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# MYTHICAL UNIVERSES OF THIRD- MILLENNIUM RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: THE CHURCH OF THE FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER AND MATRIXISM

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## INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (FSM) and Matrixism have created extended mythical universes. These two third-millennium religious movements deliver advanced cosmogonies and cosmologies. My aim is to analyse and compare them. The description of these phenomena needs to begin with the general conceptualization.

Labelling new religious movements such as Matrixism and the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster is very problematic, they can be recognized under different terms: fiction-based religions, joke religions, invented religions, alternative spiritualities, postmodern, consumer and hyper-real religions. I find the first two terms most useful while describing the Church of the FSM and Matrixism.

Professor Carol M. Cusack, the author of the only existing monograph pertaining to the invented religions<sup>1</sup>, described both Matrixism and the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. Even though her definition of invented religions is not helpful for this analysis<sup>2</sup>. *Markus Altena Davidsen* introduced the classification of fiction-based religions as opposed to history-based religions. In fiction-based religion “[...] fictional texts are used as authoritative texts”<sup>3</sup>, and fiction is “[...] any literary narrative which is not intended by its author to refer to events which have taken place in the actual world prior to being entextualised”<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, Scott Simpson

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<sup>1</sup> C. M. Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith*, Farnham 2010.

<sup>2</sup> According to C. M. Cusacks, invented religions, unlike traditional religions, “[...] are openly defying the web of conventions that surround the establishment of new religions, which include linking the new teaching to an existing religious tradition [...]”. Ibidem, p. 1. This is not the case of either Matrixism or the Church of the FSM.

<sup>3</sup> M. A. Davidsen, *Fiction-based religion: Conceptualising a new category against history-based religion and fandom*, “Culture and Religion”, 2013, no. 14 (4), p. 384.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 384.

described the phenomenon of joke religions<sup>5</sup>. According to his definition, joke religions are “para-religious movements, invented primarily to amuse the authors and their audience, which extend beyond simple literary fiction to take on an approximation of many of the dimensions of real religious movements”<sup>6</sup>. I find the terms: fiction-based religion (defined by Markus A. Davidsen) and joke religion (defined by Scott Simpson) most adequate and useful while describing the Church of the FSM and Matrixism.

## MATRIXISM AND THE CHURCH OF THE FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER

Matrixism is, or rather was<sup>7</sup>, an internet religion inspired by stories concerning the world of the Matrix. It was based on *The Matrix*<sup>8</sup>, the legendary science-fiction film released in 1999, its sequels (*The Matrix Reloaded* from 2003<sup>9</sup>, *The Matrix Revolutions* from 2003<sup>10</sup>), and its media franchise (animated films, comic books, video games). The Wachowski's trilogy galvanized numerous philosophical comments and comparisons. Scholars were finding motifs derived from the philosophy of Plato, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Baudrillard in the films<sup>11</sup>. *The Matrix* and its sequels raise deeply religious matters, in these films we can find elements characteristic of various traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Gnosticism, Judaism, Islam...<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the narrative about the world of the Matrix is an “[...] example of modern-day myth making”<sup>13</sup>, a classical story of a hero's journey<sup>14</sup>, a foundation myth of a new, minor religion that did not last long.

In the course a brief history of Matrixism or the path of the One, around 2000 Pathists (followers of this path) registered their membership via email. The religious

<sup>5</sup> S. Simpson, *Joke Religions: Make-Believe in the Sandbox of the Gods*, “Ex Nihilo. Periodyk Młodych Religioznawców”, 2011, no. 2 (6).

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> Matrixism has been in its moribund condition since 2008.

<sup>8</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski, *The Matrix*, USA, Australia 1999.

<sup>9</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski, *The Matrix Reloaded*, USA, Australia 2003.

<sup>10</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski, *The Matrix Revolutions*, USA, Australia 2003.

<sup>11</sup> *Philosophers Explore The Matrix*, ed. Ch. Grau, Oxford, New York 2005; *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, ed. W. Irwin, Chicago, La Salle 2002; *More Matrix and Philosophy: Revolutions and Reloaded Decoded*, ed. W. Irwin, Chicago, La Salle 2005.

