary spirituality, 'purification', transreligiosity, transnational religion, vernacular and lived religion

Résumé

Le article est une proposition et une exploration du terme «transreligiosité». Nous soutenons que la transreligiosité est plus apte à décrire le caractère transgressif de la religiosité, en se concentrant plus particulièrement sur la transversalité des espaces, symboliques ou non, qui sont créés dans les phénomènes religieux. Nous examinons la porosité des frontières religieuses et, finalement, proposons le terme de transreligiosité pour les embrasser, en mettant l'accent sur leur caractère transreligieux, tout en les percevant comme un fragment pivot de la transreligiosité. Nous prenons quelques-uns des concepts clés de Latour sur la « purification », pour argumenter en faveur de l'impossibilité ultime de celle-ci dans le domaine de la religiosité. Alors que les processus de purification ont été puissants grâce aux efforts d'institutionnalisation et de centralisation de la religiosité, au niveau vernaculaire, cela a eu un effet contraire. Les sujets religieux ont été éloignés d'une participation

plus directe (« médiation »). Par conséquent, ils créent constamment des instances transreligieuses afin d'abolir et de transgresser ces frontières rigides.

Mots clés: Bruno Latour, spiritualité contemporaine, «purification», transreligiosité, religion transnationale, religion vernaculaire et vécue

We have never been religious

'We have never been religious'. This statement is anything but a conventional antireligious or nonreligious claim which would invert Bruno Latour's (1993) famous claim that 'we have never been modern' into an aphoristic 'we have always been modern'. Latour has developed influential propositions concerning the 'Great Divide' which is striving to distinguish between the world of humans (Culture) and the world of nonhumans and objects (Nature), through acts of 'purification'. This is the case, according to Latour, for the 'West' internally. Accordingly, the 'Rest' are viewed within this prism, as not making these distinctions rigidly. For the West, the angst for these distinctions creates 'hybrids' in an unconscious or implicit way, while for the Rest, hybrids are not problematic or suppressed. As everybody is implicitly or explicitly under the spell of hybrids, his provocation is that *we have never been modern* (just as that they have never been premodern). In this paper, we shall be engaging with the religious aspect of 'purification', as an impossible effort to create strict borders, and the proliferation of 'hybrids', as the transgression of these borders. We argue that we are faced with a complex condition wherein the consciousness of the existence of religious borders is as much heightened as the desire to transgress them. Therefore, it is not so much a matter of a 'premodern' world that completely ignores the existence of borders and, thus, is 'hybrid' by default. Nor is it a matter of a 'modern' world which openly 'purifies' and secretly or unintentionally creates 'hybrids'. Perhaps we are already well into a different world ('nonmodern', echoing Latour), wherein borders exist, but they are simultaneously ignored *and* actively transgressed.

There is no space and no intention here to engage with a vast theological and social scientific literature on what religion is. The vastness of efforts for a concrete

definition confers a sense of desperate impossibility to the project, although the term religion is often employed officially with certainty or vernacularly with ease when it comes to name, and not strictly define, a phenomenon, an experience, or a belief as religious. The simultaneous difficulty in defining religion and the certainty or ease in naming it becomes even more complex by the efforts of defining what religion *is not*, including the various ‘indifferences’ to it. In the social sciences lurks a constant tension between a deeply ingrained understanding that religion is a human-social construct and a phenomenological observation that the religious is conceived as a kind of force or subjectivity (or a plurality of them) which is ultimately extra- or non-human but, in one way or another and to a larger or lesser degree, related to the human. If we were to radically annul this simultaneous tension there would not be a need for the social sciences to deal with religion, just as there would not be a need for religion if we were to eradicate the relational but non-identical element of it with the human-social. We would just be confronted with the latter being directly dealing with itself. In that sense, *we have always been religious*.

But *we have never been religious* if religion is sought to be axiomatically defined as and delimited to what is distilled down to a precise socio-historical context. One such context is that of Christianity, of its Reformation(s), its (colonial) expansion and its accompanying secularization processes. Similar but not identical processes have given us some broad and universalist-aspiring definitions of religion, constructing and rendering the historical religions as the dominant players in the religious arena. However dominant such players might have been at an institutionalized level, if we broaden our vision to a less institutional and a more socio-cultural field, Religions (with a capital ‘r’) somehow lose their universalist identarian grip. What is in such a context sought to be defined and established as

