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## **Processing Entities: Healing Practices and Body Conceptions in the New Age Group “Spiritual Technology”**

**Abstract:** It is virtually impossible to conduct a holistic study of any religious phenomenon without considering its relationship with health, healing, and the body. In the case of New Age or self-denominated “Spiritual” groups, the role of health takes on an even more prominent role, acting as a soteriology or a cultural ideal. This paper focuses on the conceptions of the body, healing, and well-being held by members of the Serbian group “Spiritual Technology,” founded by Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski in 1996, and their associated practices. Through an in-depth analysis of various texts authored by Slavinski, healing practices are considered as religious practices, divided into prevention and remediation practices, along with their subsequent stages (diagnosis, treatment, and prescription). Based on an energetic view of the body, where well-being and unwellness are concepts constantly renegotiated between healer and patient, the body is understood as composed of entities, which have been classified and divided in terms of their origin and their influences on humans. This research concludes that these ritualized practices contribute to the creation of ritual bodies as well as common narratives of corporeality, health, and even a shared worldview, serving as an interpretative framework to interact with the self and the surrounding world and, therefore, playing an important role in the formation of contemporary subjectivities.

**Keywords:** body, healing, New Age, new religious movements, Serbia

### Introduction

Health is, and has always been, a religious concern. Better said, it is not possible to separate health issues from religious issues (Turner 1997; Hanegraaf 1996). As Puglisi (2015) remarks, it is not possible to analyze any healing system ignoring the religious dimensions that give them foundation and significance, because religion is one of the interpretative frames (Carozzi 2000) of the reality

of every social group. Biomedicine<sup>1</sup> is the dominant discourse in Western contemporary society. As any other etiology, it stems from cultural ideas, but one of its main particularities is the exclusion of extrasensory and supernatural agents of health. Despite its hegemonic position, its vision is contested by different schools of thought rooted in non-materialistic perspectives on humans, their existence, their bodies and the ways they experience them (Hanegraaf 1996).

The main objective of this paper is to explore the knowledge<sup>2</sup> about health, illness, and healing in the New Age group “Spiritual Technology”. Based on the analysis of books written by its leader Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski<sup>3</sup>, this work aims to answer the following questions: How are health, healing and illness portrayed in the groups’ narratives? How do they conceive the body? After describing some of the healing practices and the cosmivision depicted in these books, the categories of ritual, ritualization, entities, and ritual body will be used to acknowledge this phenomenon.

## Spiritual Technology

Spiritual Technology is an organization founded in 1996 by the Serbian psychologist Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski immediately after the dissolution of his occultist<sup>4</sup> group “Ecclesia Gnostica Alba“ (EGA), which dates back to 1986. The EGA was, as its name indicates, a group self-denominated as “Gnostic”, wherein they followed the ideas of Aleister Crowley’s Thelema and the meditation practices created by Charles Berner, incorporating other elements borrowed from different traditions, such as Scientology, Yoga or the Hermetic Order of

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<sup>1</sup> Biomedicine is defined as “The allopathic medicine and psychotherapies, officially recognized and offered in hospitals and another health units of diverse complexity, both public and private” (Idoyaga Molina 2005, 123)

<sup>2</sup> Understanding Knowledge in the sense of Barth (2002, 1) “What a person employs to interpret and act on the world (...) include feelings (attitudes) as well as information, embodied skills as well as verbal taxonomies and concepts: all the ways of understanding that we use to make up our experienced, grasped reality.”

<sup>3</sup> Born as Živorad Mihajlović, Slavinski is a fictional surname that, according to his own statements, he got in Sweden in the 1960s after being initiated into an unnamed line of Thelema (Radulović 2020).