<sup>12</sup> F. Flannery-Dailey, R. Wagner, *Wake up! Gnosticism and Buddhism in The Matrix*, “The Journal of Religion and Film” 2001, no. 5 (2) [on-line:] <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/gnostic.htm> [09.05.2016]; J. L. Ford, *Buddhism, Christianity, and The Matrix: The Dialectic of Myth-Making in Contemporary Cinema*, “The Journal of Religion and Film” 2000, no. 4 (2) [on-line:] <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/thematrix.htm> [09.05.2016]; I. Samawi Hamid, *The Cosmological Journey of Neo: An Islamic Matrix* [in:] *More Matrix and Philosophy*, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> J. L. Ford, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Princeton 1968. Vide: Ch. Volger, *The Matrix – Joseph Campbell Monomyth* [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AG4rlGkCRU> [09.05.2016].

movement was introduced in 2004 on a website [www.geocities.com/matrixism](http://www.geocities.com/matrixism)<sup>15</sup>. That year was a starting point of the history of Pathists. Nevertheless, they claimed that the history of Matrixism was much longer, it could be traced back to 1911 and linked to the Baha'i faith.<sup>16</sup> In 2008, the original Matrixism website was shut down together with the Geocities web hosting service. And therefore, since 2008 this internet religion has been in its moribund condition.<sup>17</sup> Matrixism has disappeared and there are not many signs of it: the original website is not active, other internet representations of this movement ([www.newmatrixism.com](http://www.newmatrixism.com), [www.matrixism.org](http://www.matrixism.org))<sup>18</sup> have vanished.

In 2005, a few months after the introduction of Matrixism, physics graduate Bobby Henderson wrote an open letter to Kansas School Board.<sup>19</sup> His aim was to protest against the decision allowing the theory of Intelligent Design, a quasi-scientific manifestation of Creationism, to be taught in science classrooms along with the theory of evolution. Henderson claimed that he was of strong belief and he had evidence that the Flying Spaghetti Monster created the universe. On behalf of 10 million of Pastafarians, he demanded to include the Flying Spaghetti Monster in science curriculums. Moreover, Henderson posted that letter on his website,<sup>20</sup> and received a lot of attention.<sup>21</sup> Besides, more extensive holy books of Pastafarianism were written. Bobby Henderson's *The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster*<sup>22</sup> was published by Villard in 2006. Later on, the adherents of the FSM prepared *The Loose Canon*.<sup>23</sup> The publication which is divided into two parts: *The Old Pastament* and *The New Pastament*, is an obvious parody of the Bible. There are numerous incongruences, biblical references and mockeries in the holy texts of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti. Bobby Henderson established the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster because he was "[...] dedicated to keeping Intelligent Design (ID) out of public school science classrooms"<sup>24</sup>. However, since 2005 the Church has undergone an evolution,

<sup>15</sup> *Matrixism: The path of the One* [on-line:] <http://web.archive.org/web/20081225091136/http://www.geocities.com/matrixism/> [09.05.2016].

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> I gave a speech about short life and death of Matrixism at the Conference on Invented Religions which took place in Kraków on 28th March 2015.

<sup>18</sup> J. W. Morehead, "A world without rules and controls, without borders or boundaries": *Matrixism, New Mythologies, and Symbolic Pilgrimages* [in:] *Handbook of Hyper-Real Religions*, ed. A. Possamai, Leiden 2012, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> B. Henderson, *Open Letter To Kansas School Board* [on-line:] <http://www.venganza.org/about/open-letter/> [09.05.2016].

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> D. E. Cowan, *Religion on the Internet* [in:] *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, eds. J. A. Beckford, N. J. Demerath III, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore 2007, pp. 360–361.

<sup>22</sup> B. Henderson, *The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster*, New York 2006.

<sup>23</sup> *The Loose Canon: A Really Important Collection of Words: A Holy Book of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster* [on-line:] <http://www.loose-canon.info/Loose-Canon-1st-Ed.pdf> [09.05.2016].

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 153.

gained popularity, interests, media attention, and sometimes even official recognition. Therefore, Bobby Henderson wrote in 2010 that “FSM still going strong though after 5 years we’re at that dangerous place where we either become more real or more fake and both worry me. Don’t want the church of FSM turning into Scientology or Mormonism”<sup>25</sup>. Today Pastafarianism is the most recognizable joke religion in Poland, as well as worldwide. The members of the Polish Church of the FSM are tenaciously struggling for a state recognition<sup>26</sup>.