religion and what as not, clashes with a variety of other definitions and non-definitions of it. We, thus, enter the field of transreligiosity, which seeks to engage with the complex dynamics of the religious without dissolving it though to an amorphous, over-relativized, and for this reason, even more desperate impossibility. *'We have always been transreligious'*. As anthropologists who study religion and spirituality in the present-day world in places like Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Cuba, we are continuously confronted with a transgressiveness of borders, which defy any strict delimitations that the institutionalized and secularizing processes have sought to establish. Religious subjects might not be completely indifferent to these processes, as they are enmeshed in them, and out of a need for public recognition, at least to gain a minimal freedom for their religious practices to take place and not to be stigmatized. Often, the tension arises from the fact that while they are making utterly secular claims, that is, for public recognition and religious freedom, their transgressiveness of borders tends to blur precisely what is sought to be strictly defined, institutionalized, and secularized. The proposed term of 'transreligiosity' has the ambition to establish a useful term and an analytic perspective which is both encompassing and sensitive to the various nuances and contingencies of the transgression of religiosity's borders.

The shaking pillars of religious purification and its nonmodern hybrids

Acts of purification are ever-present in religious matters, whether the context is predominantly secular, non-secular, non-religious (see Llera Blanes and Oustinova-Stjepanovic, 2015) or post-secular (see Marpil *et.al.*, 2017). Broadly speaking, in a secular context the tendency is to simultaneously purify religion from nonreligion, separating religiosity's public manifestations from its private ones, and regulating in

a formal (constitutional) way religion's status *vis a vis* the State, as well as the relations among different religious groups which, in principle, should be granted a basis of equality and freedom of expression. In a non-secular context, the tendency is not to disentangle religion from public life and the affairs of the State, either by way of intense merging between the two (for instance, in many Islamic countries), or by way of radically abolishing the former from the latter, because they can only be perceived in antagonistic terms (for instance, in communist regimes). In any case, the common denominator in both contexts is that of an active purification process, in which religion is understood and instituted as a centre, with a hierarchical authority, from which its orthodoxy and orthopraxis emanates and is subsequently diffused into the 'lower' strata of its 'followers'. It is more useful to view the 'secular' and the 'non-secular' as forces and a process, rather than a state and an essence (even within a single context; see Asad, 2003; Cady and Shakman Hurd, 2010; Jakobsen and Pellegrini, 2008). But what both forces may share, especially in the long and complex process of development of the Nation-State, is the relative separation of the institutionalized, the centralized, and the dogmatized from the vernacular which, then, the latter has to be *represented* by the former, through 'intermediaries' (see Latour, 1993: 76-85), whether this is a monarch or an elected body of representatives.

Seen under such light and taking Latour's propositions as a departure point, rather than strictly being faced with the 'West and the Rest', the secular and the non-secular, the premodern and the modern, the old and the new, another set of forces arises, which may permeate multiple contexts. On the one hand, we have a highly institutionalized, centralized, and dogmatic class of 'intermediaries', which defines what is religion, what is not, and what should its place and power(lessness) be. On the other hand, we have a vernacular domain, which, exactly because it does not

directly ‘mediate’ and participate on this official level, it has found for itself, no matter how limited or ‘private’, a counter-domain full of ‘hybrids’, namely, of non-official, decentralized, non-dogmatic constellations of subjectivity and objectivity, humanity and non-humanity, choice and un-choice. This is precisely the domain in which transreligiosity mostly breathes, wherein what is religious and what is not, and what belongs to one officially recognized religious denomination and what to another, is not faithfully followed to the (purifying) letter.

Both of our fields of research have brought to the fore this general aspect in various and intense ways. For instance, Panagiotopoulos’ research, which focuses on Afro-Cuban religiosity in Cuba and Spain, offers multiple transreligious instances. From its very inception, in colonial-era Cuba and its busy Transatlantic slave trade with Africa, Afro-Cuban religiosity has developed up to the present as a decentralized network of ritual and oracular attention. Stigmatized from the beginning as a ‘backwards’ phenomenon, steeped in its ‘primitive’ and ‘fetishist’ superstitions, it has nevertheless acquired an increasing popularity, beyond racial, social, and national boundaries.

The operational centre of Afro-Cuban religiosity, in the absence of officially sanctioned public temples, and of a singular hierarchical authority (symmetrical to an absence of a singular divine authority), has been the more private enclaves of the house, which hosts ‘religious families’ by way of initiations and mutual-aid attention. While degrees of initiation may confer small-scale hierarchies, antagonisms, and ‘purist’ understandings of what is correct religious praxis, the overall tendency is to create an open, often idiosyncratic, multiple, non-exclusive attitude, even in the most ‘purifying’ of intentions. In tandem with the non-institutionalized and decentralized networks of ritual attention (or the minimal and, to a large extent, failed efforts for

the opposite), Afro-Cuban religiosity is not characterized by a dogmatic, text-based creed which imparts universal values, principles, and norms of conduct. A vast and complex reservoir of oracular and ritual techniques are on offer to make the central focus of reference and care the person and his or her intimate natural, social, and geo-spiritual surroundings. Objects, nature, and culture, in their inter-immediacy, all participate, through a polytheistic and multi-spiritual cosmos, to neither lock the person into a bounded and suffocating individuality nor abstract it to an elusive and impersonal sociality.