<sup>4</sup> The topic of Occultism in the region has been studied, among other scholars, by Nemanja Radulović (2020) and Lidija Radulović (2007), focused on the literary and practical aspects of this phenomenon. Both of their works mention the contributions of Slavinski to this scene. The work of Gordan Djurdjević (2014) also focuses on Slavinski’s topic, analysing the content of his first books from the 1970s. For a more extensive overview on the research antecedents of Occultism in general both in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria see Putnik (2023).

the Golden Dawn. The association counted important figures of the occultist world, including Michael Bertiaux and Kenneth Grant as spiritual godfathers. Following the disbandment of the EGA in 1996, Slavinski shifted his teachings and practices towards a trajectory more aligned with the “New Age”<sup>5</sup> practices (Radulović 2020) offering courses on healing methods techniques for wellbeing, as well as producing related books.

As for today, Spiritual Technology remains active and maintains an official website<sup>6</sup> in multiple languages. The website features a list of official trainers for the group’s healing techniques, not only from the Balkans but also from other countries of Europe and North America. It also provides information about upcoming workshops, an online bookstore, and the option for private training with Slavinski himself, either via skype or in person<sup>7</sup>.

For this research I have used five books written by Mihajlović Slavinski in the time frame of this organization<sup>8</sup>: “Aspects: Gnosis of the Fourth Dimension” (1996), “Return to Oneness” (2004), “The invisible influences” (2008), “Gnostic Intensive with the Alternative Technique” (2010a), and “Transcendence” (2010b).

## Health and Religion: The Role of Healing in the New Age

The concepts of health, healing, and body, as with any other socially constructed categories, are not something inherent, and therefore, they can be subject to anthropological study. Since the early 20th Century, scholars such as Arnold Van Gennep (1909), Franz Boas (1912), or Mauss (1936), particularly in his essay about body techniques, along with anthropologists and other social scientists, have been studying the relationship between culture, cognition, and our perceptions and interaction with our bodies and those of others<sup>9</sup>. If we add

<sup>5</sup> Among more exhaustive studies about “New Religious Movements” in Yugoslavia are the works of Gredelj (1988) and Jovanović (2019). For the Serbian case, we recommend the studies of Sinani, Kulenović and Stajić (2012), and Radulović (2019). The work of Marinović (1995) and Bašić (2001) offer study cases of Croatia and Bosnia, respectively. Additionally, the paper of Merdjanova (2010) also covers Eastern Europe in general and the interaction between these movements with traditional Christian Churches.

<sup>6</sup> <https://spiritual-technology.com/>

<sup>7</sup> Sadly, Slavinski passed away in February 2022, although his contact information and the offer for personal workshops still remain on the website.

<sup>8</sup> For easier quotation, I used for this work the translated English versions, although for general analysis I used the originals written in Serbian.

<sup>9</sup> For a longer, more actualized and deeper genealogy and discussion of the story of Anthropology of the Body see Asad (1997)

the variable of religion to this equation, we can agree with the phenomenologist Michael Jackson that “the collective representations, in this case the religious conceptions, are correlated with patterns of corporal use, generated within specific habitus” (1998 quoted in Carini 2009) or, in words of Puglisi, that “every religious system possesses a particular conception of the body, a specific representation about its’ structure and working, what Heritier (1991) calls an ethno-anatomo-physiology” (2015, 73).

In New Age groups, the nexus between health and spirituality assumes particular importance, with “healing” as a conspicuous theme in their narratives. It is depicted as the primary means to connect with the inner sacred self (Albanese 1992; de la Torre, Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Juárez Huet 2013; Carozzi 2000; Gracia 2020), prompting some authors to characterize healing as the “New Age soteriology” (Bowman 1999; McGuire 1993; Hanegraaff 1996). Key characteristics of this movements’ concept of healing include:

**Holistic Interpretation:** mind, body, and soul are seen as interconnected and interdependent, so the healing –or the illness– of one of these spheres inevitably affects the others. (Albanese 2000; Viotti 2018).