## THE MYTHICAL UNIVERSE OF „THE MATRIX” TRILOGY AND MATRIXISM

The Wachowskis’ trilogy brings up cosmological questions, *The Matrix* and its sequels ask about the nature of reality, the difference between actuality and illusion, the purpose and the destiny of the world and humanity. The adherents of the path of the One individually reinterpreted the mythical cosmos, which was presented in *The Matrix* trilogy<sup>27</sup>. Nevertheless, due to the moribund condition of Matrixism, we are able to find little information on their interpretations. We can learn something about Pathists’ worldviews from what is left from the original Matrixism website.<sup>28</sup>

The adherents of the path of the One were required to analyse and interpret on their own, because “[...] Matrixism is similar to the Protestant Reformation in its innovation that people should read and interpret the Bible for themselves instead of relying on priests to do it for them”<sup>29</sup>. Texts that Pathists should research individually were listed online. They included primarily the Wachowskis’ trilogy and also: Aldous Huxley’s books, *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, Bhagavad Gita, the Bible, the Quran, a book about lacrosse...<sup>30</sup> According to the Geocities website, Matrixism was created by “the Wachowski brothers for the most part but also Aldous Huxley, C. S. Lewis and Abdul Baha” and they “[...] have stood on »the shoulders giants« men like the Buddha and Jesus Christ”<sup>31</sup>. These lists give us information about Matrixism’s beliefs. Firstly, “the path of the One does not have an exclusivity clause as part of its canon”<sup>32</sup>, the authors of the website even encouraged readers to follow another religious path at the same time. They made several references to the Baha’i

<sup>25</sup> B. Henderson, *Addendum 2010* [on-line:] <http://blog.venganza.org/about.php> [09.05.2016].

<sup>26</sup> *Rejestracja Kościoła Latającego Potwora Spaghetti* [on-line:] <http://www.klps.pl/home/rejestracja-kościoła.html> [09.05.2016].

<sup>27</sup> *FAQ* [on-line:] <http://web.archive.org/web/20090901225214/http://geocities.com/matrixism/faq.html> [09.05.2016].

<sup>28</sup> *Matrixism: The path of the One* [on-line:] <http://web.archive.org/web/20081225091136/http://www.geocities.com/matrixism/> [09.05.2016].

<sup>29</sup> *FAQ*, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> *Join* [on-line:] <http://web.archive.org/web/20081009010321/http://www.geocities.com/matrixism2069/membershipform.html>, [09.05.2016].

<sup>31</sup> *FAQ*, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

faith. It linked their teaching with the older, well-established belief system, which emphasizes unity and harmony between religions. Secondly, inspirations from Aldous Huxley's and C. S. Lewis's texts are closely linked to illusion – the leitmotif of both *The Matrix* trilogy and Matrixism. In order to examine the subject of illusion, we should take a look at the world of the Matrix.

The Wachowskis' trilogy tells a story that takes place in two different worlds: Matrix and "the desert of the real"<sup>33</sup>. The matrix is a neurointeractive simulation within the computer environment. Here the viewer is introduced into the world that has been pulled over peoples' eyes to blind them from the truth and create the prison for their minds<sup>34</sup>. However, that world of illusions is also "[...] an intermediary realm between Neo's earthy existence and the source that is his cosmological origin"<sup>35</sup> and a place where the awoken ones develop. *The Matrix* pictures "the desert of the real" in approximately 2199 CE. This pessimistic reality is divided into three significant parts: fields of human beings, Zion – the last remaining human city and the Machine City, a place where Neo goes in the third part of the trilogy<sup>36</sup> in order to fulfil the prophecy, which requires saving the world and humanity.

*The Matrix* gave the followers of the path of the One "[...] an apocalyptic prophecy regarding a messiah and his role in bringing about world peace"<sup>37</sup>. According to *The Matrix* trilogy, our year numbering system is wrong. Pathists did not understand this fact literally, the year 2199 simply indicates that the fulfilment of the prophecy will take place after the year 1999, and "[...] the exact day may be closer to 2199 [...]"<sup>38</sup>.

The adherents of Matrixism interpret "computer simulation" as a metaphor of rules and values of our shallow consumer society:

Matrixism looks at the »computer simulation« aspect of The Matrix as a metaphor for the rules, norms and values of our current society. This metaphor also refers to hyper-reality (i.e. television, radio, internet, etc.) which effects people in much the same way as raw (i.e. real) experience<sup>39</sup>.