The individual steps out of its too narrow a privacy, of its bounded body, its immanent materiality, or its excessively intimate sociality (kinship and affine ties) and, simultaneously, steps back from its transcendental spirituality, or the more anonymous structures of society, which in their socialist construction, have accentuated anonymity, without creating a satisfactory sense of participation (even though, these were precisely the Revolution's initial objectives; see Panagiotopoulos and Espírito Santo, 2019). These transreligious aspects do not tone down in the otherwise different context of Spain, not even for Spaniards, not just Cuban immigrants, who do find in Afro-Cuban religiosity an elasticity, affectivity, and effectivity beyond the 'purified' limits of their dominant inherited religious practices. In that sense, and contrary to a more conventional perception about religiosity, it may well be argued that transreligiosity, especially as a more vernacular, participatory, and less institutionalized phenomenon, has never really toned down but that it constantly transforms and readapts itself, in its quest for active 'mediators', rather than representative 'intermediaries', to echo Latour once more.

Another important dimension, which is only recently being elaborated and which complicates things even further, is the notion of 'indifference' (see Quack and

Scuch 2017). It is a much more indeterminate zone, which can in potential equally transform into a religious or a nonreligious stance or be shared among them simultaneously, and not necessarily fervent in its manifestations, but not for that matter less socially significant. A nonreligious, even antireligious stance, for example, does not preclude metaphysical explorations, no matter how softly or *ad hoc* they might manifest themselves, precisely because what is conceived as religious, and ignored or opposed, is mainly adherence to an institutionalized version of it (see Herbert and Bullock, 2020). ‘Indifference’ is not necessarily a passive stance, neither an aggressive one, but active in partially ignoring and partially transgressing pure borders of what religion is and what is not, and of what is interreligiously separated.

Transreligiosity and Transreligious Theology: clarifications of conceptual terminologies

While transreligiosity as a term has not yet been established academically as an encompassing heuristic and analytical one, its adjectival derivation has made its appearance during the 2000s under a novel theological ‘movement’, self-defined as ‘Transreligious Theology’ (see Faber, 2019; Kling, 2020). Transreligious Theology is a comparative, even cross-cultural, method to reach a more harmoniously unified and universal theological ontology. Transreligious Theology presented itself with an almost existential question: ‘Is Transreligious Theology Possible?’ (Martin, 2016b). It can be traced as a recent project, initially and then in parallel termed as ‘Theology without Walls’ (Martin, 2016a). Some of its most pressing preoccupations are how to best engage with ‘interreligious dialogue’, ‘multiple religious belonging’ (Kalsky 2017) and, even, religion through ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie 1990, 1994).

It also seems to be willing to go beyond them, in the sense of creating a novel and more unified theological vision and not just stay on the descriptive fence of such phenomena. While this is an extremely interesting *theological* quest on the making, from a social scientific perspective, transreligiosity as an *ethnographic* phenomenon, we claim, is not ‘modern’ (in Latour’s ‘purifying’ sense), let alone stemming from or leading to a single path.

Our proposed term of transreligiosity embraces without any aspirations of unification and ultimate universalization a variety of religious phenomena, across time and space, as *unique* instances of itself. It does not privilege any instance, whether this might be an established religion, a vernacular version of it, or the remotest magico-religious practice. Even the coexistence of all of them does not necessarily lead to a distilled commonality among them but what is highlighted are their differences or the concrete historical conditions in which they have developed. Transreligious Theology or any other similar phenomenon (for instance, Unitarian Universalism) would just be a singular, despite its cosmopolitan pluralism, example of the inherently diverse quality of transreligiosity.

Before proceeding, we need to clarify that we utilize ‘religiosity’ throughout the present paper as a flexible term that encompasses both institutionalized and vernacular forms of religion, including ‘alternative’ forms of spirituality. By no means do we treat religion and spirituality as antithetical. On the contrary, they are perceived as mutually interactive, with their boundaries becoming misty, although not disappearing, at least for analytical or heuristic reasons. This distinction is adopted to be terminologically clear as to which forms of religiosity we refer to in the context and analysis of our proposed term of transreligiosity. The latter is a

potential quality of all kinds of religiosity, although in different ways, kinds, and degrees, which should always be contingently examined.

