

REVIEWS AND SHORT REVIEW NOTES

Joanna Wawrzeniuk¹

(Review) Andrzej Bronisław Pankalla, Konrad Kazimierz Kośnik, *Indygeniczna psychologia Słowian. Wprowadzenie do realnej nauki*. Kraków 2018: Universitas, 216 pp.

In 2018, a new book appeared on the scientific publications market. Written by Andrzej Bronisław Pankalla and Konrad Kazimierz Kośnik – specialists in the history of psychological thought, cultural psychology, and the psychology of religion – the book was titled ‘Indygeniczna psychologia Słowian. Wprowadzenie do realnej nauki o duszy’, which translates to ‘Slavic Indigenous Psychology. Introduction to the Real Science of the Soul’.

My attention was drawn to the publication because it represents perhaps the first attempt to analyze Slavic beliefs from the point of view of psychology. There is no position regarding the psychology of the Slavs, understood as psychic knowledge hidden in myths, rituals, customs, and religion. There are also no books about the Slavic soul perceived through the prism of centuries of cultural influences and from different points of view. Finally, there are no publications that present broadly defined local knowledge based on the scientific experience and senses of Slavic authors who are, to put it colloquially, feeling the climate.

The book by Pankalla and Kośnik was therefore intended to begin to fill this gap. In addition, the content presented in it was to be an attempt to penetrate the mentality of both the Slavic individual and the Slavic society operating on the border of two belief systems, pagan and Christian. In this work, indigenusness is understood as a kind of primary pattern of human behaviour and traits. The authors, presenting the assumptions of indigenous psychology (Kim *et al.* 2006; Boski 2010), emphasize the localness – the nativeness of such science, the inclusion of many theses and contexts, the multitude of research approaches from the subject’s perspective, communication between dialogue and objectivity, and the use of methodologies from humanities and social sciences. Post-structuralism and critical theory form the methodological foundation for the indigenous position in this publication. In post-structuralism, discourse plays a fundamental role in the

1 Institute of Archaeology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Wóycickiego 1/3, building 23, 01-938 Warszawa, Poland; j.wawrzeniuk@uksw.edu.pl; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2157-3559>

process of creating knowledge, just like in discovering connections between various spheres of life (such as colloquial knowledge, practices, and rituals) at its various levels. On the other hand, in critical theory, reflection and self-reflection are intentional and seen 'as factors and the result of a dialectical relationship between participants of the research situation and other elements that make up the world of life of the subjects participating in the procedure' (Czerapaniak-Walczak 2010, 322; Pilarska 2015, 223-224).

The authors also believe that 'a man in the science of himself, and thus a psychologist, is forced to solve and see epistemological dilemmas regarding the study of an object that by definition cannot be external to itself, he examines a representative of the human race'. They note that psychology is dominated by an objectivistic perspective and a way of research closer to natural sciences than to humanities, thus lacking analyses of the role of man and the effects of his activities on culture (p. 13).

The publication consists of four basic chapters and begins with reflections on the specifics of the research area – *i.e.*, Slavdom and the psychological analysis of the Slavs – and discusses their interrelationship. Next, the theoretical-epistemological assumptions, which helped to understand and show the structure of Slavic psychology, are presented. The fourth part discusses the relationship between Slavic mythology, contemporary Poles, and the system of neopagan beliefs. The book also contains two annexes: Slavic studies (containing a list of selected gods of the Slavic religion and the geographical division of the Slavdom area) and psychology (with people important to cultural and cultural-historical psychology, as well as a dictionary). The work ends with a list of publications and an index of people.

The publication, according to the authors, was to be a reconstruction, or rather an attempt to reconstruct the ancient (native) psychology of the Slavs, and, on the other hand, a reflection on the modern version of Slavic mythology or beliefs. The authors dedicate the publication primarily to psychologists, as well as to representatives of other social and humanistic sciences, 'who, in their attempts to understand man, focus on his cultural localness in order to find specific, material correlates of observable non-universalistic behaviour' (p. 20). In addition, it is hoped that non-specialists dealing with broadly understood Slavic beliefs may find some kind of inspiration in it.