Apparently Pathists were critical about the illusory contemporary world. They were seeking authenticity somewhere else, beyond the metaphor of Matrix and in altered states of consciousness caused by psychedelic drugs<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski, *The Matrix*, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> I. Samawi Hamid, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>36</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski, *The Matrix Revolutions*, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup> *Matrixism: The path of the One*, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>39</sup> *FAQ*, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Pathists considered the use of psychoactive drugs as a sacrament, they emphasized the "red pill" scene from *The Matrix*, they referred to Aldous Huxley's recalls of his psychedelic experiences.

The world of illusions inside the Matrix has been compared by Idris Samawi Hamid<sup>41</sup> with Islamic *dunyā* and by Michael Brannigan<sup>42</sup> with Buddhist *maya*. *Dunyā* is a phenomenal world of illusion and slavery, a place where our superficial desires lie:

It is the realm of which we are immediately conscious. It is a phenomenal world wherein lie our immediate desires and attachments. It is an ephemeral world whose objects of desire do not last. It is a universe where one is not free except as a slave to one's own desires. It is a place where the initial choice that brought us into existence has been forgotten and buried very deep into the recesses of consciousness. Yet most of us accept this world as ultimately real and are completely enslaved by it<sup>43</sup>.

Also Buddhism teaches that the world we live in is *maya*, 'an illusion'. What is the nature of this illusion? Michael Brannigan gave the example of Mahayana interpretation:

[...] The illusory nature of the world consists in our *knowledge* of the world. This is, the concrete world does exist, but our views and perception of this reality do not match the reality itself. The image in the mirror is not the reality that is in front of the mirror [...]<sup>44</sup>.

Why did the Wachowskis use so many mirror-reflections? Brannigan points out that they reminded "[...] us that we need to be careful not to place too much importance on the images that are reflected"<sup>45</sup>. Mirrors in Buddhism and in *The Matrix* trilogy are "[...] symbolizing the mental act of reflection, examination, thinking through"<sup>46</sup>. The Wachowskis used several motifs derived from Buddhism in the trilogy. Probably the most obvious Buddhist reference can be found in a scene from *The Matrix* that takes place in the Oracle's flat. There Neo meets a bold boy who wears monk's robe. While the boy is bending a spoon with the power of his mind, the viewers can observe Neo's mirror-reflection on the utensil:

Boy: Do not try to bend the spoon. That's impossible. Instead... only try to realize the truth.

Neo: What truth?

Boy: There is no spoon.

Neo: There is no spoon?

Boy: Then you'll see, that it is not the spoon that bends, it is only yourself<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> I. Samawi Hamid, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> M. Brannigan, *There Is No Spoon: A Buddhist Mirror* [in:] *The Matrix and Philosophy...* op. cit.

<sup>43</sup> I. Samawi Hamid, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>44</sup> M. Brannigan, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 103.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 104.

<sup>47</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski *The Matrix*, op. cit.

This scene refers not only to the concept of *maya*, but also to the Chan Buddhist teachings of Hui-neng. It brings to mind his sutra about a flag:

[...] the wind was blowing a flag. One monk said it was the wind that was moving. Another monk said it was the flag that was moving. They wouldn't stop arguing, so I stepped forward and said, »It isn't the wind that's moving, and it isn't the flag that's moving. It's your minds that are moving«<sup>48</sup>.

The Wachowskis, who were recognized as the creators of the path of the One, portrayed the Architect and the Oracle as supernatural beings, the designers of the world of the Matrix. The Architect manifests the Source – the ultimate origin of the programs, the Matrix, the machines, Neo and the others. According to Idris Samawi Hamid, the source corresponds with Neoplatonic principle of reality, the beginning of the chain of emanations – the First Intellect, the Universal Intellect, or the One<sup>49</sup>. The Architect is the father of the Matrix, he strives for balancing the equation with the harmony of mathematical precision. He created six versions of the Matrix, the first one was perfect and, in the same time, it was a monumental failure.<sup>50</sup> The Oracle is the mother of the Matrix, she unbalances the equation, represents choice, abnormality, and possibility. At first sight, we notice a conflict between the creators, but in fact they complement each other, “[...] the Oracle works (through Neo) to save the very world the Architect built”<sup>51</sup>.