What follows is an examination of how transreligiosity can be applied, both as an analytic and ethnographic tool, to three themes that are pertinent to contemporary religiosity: the first one is transnational religion, in relation to globalized and diasporic religious communities; the second is contemporary spirituality with particular reference to holistic and/alternative healing; and the third is the so-called ‘lived’ and ‘vernacular’ religion. Our choice to place emphasis on these three contexts is far from random; it is based on the fact that their study has become very popular in recent years, and we find that these three contexts, themes and/or conceptual and terminological tools are the ones in direct dialogue with transreligiosity.

Transreligiosity and the transnationalization of religiosity

According to one of perhaps its most popular definitions, transnationalism is identified as as signifying ‘the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states’ (Vertovec, 1999: 447). In recent decades, a renewed interest in transnationalism, namely in ‘various kinds of global or cross-border connections’ (Vertovec, 2001: 573) can be observed. When the study of religion is added in the scholarly picture, it predominantly focuses on its diasporic aspect: namely, on the relation between transnationalism and religion in the context of migration (see, among others, Levitt, 2004; Saraiva, 2008; Sheringham, 2013).

In her study of ‘transnational migrants and transnational spirits’ among Guinean migrants to Portugal, Saraiva (2008) offers an ethnographic example of how transnational religion escapes national frontiers and creates transreligious bridges

between the Global South and the Global North – between Africa and Europe, in particular (Saraiva, 2008: 254). As she asserts, the religious practices and spirits of the Guineans travel to Lisbon, when they move. They thus:

All become transnational characters in a complex set of relations (...). Transposed to the diaspora universe, such relations incorporate transnational circumstances in which African practices become mixed with European ones (...) and give rise to a continuous flow of people, spirits and goods that move back and forth between Guinea-Bissau and Portugal (Saraiva, 2008: 254).

Saraiva (2008: 266) argues that through the circulation of person, spirits, and ritualistic material goods, a ‘transnational religious network’ is created. We, in turn or subsequently, claim that what the anthropologist ultimately describes is a transreligious network of transgressing religious, national, spatial, and performative frontiers.

In presenting the example above, we wish to suggest that transreligiosity can be utilized as a useful analytical and conceptual tool in the context of studying transnational religiosity within diasporic communities. At the same time, however, our aim is to expand the context of the transnationalization of contemporary religiosity beyond its connection to migratory sociocultural settings, and approach the transnationalization of religion from a different perspective, by shifting the attention from transnational religion to transreligiosity: a religiosity that takes into consideration the global and cross-border connections and the role of religion as linking people or institutions across national borders, but removes them from their primarily migratory connotations and into an openness of borders that is more fluid, elastic and encompassing.

In one of the most influential and now classic works on the study of religion, transnationalism and globalization, Csordas (2009) devises the concept of ‘transnational transcendence’ to analyze the transnationalization of religion in the contemporary world. According to his approach, transnational transcendence ‘is intended to point to the existence of modalities of religious intersubjectivity that are both experientially compelling and transcend cultural borders and boundaries (while in some instances forging new ones)’ (Csordas, 2009: 1). Although that edited volume offers rich paradigms on the transnationalization of religion globally, it mostly focuses on four vectors of ‘transnational transcendence’: missionization, mobility, mediatization, and migration (Csordas, 2009: 5-6), and on the ‘globalization and religion’ and the ‘globalization of religion’ (Csordas, 2009: 1), rather than the transnationalization of religiosity as a creative and elastic transgression of frontiers. This focus on the globalization rather than the transnationalization of contemporary religiosity is also evident in more recent studies. For instance, in one of the most inspiring recent ethnographies on contemporary religiosity, Rocha (2017) has insightfully studied the connection among religion, spirituality, globalization and transnationalism in Brazilian faith healing. Yet, emphasis is placed on the globalized processes of practising religiosity and the concept of transnationalization is mainly utilized to describe the creation of a diasporic spiritual community.

Globalization and transnationalism are of course two concepts that are closely interrelated. By employing the term of transreligiosity, we do not intend to ignore the global processes entailed in the transnationalization of religiosity, but to shift the focus more towards the metaphor of negotiating the religious frontiers of transnational sacred spaces. Furthermore, as mentioned above, our goal is to

approach the transnationalization of religiosity stripped from its primary diasporic and migration connotations. We view transreligiosity as ‘a novel, spiritually creative and fluid religiosity that incorporates alternative medicine, holistic spirituality, and transnationalism in its core; a religiosity that *transcends* religious boundaries, *transforms* religious identities, and *transgresses* national, symbolic, and spiritual frontiers’ (Roussou and Panagiotopoulos, *forthcoming*).