**Appropriation of diverse sources:** New Age movements draw images, myths, symbols, and rituals from a variety of traditions, including Asian religions, Christianity, Western occultism, indigenous practices, recent psychotherapeutic approaches. (McGuire 1993). These appropriations are not random nor a “mystical esoterical nebulous”, as stated by Françoise Champion (1989), but are carefully curated (de la Torre, Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Juárez Huet 2013, Frigerio 2013), and guided by a subjacent central idea, such as the use of healing energy as an alternative to the biomedical model.

**Energetical conception of the Cosmos:** New Age conception involves an energetic portrayal of cosmos, which sometimes can take the form of “dense” matter (Puglisi 2015, 74). The flow of these energies is usually presented as a determinant of health and equilibrium, while the disruption of this flow is considered the cause of sickness and disequilibrium, addressed through the healing therapies (Carozzi 2000).

**Critical evaluation of Biomedicine:** While biomedicine is not outright rejected or conceptualized as inherently bad, it is often portrayed as insufficient or inadequate, as solely focusing on the physical symptoms (McGuire 1993; Hanegraaff 1996).

**Cultural Ideal of Health:** Health is portrayed in these groups as a cultural ideal (McGuire 1993) and / or as a pathway to achieving the “sacred” version of the self (Carozzi 2000; Frigerio 2013; Gracia 2020). This ideal is deemed as achievable through the adherence to prescribed practices and the cultivation of “correct” emotions and behaviors.

**Negotiated Senses of Health and Illness:** The understanding of these concepts is not fixed but rather agreed by both clients and practitioners, with a constant renegotiation of the meanings attributed to these terms. (Bowman 1999, 183).

Due to these characteristics, I consider it arbitrary to establish a sharp distinction between therapeutic practices and religious ones<sup>10</sup>. For practical purposes, in describing the different healing techniques offered in “Spiritual Technology”, I will adopt the category of Religious Practices, as proposed by Bandić (1980 quoted in Sinani 1994): This term encompasses “the treatment of the supernatural<sup>11</sup>”, and can concurrently be subdivided into two processes: prevention procedures and remediation procedures. However, before delving into the analysis, it is necessary to define and address some theoretical considerations regarding the concept of the body.

### Body as a Category

In this work, body is conceptualized as a psychophysical entity<sup>12</sup> (Lackoff 1987 quoted in Lycourinos 2017), modeled by a psychophysical habitus, a “system of dispositions acquired through the implicit or explicit learning, that works as a generator of categories of perception, evaluation, appreciation, and as principles that organize action” (Bourdieu 2007 quoted in Carini 2009).

To explore the relationship between body and consciousness, Carini draws from Csordas the concept of somatic modalities of attention, denoting culturally elaborate forms of paying attention to, and with one’s own body. According to the author, these modalities also “encompass the perceptions that defy the habitual conception of how the world can be known” (Csordas, 1993; 1999 quoted in Carini 2009, 70). Additionally, we cannot overlook the notion of body proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a foundational element for the phenomenological approach in anthropology of the body. According to the philosopher, the body is “neither subject nor object, purely mental or purely physical; is an active process relating to our ongoing embodied practices as “being-in-the-world”; is not “an object of the world but a mode of communication with it” (Merleau Ponty 1962 quoted in Lycourinos 2017) As he explains, the body is shaped by experience but also is the mean by which humans live the experience, the “being-in-

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<sup>10</sup> For a deeper discussion about the blurred limits of therapy and religious practices see Viotti (2018). [In Spanish]

<sup>11</sup> The definitions of “supernatural” are a complex matter, which exceeds the reach of this paper. In this context, and merely for practical reasons, “supernatural” will be understood in the sense of practices that manipulate something beyond the physical realm. For a further and deeper address of this subject, see Saler (1977) or Spiro et al (1958).

<sup>12</sup> We agree with the author in his aim “not to distinguish or neglect both the social and biological experiences of the body, with an embodied pre-conceptual structuring of experience that in turn structures conceptual categories” (Lycourinos 2017, 68).

the-world”. Many authors have embraced this approach to explain how religion can shape bodily experience and simultaneously be the experience itself (Carini 2009; Citro 2006; Gracia 2018; Lycourinos 2017; Puglisi 2015, 2018).