The remains of the cosmological beliefs of Matrixism cannot be analysed separately from their origins – mainly *The Matrix* films. The Wachowskis' trilogy was an area of great potential for postmodern myth-making, religious comments, and philosophical comparisons. Pathists had rich sources to take inspirations from while creating their cosmological interpretations.

## MYTHICAL UNIVERSE OF THE CHURCH OF THE FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER

The sacred scriptures of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster present a complex cosmological system that is described below. And the question is: why this parody created an expanded mythical universe?

Cosmogony and cosmology of Pastafarianism are based on a belief in the eternal creator, the Flying Spaghetti Monster, who is portrayed as pasta with noodly appendages, two eyeballs, and two meatballs. According to the believers, the FSM created life and the cosmos in his image. From his flesh, molecular pieces of fusilli pasta that

<sup>48</sup> R. Pine (translation and commentary), *The Platform Sutra: The Zen Teaching of Hui-neng*, Berkeley 2006, pp. 122–123.

<sup>49</sup> I. Samawi Hamid, op. cit.

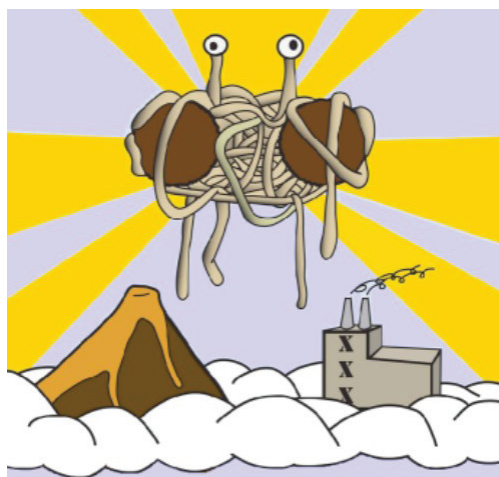
<sup>50</sup> A. Wachowski, L. Wachowski, *The Matrix Reloaded*, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> I. Samawi Hamid, op. cit., p. 143.

resemble the structure of the DNA, everything originated. Bobby Henderson describes the universe as a bowl of pasta:

[...] Science tells us that the universe itself is composed of nothing more than an enormous matrix of strings, vibrating to their own Noodly music, forming a single, unified, coherent framework of invisible spaghetti. In short, it's all one eternal bowl of pasta<sup>52</sup>.

The Flying Spaghetti Monster is obviously a parody of the God of the Old Testament. This supreme being can be characterized as jealous, severe, omniscient, and omnipotent<sup>53</sup>. For example, in *The Old Pastament* there is a story about a man named Abe, who got drunk with the FSM. The deity asked him to kill his son, albeit later backtracked from his decision, and made him circumcised himself instead. *The Loose Canon* parodies the Bible, through plenty of biblical impersonators and references. Furthermore, it comprises numerous characters from other religious traditions, history, and pop-culture. Among others, Hari Krishnas, Ninjas, Dalai Llama, the Buddha, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Dave Barry, Pirate Pete, and Batman are mentioned in this highly eclectic text.



Pict. 1. The Flying Spaghetti Monster, a Volcano of Beer, and a Factory of Strippers (source: *The Loose Canon: A Really Important Collection of Words: A Holy Book of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster* [on-line:] <http://www.loose-canon.info/Loose-Canon-1st-Ed.pdf> [28.12.2015], cover).

In the beginning, the FSM created “[...] mountains, trees and a midgit/midget (but not necessarily in that order), and that thereafter He took three days off, Friday being the Holiest among them”<sup>54</sup>. According to another version of the cosmogonic myth, 5 000 years ago this supreme being “[...] created the universe and a bunch of planets, including Earth”<sup>55</sup>. Earth was brought to life in less than a second, though it took the Flying Spaghetti Monster years to camouflage its real age. Dinosaurs bones were placed, because, as it is written in the texts, in reality dinosaurs lived alongside people and had no bones, they were “[...] not much more than

<sup>52</sup> B. Henderson, *The Gospel...* op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> The characteristics of the God of the Old Testament God is a highly complex subject matter. Here I am referring solely to his popular image, because it has been an object of Pastafarians’ mockery. Vide: R. Dawkins, *God Delusion*: Boston, New York 2006, p. 51; M. E. Mills, *Images of God in the Old Testament*, London 1998.