Without any intention to essentialize or deprive the individual actors from their agency, we find it important to place the elasticity of *transreligious* spaces and their frontiers, rather than the mobility of people per se, at the epicenter of the analysis. We therefore begin with the insight that the borders of all religious spaces, be it physical/geographical (between nations), faith-based (between religious traditions), conceptual (between scholarly interpretations of different forms of religiosity), or ritually performative (between creative spiritual practices of people in their vernacular life), are elastic: they stretch, and sometimes bounce back, affected by the impact only ever slightly; and other times they break completely, leaving open passages for creative transreligious interactions. We propose transreligiosity as mainly a conceptual tool to understand, study and analyse the elasticity of transnationally actual and symbolic sacred spaces, their transgression, from both theoretical and empirical viewpoints, and in both the context of institutionalized religions and the creation of sacred spaces as practised in the context of contemporary spirituality and healing and, perhaps most importantly, of lived and vernacular religiosity.

Transreligiosity as contemporary spirituality and healing: beyond individualization

‘Contemporary spirituality’, ‘New Age’ spirituality and/or ‘alternative spirituality’ are three umbrella terms, very often utilized as synonymous but also criticized for their too widely encompassing nature (Sutcliffe and Bowman, 2000; Sutcliffe, 2003; von Stuckrad, 2005; Wood, 2007), which designate the non-institutional and non-doctrinal, individualized and spiritually creative forms of contemporary religiosity. Out of those terms above, ‘New Age’ appears to have attracted the most criticism. New Age is linked with individuality and the spiritual development of the self (Heelas, 1996), being ‘a diffuse social movement of people committed to pushing the boundaries of the self and bringing spirituality into everyday life’ (Brown, 1997: vii). Considering the various definitions and criticisms on New Age spirituality, we concur with Sutcliffe and Gilhus (2013: 1) that “‘New Age’ is among the most deputed of categories in the study of religion in terms of agreeing content and boundaries (...) studying “new age spiritualities” tantalizingly reproduces issues central to defining and theorizing religion in general’.

By proposing transreligiosity as an alternate term of (New Age, contemporary, alternative) spirituality, we wish to expand on Sutcliffe and Gilhus’ (2013: 2-3) suggestion that ‘we need a model of religion that comprises new age phenomena, either as part of the old model of religion in such a way as to expand its parameters, or as part of a fresh prototype’. Here, we introduce transreligiosity as a fresh theoretical and analytic prototype of studying religiosity, where religion and spirituality are not perceived as antithetical; on the contrary, they are approached as two concepts with liquid boundaries, leaking transreligious fluid(ity) in-between

their sacred spaces, and staining the rigidity of their religious boundaries with spiritual creativity.

One of the main characteristics of contemporary spirituality is individualization. As Pollack (2008: 171) has argued: 'Individual religiosity has emancipated itself from the custody of the large religious institutions; religious preferences are increasingly subject to the individual's autonomous choices; (...) individuals instead decide on their own worldviews and spiritual orientations.' We perceive the individualized practice of contemporary spirituality as a form of practising religiosity that has always existed in the context of both alternative forms of spirituality and institutionalized religions. Individualized religiosity is spiritually creative as well as 'spiritually revolutionary', to use Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) well-known conceptualization of how 'traditional forms of religion, particularly Christianity, are giving way to holistic spirituality, sometimes still called New Age' (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005: x).

In her work that focuses on Brazilian faith healing of the globally known spiritist medium healer 'John of God', whose healing is based primarily on Brazilian Spiritism, while strongly incorporating New Age spiritual elements, Rocha (2017) criticizes the individualistic character of contemporary spirituality and the insistence of many scholars to link contemporary spirituality with individualization. As she points out, 'movements of New Age inspiration (...) can create community, albeit not the traditional, site-specific, exclusively face-to-face variety' (Rocha, 2017: 225). John of God, whose healing centre is situated in a small town of central Brazil, became globally well-known in the late 1990s and his fame expanded over the next decades, attracting the attention of international media and stars like Oprah Winfrey. The transnational influence of his alternative spiritual healing has grown through

John of God's visits to several countries of the Global North, ranging from the United States to Europe; he even established four 'spiritual extensions' of his healing centre in New Zealand Australia and the United States (Rocha, 2017: 3). As Rocha observes, 'such global exposure has been accompanied by an intense flow of people, ideas, practices, and material culture between Casa de Dom Inácio in Brazil and these countries', developing a 'transnational spiritual community' (Rocha, 2017: 3).