The book was meant to be impartial and not encourage the promotion of any theories – neither Christian correctness nor the pagan creation myth – which the authors managed to achieve.

The introduction shows that the publication can also be useful for archaeologists involved in reconstructing the religion of pre-Christian Slavs. In the first chapter of the publication, the authors, thinking about the psychology of the Slavs, search for its origins. Discussed here are the characteristics of ancient Slavic beliefs and, in principle, difficulties in their reconstruction due to the lack of sufficient data. At the same time, the authors say, this point of view is not entirely correct or complete, because it is dominated by researchers representing the non-Slavic point of view through Western European science (p. 25).

Slavic culture and beliefs were also affected by foreign cultural elements. The Middle Ages combined the cultural structures of the pagan or barbaric world with elements of Mediterranean heritage and Christian ideology. In the source literature, it was often emphasized that the shape of the Slavic world was influenced by neighbouring peoples and Christianization. Missionaries arriving in Slavic lands represented the spirit and the mind of a different, non-Slavic nature. For example, Saints Cyril and Methodius were Greeks, educated in the spirit of Byzantine culture. The establishment of the parish network in the 13th-14th centuries in Poland was preceded by the construction of monasteries and episcopal palaces; there were many people of non-Slavic origin among the monks and priests.

The incompleteness of information from written sources and the lack of indigenous pre-Christian writing sources makes it difficult to reconstruct the way of thinking of the ancient Slavs in a more credible way. Some traces of this mentality can be found in certain proverbs and culinary delights. However, the authors do not elaborate on this topic.

A lot of attention in the publication is paid to the cult of trees as a typically Slavic manifestation of beliefs. However, it was also present among other Indo-European peoples. In addition, this phenomenon of nature did not function separately in ancient rituals. Many ritual behaviours in connection with the worship of stones or waters or fire have also been preserved. Even the night of the summer solstice (Kupala Night), called Saint John's Eve in other parts of the Slavic lands, combined wood/tree magic with fire and water magic. It should be emphasized that, according to available written records, the element of water also played a huge role in beliefs and ceremonial activities. Records of Belarusian folklore demonstrate how elaborate these rituals could be (*e.g.* Dučyc and Klimkovič 2011: 76-89; L'obač and Valodzina 2016). Admittedly, the influence of Christianity contributed to the fact that *water gained miraculous power*, but in Slavic ceremonies, one can distinguish a number of rituals in which this element played an important role. Water had a healing, cleansing, and magical function. In Belarus, even nowadays a ritual is performed in some regions to invoke rain during droughts. This ritual is always attended by women who, standing in a circle, dance and sing or hit the ground with sticks held in hands and invoke the rain to fall (Dučyc and Klimkovič 2011, 76-89).

In the chapter on the psycho-cultural definition of Slavs, the authors wonder whether the processes of shaping Slavic ethnic identity were related to the awakening of national consciousness in the Romantic era. From that moment on, Slavic identity was to be defined by shared beliefs and myths, and 'the perception of reality (including psychological phenomena and self-perception) systematized in Slavic cognitive systems and the resulting specificity of psychological functioning, manifesting in the structure (features) of personality and characteristically Slavic (*e.g.* ritual) behaviours that distinguish them from other ethnic groups' (p. 45).

So, in the end, what can psychology say about the Slavs? The authors, citing the research of Geert Hofstede (2007, 33), point out that values are a more permanent element of culture than practice. Developing persistence and saving now in order to reap benefits

in the future are considered to be certain constant cultural values in Slavic countries. In addition, the Slavs are persistent and systematic in pursuing their goals, and, on the other hand, restrained – that is, respecting the norms and rules of the community. These rather interesting observations are not elaborated on further in the book. It is a great pity, since an analysis of texts regarding the beliefs and political history of the early Slavs could expand the issues of mentality- indigenoussness.