<sup>54</sup> *The Loose Canon...* op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> B. Henderson, *The Gospel...* op. cit., p. 51.



a massive collection of penises (penii) under a thick skin”<sup>56</sup>. The Flying Spaghetti Monster also manipulated the carbon-dating process, he is “[...] changing the results with His Noodly Appendage”<sup>57</sup>.

In *The Old Pastament* we can find stories about three races of people: the first and the oldest, cute, bald, and short Midgets, who lived near the holy Bobby Mountain. Later, bored FSM created the Midgits, who were similar to the Midgets, but had hair on their heads and on their breasts. After some fights, the Midgits settled down in the kingdom of Noodelim, situated by the sea. The third race of human beings, the Big People were brought to life in order to control the Midgets and Midgits, and lived near them<sup>58</sup>.

According to *The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster*, the Noodle Earth was inhabited also by representatives of other categories: Pirates – his chosen people and their adversaries, evil, bloodthirsty descendants of Ninjas – the Hari Krishnas<sup>59</sup>. Pirates were peace-loving explorers who were seeking adventures, sailing and spreading the words of the FSM. They were neither criminals nor thieves nor killers:

And while mainstream education tells us that Pirates were hunted down because they were thieves, killers, etc., this is largely a misinformation campaign propagated by the Krishnas and many of the other religions that banded together to begin their systematic assault on the Pirates’ worship of the FSM<sup>60</sup>.

Pirates have nearly died off, which has catastrophic effects on the world: “Global warming, earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters are a direct effect of the shrinking numbers of Pirates since the 1800s”<sup>61</sup>. As we can observe, the fact presented in the text is that Pirates’ survival is crucial for our entire planet and it has essential impact on global warming. According to *The Loose Canon*, the Earth’s orbit is no longer stabilized by Pirates. Therefore, our planet is moving inexorably to the sun, which will eventually swallow it up.

Furthermore, the members of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster have constructed the concepts of heaven and hell. All the true believers after death go to the Pastafarian heaven. The main attractions of this place are: the Volcano of Beer and the Factory of Strippers (Figure 1). “The Beer Volcano is really a Volcano of any beverage you like”<sup>62</sup>, so that rum lovers can drink their favourite beverage from the Volcano. There are female and male strippers in this heaven, however, male

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<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> B. Henderson, *Open Letter...* op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> *The Loose Canon...* op. cit., pp. 5–11.

<sup>59</sup> B. Henderson, *The Gospel...* op. cit., pp. 54–56.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> B. Henderson, *Open Letter...* op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> *The Loose Canon...* op. cit., p. 31.

strippers are invisible to the heterosexual men<sup>63</sup>. The Pastafarian heaven is located on an island, with lots of ships sailing around. The great beer volcano dominates the island. The higher one gets, the more delicious pasta and beer he/she can enjoy, the more beautiful strippers are, the cooler Pirates one she/he meets. The Flying Spaghetti Monster likes spending time near the crater, where “he gathers all the best and brightest to Him [...]”<sup>64</sup>.

On the other hand, there is no hell with boiling liquids, fire, and physical tortures. Unbelievers after death go to a place called Hell Light, there they “[...] have to live with school cafeteria spaghetti, second rate beer, and boring jobs in the service industries [...]”<sup>65</sup>. The inhabitants of Hell Light were not bad people, they just did not recognize the true faith. “Actual Pastafarian Hell is reserved for a very few [...]”<sup>66</sup> among whom corrupted politicians, conmen, bullies of the geopolitical world should be mentioned. They never drink finest beverages, never eat pasta: “Never will they eat of the Pasta of any kind, but will live on lots of beans and rice, potatoes and extremely cheap cuts of meat [...]”<sup>67</sup>. The inhabitants of that terrible place do the most awful jobs: “They will do all the laundry, cleaning and heavy or unpleasant jobs that are there”<sup>68</sup>.