Rocha's is an eloquent paradigm of the transreligious creativity embedded in contemporary spirituality, through powerful (spiritual) flows that are created between the Global North and the Global South (Rocha, 2017: 225). Her ethnography demonstrates successfully how transreligious elasticity works through spiritual practices that mix established religions, such as Spiritism, with alternative spiritualities, such as the New Age, transgressing geographical, sociocultural and religio-spiritual frontiers. In agreement with her that contemporary spirituality can be based on individual transreligious practices without losing its sense of community creation, we suggest that transreligiosity depicts the transgressional webs of practising individualized forms of alternative spirituality instead of treating religious individualization as cut from its sociocultural and spiritual environments (see also Roussou, 2015). Individualized forms of religiosity can subsequently be considered as transreligious, since they are neither cut from the institutionalized religion nor are they spiritually autonomous; they develop, instead, within a continuous dynamic of crossing the boundaries between religious doctrine and religious freedom, creating zones of contact in the vernacular space of practising religiosity that are not or not only interreligious but fore and foremost transreligious.

Those transreligious zones of contact in relation to contemporary spirituality are perhaps most evidently depicted in its therapeutic aspect. The connection between

religiosity and healing, especially in the context of holistic spiritualities mentioned above, namely ‘those forms of practice involving the body (...) which have as their goal the well-being of body, mind, and spirit and shade into the realm of complementary and alternative health care practices (CAM)’ (Sointu and Woodhead, 2008: 259) has gained anthropological attention. In recent decades, scholars have recognized the significant role of the alternative forms of healing that are directly linked to contemporary religiosity (see, for example, Bowman, 1999; Sointu and Woodhead, 2008; Fedele, 2016). These alternative therapeutic practices are thought to be part of the Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). CAM practices adopt a medical pluralism that is directly connected to globalisation and transnationalism, while acknowledging the ‘postmodern medical diversity’ (Kaptchuk and Eisenberg, 2001: 189). Due to exactly their diverse, transnational qualities, where religiosity is incorporated extensively, we consider CAM practices to be a useful paradigm of transreligiosity; or, to reverse the assumption, transreligiosity actively incorporates CAM into its core conceptualization.

In her comparative long-term research on New Age spirituality and alternative medicine in southern Europe, Roussou (2021) has witnessed the rising popularity of newly emergent transreligious practices. In Portugal and Greece, the two countries of research locus, (Orthodox) Christianity and biomedicine are considered to be the institutionalized religious and healthcare systems equivalently, and, up until recently, they would not give up enough space for other spiritual and healing practices of an alternative and/or New Age character to come to the sociocultural front. The current landscape of contemporary Portuguese and Greek religiosity has changed, however, and, at least during the last ten years of the anthropologist’s active ethnographic fieldwork, it has become transreligious.

At the level of vernacular practice in the two countries, especially in their capitals Lisbon and Athens, healing is sought from a combination of religious and/or spiritual sources: CAM Portuguese and Greek practitioners travel to Peru, Brazil or India to learn or try shamanic, spiritist or hindu therapies, and sometimes invite healers from the Global South to attend spiritual workshops in Portugal and Greece; New Age healers commonly apply a combination of holistic spiritualities in their therapeutic techniques, ranging from adaptations of Christian religion to Buddhistic meditation, and from shamanic travelling to yoga asanas and spiritist energy therapies. A constant transreligious process of transgressing religio-spiritual boundaries, be it actual, via travelling across geographical frontiers, or symbolic, through the creative amalgamation of different religious traditions and their therapeutic practices, thus takes place.

Holistic spirituality and healing practices are vital because they place emphasis on the perspective of religiosity as a creative transreligious form of negotiating health, spiritual well-being and the creation of a 'sacred self' (Csordas, 1997), through healing. They can be approached as a hybrid form of transreligiosity and point to how this novel, fluid, transformative, transcending and creative form of religiosity – this *transreligiosity* – and healing merge in everyday life not through – or not just through – the practice of religion, but through the amalgamation of transnational religion, alternative spirituality and complementary and alternative healing.

By looking into the interaction between contemporary religiosity and healing as transreligiosity, we argue that the concept of transreligiosity can be applied to current critical negotiations of identity formation, in an attempt to observe how health and illness are perceived and practised through transnational religion and holistic

spirituality. Perceiving the CAM practices as transreligious signifies that there is a shift in the religious and healthcare boundaries, as institutionalized religion and biomedicine must compete with alternative forms of spirituality and healing. Investigating the contemporary medico-religious landscapes as transreligious creates a theoretical and analytic pathway of how individuals from different social, religious and healthcare backgrounds encounter each other into a novel, pluralistic, fluid, therapeutic field. The study of such a transreligious field can lead to a better understanding of how current transnational processes of globalisation and multiculturalism affect, develop, and negotiate one's individual, social, religious, spiritual, medical and gender identity in the contemporary world.