In cultural psychology, attention is paid to aspects, shared by members of a specific community and determining their ways of thinking and behaviour, such as religion, myths, rituals, language, and customs (p. 67), as well as material products of culture. A newly made clay pot revealed the manufacturer's perception and the cultural norms they shared. The indicated elements also constituted the psychological structure of the past community. Potential is visible in such cultural psychology, as it reaches 'the subjective psychological life of man embedded in the social context' (p. 69). Its aspiration was to be 'the science of the soul', which is omitted in classical psychology. Along with the practice of the second, critical (based on natural sciences) branch of psychology – which determines the conditions of the subject of scientific cognition (the cultural context of science) – a new, indigenous, psychology arises that describes phenomena in the Slavic context, the mental constructions of men, their motives of action and personalities. However, in order for the descriptions to be as complete as possible, indigenous psychology should be analysed and described by a Slav, but in such a way that the researcher listens to local knowledge, leaving their own knowledge aside. Culture is multi-threaded and has many meanings that cannot be ignored when writing observations. 'In the kingdom of the blind who are not as blind as we think, the one-eyed is not a king but an observer' (Geertz 2005, 65-66). But where do we get local knowledge from if there are no more respondents?

In the next chapter, the authors develop their views on how to practice the indigenous psychology of the Slavs. Its main element is treating the religion or beliefs that have been recognized so far, and above all the Slavic pantheon, as a starting point for learning about the human mental structure. In the widely discussed polytheism, the dominant factor was the faith in gods and demons, even if one of these deities stood out among the others, such as Swarożyc for Western Slavs or Perun for Eastern Slavs. The community felt associated with their deity. Various sacrifices, including blood sacrifices, were made to it and, in return, they expected its favour. It was believed that bad omens brought bad crops and war defeats. The blame for this state of affairs was put on the higher power to whom an offering had been made. It happened then that offerings were addressed to a deity of a foreign tribe or community. It was believed that since the opponent had won, his god was stronger and more important, and therefore it is worth relying on its protection. The progress of Christianization missions in Slavic lands was also explained in this way. In the presented descriptions of higher powers, however, the authors carelessly mingled the bestiaries without providing the sources of origin of the described combinations of Slavic demons and gods.

Penkalla and Kośnik also believe that myths provide information about community mentality. Myths have always accompanied people, but sometimes it is difficult to recreate a full picture of mind or beliefs with only a part of them. According to the authors, the prehistory of psychology will help in the analysis of the myths of ancient tribal societies. Myths and mythology provide the basis for further interpretation, and the starting point is to determine the archetype of the myth. This allows researchers to establish priorities of beliefs and cultural systems. Carl Gustav Jung (1993), Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1992), and Joseph Campbell (1997) saw the legitimacy of this way of reaching the magical-mythical thinking of ancient societies, although Mircea Eliade discounted the use of psychology for researching myths (Eliade 1992, 169; Korczak 2016, 364). The psychology of myth links the presence of archetypes with the belief structure of a given culture. Next, the myth should be associated with a phantasm, the task of which is to show how to create one's own identity, and thus indicates the features of the psyche of an examined individual or society. Using the so-called Connotational Analysis, Ernest Boesch (1991; 2001) provides the description and significance of the myth-phantasm relationship. 'This method ... focuses on connotations that are contrasted with denotations (meanings shared by the social group, ... superficial features of culture)' (p. 97). On the other hand, connotations concern individuals and communities and their internal, often unconscious, needs. Analysis of these phenomena within psychology may allow for the study of not only psychological and physiological processes but also symbolic ones (understood as the mythical identity of the individual: myths and phantasms). The authors of the reviewed book would want to use this method to analyse the strictly Slavic myth, but they basically end their considerations at theory.

In the publication, a lot of space is devoted to the essence of indigenous psychology, namely the soul; it is perceived threefold as the self, life, and spectre. The analysis was based on the work of Aleksander Gieysztor (2006), along with the ethnographic compendium of Kazimierz Moszyński's knowledge (2010), and the publication of ethnologist of religion Andrzej Szyjewski (2010). Unfortunately, the authors did not explain, in a general way, the scope of the analysed publications, which use different research and methodological techniques. The cognitively valuable works of Stanisław Urbańczyk (1991), Jerzy Gąssowski (1995), Bogusław Gediga (1996), and Piotr Kowalski (1998) were not included, while others were discussed rather cursorily. An interesting article by Edyta Dziduch (2012) about the Slavic soul in the linguistic and cultural context was also omitted. The issue of the soul is analysed in four different layers of meaning: as a symbol of life and energy, goodness, reason, mind, and finally as a symbol of man. These types of meanings, visible in the beliefs of various Slavic nations, are a set of different pre-Christian, folk, and Christian traditions (Koncewicz-Dziduch 2012, 185).