It is time to go back to the initial question about the reason of this expanded cosmological system delivered by the Church of the FSM. Even obvious mockery religions need to follow the web of conventions of established religions, in order to be recognized as successful criticism. This subject matter have been described by David Chidester in his book about the intersections between religion and popular culture in America<sup>69</sup>. Indeed, the Church of the FSM is so vivid thanks to constant conflicts and comparisons with its opponents – traditional and influential religious systems, primarily Christianity<sup>70</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS AND COMPARISONS

I have described two very newly invented mythical universes. The first one was based on Wachowskis’ trilogy and introduced by its fans, the second one was created by Bobby Henderson and his followers – the members of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. Both of these unconventional and very recent (initiated between

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<sup>63</sup> B. Henderson, *The Gospel...* op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> *The Loose Canon...* op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p. 128.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, p. 128.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> D. Chidester, *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*, Los Angeles, London 2004, p. 210 [after:] C. M. Cusack, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>70</sup> The Church of the FSM usually mocks Christianity, however, not only. For example, Turkish Pastafarians criticize primarily Islam.

2004 and 2005) religious movements deliver quite sophisticated cosmologies and cosmogonies. However, the reasons why they do that are different.

The mythical universe of Matrixism is complex, because it is based on stories about the world of the Matrix. As I mentioned earlier, these legendary films are deeply religious, mythological and philosophical. The Wachowskis' trilogy raises numerous cosmological questions. *The Matrix* films, together with other texts from the Matrixism canon were open to interpretations. Due to the moribund condition of this religious phenomenon, there are not many results of this process remaining. Though, we can still regain some information about this fiction-based religious movement from what is left of the Geocities website.

When it comes to the Church of the FSM, *The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster* and *The Loose Canon* depict an expanded cosmological system in order to be perceived as a successful mockery. Pastafarians follow the web of conventions characteristic of well-established religions, because they are fuelled by conflicts with the representatives of other faiths. In order to survive, the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster constantly needs to simulate traditional religions, primarily Christianity. And therefore, the adherents of the FSM claim to be very exclusive and strict about their religious beliefs. Even the youngest of them, like 13-years-old Tristan from *The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster*, who wrote: "Being pastafarian, I believe in the Flying Spagetti Monster to be the one true and only god. Usually when I tell people that I am pastafarian they laugh at me and say »No seriously«. This really offends me"<sup>71</sup>.

Contrary to Pastafarians, Pathists claimed to be open to various interpretations of their holy texts and highly inclusive. *The Matrix* trilogy and Matrixism were taking inspirations from various religious and philosophical traditions, Pathists were claiming to follow the Baha'i faith in its apologia for the unity and oneness of all the religions. Matrixism was inclusive, the authors of its website were enthusiastic about the idea that its followers adhere to other religions in the same time.

The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster and Matrixism are the products of the contemporary consumer society. Nevertheless, their attitudes towards it vary radically. Pathists considered the Matrix – the computer simulation "[...] as a metaphor for the rules, norms and values of our current society"<sup>72</sup>. The world of the Matrix and, symbolically, our world are illusory, and therefore authenticity could be found somewhere outside them. Illusion is one of the main themes of the Wachowskis' trilogy and the path of the One. That is why, the Matrix has been juxtaposed with Islamic *dunyā* and Buddhist *maya*.

Moreover, the followers of the path of the One were critical about advertising and marketing which are inseparable elements of the consumer society. Authors of the original Matrixism website listed religious rules and laws of the path of the One. The first rule stated: "The human image is now banned from all forms of advertising and marketing"<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> B. Henderson, *The Gospel...* op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>72</sup> *FAQ*, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster does not share this criticism of consumerism. Take into consideration its concepts of heaven and hell. The main spots of the Pastafarian heaven are the Volcano of Beer and the Factory of Strippers. The place is a consumer paradise. The dead believers mind only about consumption of beer, pasta, sex. They can choose from the vast range of beverages, because “the Beer Volcano is really a Volcano of any beverage you like”<sup>74</sup>. There is no hell with physical tortures and fire. Unbelievers are deprived of quality goods and the variety of options, they “[...] have to live with school cafeteria spaghetti, second rate beer [...]”<sup>75</sup>. The followers of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster fully embrace consumer society.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 128.

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## SUMMARY

### MYTHICAL UNIVERSES OF THIRD-MILLENNIUM RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: THE CHURCH OF THE FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER AND MATRIXISM

The article pertains to two third-millennium religious movements: the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster and Matrixism. There is no commonly agreed way of classifying these phenomena. They can be labelled as: invented religions, fiction-based religions, or joke religions. The analysis of Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster and the Wachowskis' trilogy together with the internet-based religious movement derived from it, provide explanations regarding cosmological questions. The aim of this text is to examine mythical cosmoses they created.