Living and believing transreligiously in the vernacular sphere

'Lived religion' (McGuire, 2008; Ammerman, 2014) and 'vernacular religion' (Primiano, 1995; Bowman and Valk, 2012) are two of the most popular terms in recent years to describe contemporary religiosity as it is lived and practised during everyday life. They are also related intimately to the subjective-life or mind-body-spirit spirituality described above, since the latter rests on experience (Heelas, 2006: 224), being these days considered as an essential aspect of vernacular religiosity. In their in-depth conceptualization of vernacular religion, Bowman and Valk (2012: 5) assert that 'the myths, personal experience narratives and more casual verbal expressions of belief, or material culture and actions related to, arising from or inter-related with beliefs, shed valuable light on religion in everyday life, practical religion, religion as it is lived'. In this respect, vernacular religion is lived through a plethora of pathways that render it transreligiously rich and creative.

Lived religion does often happen on the margins between orthodox prescriptions and innovative experiences, but religion does not have to be marginal to be ‘lived’. (...) Looking for lived religion does mean that we look for the material, embodied aspects of religion as they occur in everyday life, in addition to listening for how people explain themselves. It includes both the experiences of the body and the mind (Ammerman, 2014: 190).

According to Ammerman’s definition above, lived religion is a form of religiosity that is performed in the vernacular sphere, can be embodied and may involve practices of both doctrinal and non-marginal religious denominations and novel spiritual forms of creatively expressing belief in everyday life. In addition, and following McGuire (2008: 12), the term ‘lived religion’ is helpful for ‘distinguishing the actual experience of religious persons from the prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices’. Contemporary religiosity can be approached as ‘lived in a particular time and cultural setting’ (McGuire, 2008: 12), where a creative ‘patchwork’ (Ammerman, 2014: 193) is woven in the vernacular sphere. We argue that both vernacular and lived religion can be accommodated within the concept of transreligiosity. Transreligious practices are inherently vernacular and are performed during everyday life in a creatively embodied, mindful, pluralistic manner. They often happen on the margins, but they predominantly re-draw or, even better, with-draw the religious margins, by cutting through, across and over the borders between, but also within, institutional religion and alternative spirituality.

Two key characteristics of vernacular religion as lived, especially regarding the relationship between institutional religion and contemporary spirituality in everyday practice, are the notions of ‘believing’ and ‘belonging’. The notion of ‘believing without belonging’ was introduced in 1990 by Grace Davie and has been popular in

the social scientific study of religiosity ever since. ‘Believing without belonging’ is based on the idea that we live in a world where religion has become individualized and institutional religion does not play such a central role as it used to be; yet, people have not lost their belief, while they ‘see no need to participate with even minimal regularity in their religious institutions’ (Davie, 1994: 2). Despite its wide acceptance and use, Davie’s notion has received criticism, mostly due to its Christian-centric character (Hunt, 2003: 164). Day (2010: 19) has argued that Davie’s thesis is ‘implausible’ since ‘assertions of belief are expressions of belonging’, while Voas and Crockett (2005: 25) have even claimed that “‘believing without belonging’ was an interesting idea, but it is time for the slogan to enter honourable retirement.’ Even Davie herself has reconsidered her initial thesis, proceeding to opt instead for the concept of ‘vicarious religion’, which she considers as more accurate for it ‘points to the complex cultural and political histories that are likely to shape vicariousness in any given society’ (Davie, 2007: 26).

Believing and belonging are two concepts that are more relevant to transreligiosity than vicarious religion and can still offer an important analytical paradigm in the understanding of vernacular – and not necessarily Christian-based – religiosity. Transreligious experiences always involve a certain form of belief, be it connected with institutional religions or alternative forms of religiosity, without necessarily a sense of belonging. Consequently, we can speak about ‘believing without belonging’, but the two concepts are approached here as interacting instead of competing against each other. Transreligiosity is founded on the hypothesis that, during their vernacular life, individuals live their religiosity interactively and multiply, following flexible religio-spiritual itineraries, and handling their beliefs and performances in an open and creative manner, transgressing religio-spiritual

frontiers. They move around the world believing, belonging, believing without belonging, sometimes belonging without believing. Their stance towards their vernacular belief and practice is adaptable, transgressive, reflexive (Martí, 2015), elastic and thus transreligious.