Further considerations related to the afterlife – for example, its description, a discussion of the road to the afterlife, and the interaction between the living and the dead – are presented based on available Slavic studies. Here, too, one could have objections to the

publications selected for analysis. Neither the works of Stanisław Bylina (*e.g.* 1992) nor of Joanna Wawrzeniuk (2007), in which visions of the afterlife and how it could be reached are shown through the prism of archaeological, historical, and ethnographic sources, were referred to.

However, perhaps the most interesting aspect is the psychological explanation of the *demonological manifestations of the soul*. Despite incomplete and diverse records (some psychopathological-mental disorders that are equivalent to mental diseases as listed in the DSM-V and ICD-10 can be pointed out), the authors claim that such manifestations had a special relationship with believing in vampires and other harmful demons as well as the measures that were taken to fight them. This is a very original and at the same time typical mechanism of juxtaposing actions and counter-actions – a kind specific psychotherapy.

Penkalla and Kośnik draw attention to Kazimierz Moszyński's (2010) sets of elementary mental processes (2010) and analyze them to determine the most basic ones (p. 123 et seq.). They have distinguished four general Slavic 'feelings' of taste ('sweet', 'salty', 'bitter', 'sour'), as well as visual ones – basic colours ('light', 'dark', 'white', 'gray', 'black' or 'red'), auditory tones – 'fine' ('high') and 'thick' ('low'), and numerous terms for 'murmurs', 'scratching', 'trickling', 'gurgling', or 'rattling'. The sense of fragrance is the most popular one in the Slavic world. The most common terms are 'to smell' and 'to stink'. Subsequently, affective processes and feelings associated with them were built on opposing emotions, *e.g.* 'nice', 'anger', 'regret'. The next category was cognitive processes, i.e. 'reason' and 'memory'.

According to the authors of the reviewed publication, the preserved habits from pre-Christian Slavic beliefs reveal many customs in which the manifestations of society's old way of thinking can be discovered. These include the taming of *rodzanice* [rozhanitsy], first haircut, *werewolf* ritual, Kupala Night, *swačba* [wedding], funeral, and *dziady* [Forefathers' Eve]. These customs are still considered to be rites of passage at various stages of development; they allow the reconstruction of developmental stages by which the Slavs understood the process of changes in the functioning of man from birth to death. The estimated human age was determined for each of the above stages. It was noted that there was no distinct ritual for the period between the parenting stage and death, as if the Slavs did not attach much attention to this point, which was explained by the lack of a clear boundary between human vocational-economic activity and its cessation. This is a very interesting part of the work; however, in my opinion, it was treated a bit briefly (p. 137-144). Too little space was also devoted to the analysis of Slavic personality, which would be manifested in giving a name that defined human traits and referred to one's skills, specifics of character, strength, and power (p. 145-152). This interesting analysis, however, required a broader approach for other types of names (not only personal but also geographical) to be included (*e.g.* Rzetelska-Feleszko et al. 2002).

The book, as I pointed out above, has some shortcomings, resulting from poorly recognized source literature regarding Slavic archaeology, beliefs, and folklore. Some subjects would need to be developed and supplemented, which would increase the value of the

presented discourse. The content of the annexes, which does not match the content of the publication, has not been fully thought out either. However, this publication is worth reaching for, because it presents new opportunities to study the habits and beliefs of ancient Slavs based on psychological analyses extracted on the basis of the available source material. The indigenous approach gives an opportunity to look more broadly at the culture of the group, taking into account the multiplicity of cultural themes, including the cognitive structure, and thus observing the behaviour of the 'own-foreign' kind. Therefore, it is a pioneering work, although it requires supplementation.

