

Harold Koeing, 6-18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vencovský, Eugen. 1996. *Psychiatrie dávných věků*. Praha: Vydavatelství Karolinum.

Walker, D. P. 1981. *Unclean spirits: Possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early*

seventeenth centuries. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Walter, Mariko Namba and Fridman, Eva Jane. 2004. *Shamanism: An encyclopedia of world beliefs, practices, and culture*. Santa Barbara, Denver and Oxford: ABC-CLIO.

FRANTIŠEK VÁLEK

Wellbeing, Harm, and Religion – Conference Report

September 9–11, 2021, Brno, Czech Republic

In September 2021, Masaryk University in Brno hosted the fifth international annual doctoral conference in religious studies. The *Department for the Study of Religions* at Masaryk University was not the only organizer. The conference was arranged in cooperation with (mostly doctoral) students from several institutions: the *Center for Religious Studies* at the Central European University, *Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies* at Charles University, and *Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies* at the University of Pardubice.

The papers all centred around the key theme of wellbeing, harm, and religion. Three interesting keynote lectures, one on each day, formed the backbone of the conference. Andrea di Antoni from Kyoto University opened the conference with a lecture on “Spirits in the Material World: An Anthropology of Religious Healing, Affective Affordances, and Affective Technologies”, in which he presented his anthropological research and discussed the methodological implications of healing through spirit possession practices. On the second day, Radek Kundt from Masaryk University presented his paper “Effects of Extreme Ritual on Physiological and Psychological Health”, familiarizing the audience with the cognitive field research of the organizing institution. On Saturday, Michal Pagis from Bar-Ilan University closed the conference with her paper “Re-enchanting Therapy” on integrating Buddhist and Jewish elements in psychological practice.

The two full conference days were structured around presentations by doctoral students from numerous institutions around the globe. Participants came from, or joined in from, Italy, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Iran, Portugal, India, Brazil, Austria, Germany, and Egypt. The conference theme was explored from various different cultural perspectives – from antiquity to the modern era – and through the prism of different methodological approaches – ranging from textual interpretative approaches to anthropological research to computer modelling. Conference delegates had the opportunity to experience the interdisciplinary nature of religious studies. Moreover, the small size of the conference meant there was plenty of opportunity for fruitful discussion after the papers and when mingling with a good cup of coffee and tasty snack.

Given the ongoing pandemic, the conference was held in hybrid format. Naturally that had its ups and downs. Some participants were able to join us from afar and the conference papers could be heard by a wider audience. But unfortunately, some participants had unreliable internet connections and others even found it impossible to deliver their presentation. Those attending in person were able to enjoy the additional program, consisting of a guided city tour and social events to foster bonding among young scholars.

In addition, the conference in 2021 was a turning point in the sense it broadened collaboration among doctoral students at Central European institutions researching religion. Following the conference, *Central European Symposium on the Academic Study of Religion* (CESAR) was established, serving as a platform to bring together doctoral students in Central Europe. Since, University of Pardubice hosted the sixth year of the conference, themed “Transformations of Religions in Times of Crises: Spiritual Alienation and Rethinking of Ethics” in September 2022. The 2023 conference on “Religion and Identity” will be held at University of Szeged in October. The readers of the current issue are wholeheartedly welcome to participate.