Analytic bridges: concluding remarks

If we follow Latour, an apparently paradoxical but pertinent question arises. If *we have never been modern* (and *they have never been premodern*), what is the ‘nonmodern’ element that reassembles our lost ‘analytic continuity’ (Latour, 1993: 7) and brings the ‘premodern’ and the ‘modern’ at a crossroads, which makes them vanish as a ‘Great Divide’ and emerge as co-participants? In matters of religiosity, the purifying processes of strictly demarcating a religious domain from other non-religious domains or from other religious sets of practices and creeds, by institutionalizing, centralizing, and dogmatizing them, has created an important impasse which does not seem to fulfil vernacular expectations.

This is a constant theme surfacing in our research, in Greece, Portugal and Spain, for instance, where the Orthodox and Catholic predominant religions respectively, are variably described by our ethnographic interlocutors as too ‘organized’, ‘hierarchical’, ‘limited’, ‘strict’, ‘abstract’, ‘stale’, or ‘non-relevant’, among others. This does not necessarily lead to a complete abandonment of ‘faith’ in some general cosmological or ethical principles or a certain ceremonial *habitus*. But these limitations, which seem to not fulfil many other needs, such as of dealing with everyday situations (for example, health and wellbeing), or a more open, experiential, and experimental participation, do lead to the bosoms of other more ‘traditional’ (such as the ‘evil eye’), ‘polytheistic’ (such as Afro-Latin religiosity), or

New Age spiritual practices. As this has also been the case in non-Western contexts, such as Cuba, Brazil, and Africa (and its diaspora), also included in our research, one can now weave a thread of Latour's 'analytic continuity' between that 'Great Divide' which sought to 'purify' sets of practices and faith into tight boxes. And this thread is not analytic in the sense of a mere theoretical paradigm shift, because this is *happening out there*, even among 'moderns'. Not only do they also create 'hybrids', but they do it consciously and actively. They are abandoning purified limits and they are reconfiguring their religio-spiritual constellations, where humans, non-humans, spirits, subjects, and objects may be co-participants.

Imagine an old stone bridge in the shape of an arch over a river which is running dry. Old craftworks often persist in time and their growing old does not subtract from either their beauty or their durability. Many 'modern' products, in contrast, touched by and carved with the automated and commodified hand tend to lose both their beauty and their functionality in the same rapid pace as they were massively produced. The above metaphor conveys the complex nuances we have attempted to show with the concept of transreligiosity. The bridge, Latour's 'analytic continuity', is transreligiosity itself as an ever-present phenomenon, although dynamic and adapting. A different direction, the river under the bridge, seemed to be the linear progression of 'purification' of religion, but this linearity is being, once more, critically questioned by contemporary, 'nonmodern' religious subjects. In the very process of bridging, the river, as a linear understanding of having claimed the ultimate step in a universalizing process, started running dry. This is because, as we claim in this paper, the purifying and purified forms of religiosity have not managed to fully grasp the nonmodern spirit in which a more encompassing link between the particular and the universal has been developing above their drying flow. Bridges,

with all the flexibility the image of an arch may convey, do not only connect but also, and simultaneously, avoid and, to a certain extent, ignore (hence our interest in ‘indifference’) the flows below them.

This paper has been a short excursion into our conviction that transreligiosity can be a useful single term for the dynamic transgressiveness of religiosity and its inherent diversity. Even though transreligiosity may be detected even within the realms of purified religions, we understand that transreligiosity is mostly flourishing outside of what is strictly instituted, dogmatized, centralized, and universalized under such conditions. If, in the end, ‘we have never been modern’, if ‘they have never been premodern’, if we are all nonmodern, rather than making a priori distinctions or wholesale homogenizations, we should pinpoint, instead, the contingency of religious ‘purifications’ with their accompanying acts of transreligious transgressions, whenever and wherever they occur, meet, clash and cooperate.

Acknowledgments

The term ‘transreligiosity’ began to develop in our collaborative work after a panel we co-organized at the APA (Portuguese Anthropological Association) conference in 2019. It publicly solidified as a term in our respective presentations of two papers at the EASA (European Association of Social Anthropologists) conference in 2020. These two presentations have found their way as a single publication in a volume edited by the same organizers of the EASA panel. We wish to thank all participants in both conferences, as well as to the editors of the book, for engaging in very interesting discussions and offering valuable comments. The writing of this article was made possible through our position as senior researchers at the Centro em Rede

de Investigação em Antropologia (CRIA), and under the financial support from FCT in the context of the strategic plan of CRIA (UIDB/ANT/04038/2020), to which we are grateful. Anastasios Panagiotopoulos is also grateful to the research project he has been participating as a senior researcher (acronym: ETSICO, reference number: CSO2017-82774-P), all its participating researchers and, especially, the principal investigator, Prof. Manuela Cantón Delgado. We are also really thankful to the two anonymous reviewers for their kind and encouraging and at the same time sharp, insightful and engaging comments.

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