References

- Boesch E. 1991. *Symbolic Action Theory and Cultural Psychology*. Berlin-New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Boesch E. 2001. Symbolic Action Theory in Cultural Psychology. *Culture and Psychology* 4, 479-483.
- Boski P. 2010. *Kulturowe ramy zachowań społecznych. Podręcznik psychologii międzykulturowej*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Bylina S. 1992. *Słowiańskie zaświaty. Wizje kar pośmiertnych w Polsce średniowiecznej*. Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN.
- Campbell J. 1997. *Bohater o tysiącu twarzy*. Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos.
- Czerepaniak-Walczak M. 2011. Badanie w działaniu. In S. Palka (ed.), *Podstawy metodologii badań w pedagogice*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 319-337.
- Dučyc L. and Klimkovič I. 2011. *Sakralna Geografija Belarusi*. Minsk: Literatura i Mastactva.
- Eliade M. 1992. *Próba labiryntu. Rozmowy z Claude-Henri Rocquetem*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sen.
- Gąssowski J. 1995. Schyłkowe pogaństwo na ziemiach polskich w świetle odkryć archeologicznych. *Światowit* 40, 43-52.
- Gediga B. 1992. Chrystianizacja i utrzymywanie się przedchrześcijańskich praktyk kultowych na Śląsku. In Z. Kurnatowska (ed.), *Słowiańszczyzna w Europie średniowiecznej. Księga pamiątkowa dla Lecha Leciejewicza, vol. 1: Plemiona i wczesne państwa*. Wrocław: Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, 159-167.
- Geertz C. 2005. *Wiedza lokalna. Dalsze eseje z zakresu antropologii interpretatywnej*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ.
- Hofstede G. and Hofstede G. J. 2006. *Kultury i organizacje. Zaprogramowanie umysłu*. Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne.
- Gieysztor A. 2006. *Mitologia Słowian*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Jung C. G. 1993. *Archetypy i symbole. Pisma wybrane*. Warszawa: Czytelnik.
- Kim U., Yang K. S. and Hwnag K. K. 2006. *Contributions to Indigemous and Cultural Psychology. Understanding People in Context*. New York: Springer, 3-25.
- Koncewicz-Dziduch E. 2012. O słowiańskiej duszy w wierzeniach, kulturze, języku na przykładzie frazeologizmów sztokawszczyzny literackiej. *Studia z Filologii Polskiej i Słowiańskiej* 47, 181-192.

- Korczak A. 2016. Mircea Eliade i pojęcie archetypu. *IDEA-Studia nad strukturą i rozwojem pojęć filozoficznych* 27(2), 357-374.
- Kowalski P. 1998. *Leksykon. Znaki świata – omen, przesąd, znaczenie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN.
- Levy-Bruhl L. 1992. *Czynności umysłowe w społeczeństwach pierwotnych*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- L'obač U. and Valodzina T. 2016. *Swiatyja krynicy Belarusi*. Minsk: Belaruskaja navuka.
- Moszyński K. 2010 (1934). *Kultura ludowa Słowian, cz. 2. Kultura duchowa*. Warszawa: Grafika.
- Pilarska J. 2015. Perspektywa indygeniczna w badaniach środowisk zróżnicowanych kulturowo – ku metodologicznej wrażliwości kulturowej. *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne* 25, 222-233.
- Rzetelska-Feleszko E., Cieślíkowa A. and Duma J. (eds) 2002. *Słowiańska onomastyka: encyklopedia* 1. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie.
- Szyjewski A. 2010. *Religia Słowian*. Kraków: WAM.
- Urbańczyk S. 1991. *Dawni Słowianie. Wiara i kult*. Wrocław, Warszawa. Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Polska Akademia Nauk, Komitet Słowianoznawstwa.
- Wawrzeniuk J. 2007. Słowiańskie „mosty” w zaświaty. In W. Dzieduszycki and J. Wrzesiński (eds), *Środowisko pośmiertne człowieka. Funeralia Lednickie. Spotkanie 9*. Poznań: Stowarzyszenie Naukowe Archeologów Polskich, Oddział w Poznaniu, 45-58.