### Body According to Slavinski

Representations of body in the selected books for this research align with the concept of the “Energetical micro and macro cosmos”<sup>13</sup> (Puglisi 2015), a prominent element in actual New Age groups. This conception, however, has historical roots and can be found, among others, in Aleister Crowley’s Thelema system of belief, (Lycourinos 2017) which Slavinski actively propagated, particularly between the 1970s until early 1990s. Crowley, in turn, drew this idea from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn<sup>14</sup>. As described by Graf (2015), in this worldview the human is the microcosm, conceived as a reflection of the rest of the universe –the macrocosm. This perspective gave origin to the occultist adage “As above, so below”. The micro and macro cosmos are interconnected between imagination, with the rituals formulated to manifest in the physical world, if performed correctly. Within the framework of Spiritual Technology, the body is understood as a comprised of “entities”:

Entity is everything that has individual existence in the human spirit and in outward reality, and that is endowed at the same time with a separate consciousness. For further clarification, I will mention a few examples. Person XY is an Entity. All component parts of this person can be separate entities: her physical body, her astral body, her disorders: such as a headache or sore back, allergies, various fears, a feeling of inferiority, her self-esteem, etc (...) An Entity cannot be reduced to a certain size or place in space. It can be smaller or bigger, for instance, it can be the collective spirit of a group of people or just of one person. It can be our physical body or its parts; for example, our hand or head. A significant characteristic of an entity is that it exists in our minds as an individual phenomenon, thing or being, endowed with a separate consciousness. We can view it as a whole or as a part, depending on how we perceive it and what we want to accomplish. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 8)

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<sup>13</sup> Micro and macro cosmos entail the notion of “a universal energetical principle that constitutes and links the individual with the cosmos (...) [where] the body is constructed as a microcosmos of the social and planetary macrocosmos” (Puglisi 2015, 74).

<sup>14</sup> The relationship between Golden Dawn, Crowley’s and Mihajlović ideas is addressed in another paper of my authorship, within the subject “Anthropology of Islam”, as part of my doctoral program. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the conference “International Theosophical History Conference. The Reception of Egypt and the Ancients in Theosophy and Related Esoteric Currents” Held in Alexandria, Egypt, in October 2023.

Opinions differ in regard to the form of entities, for the cultural environment amply influences the way in which our conscious mind shapes the concentrates of energy which are the essence of entities. For most Westerners, benevolent and spiritual entities often take the form of angels or spiritual guides who convey significant messages to men. The forces of evil take the form of demons, Lucifer's messengers or Lucifer himself. In accordance with our time, extraterrestrial Entities who match our idea of cosmonauts, wearing spacesuits with strange symbols on them, appear more frequently. The reason for this variety in Entities' appearances is the fact that they exist on a level of consciousness where forms are not fixed, just as water does not have a fixed shape but one that depends on the vessel that contains it. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 9)

Until recently the dualistic point of view was dominant in this part of the world. A crack in such a vision of the world appeared in modern physics in 1925. Before that time, Western science presented the universe as a material creation consisting of smaller and smaller particles of matter. At the other side [sic], energy was considered to consist of energetic fields or waves. The dualistically oriented logic of the West stressed the mutually exclusive nature of these two states of existence – matter and energy. Then the discovery was revealed of matter and energy being two manifestations of the same. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2004, 9)

In this manual, as my working hypothesis, I adopted the teaching of oriental philosophy that Atman – Spiritual Being, is ubiquitous. It becomes contracted into the limited space of the human body because of its identification with it and its desire to obtain varied experiences. The human body is a source of pleasure, and more importantly, of pain and a myriad of other experiences; every experience limits the being. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 13)

With these examples and others that appear throughout all of his books, we can identify the presence of a “dual” portrayal of energy, as described by Puglisi. One aspect uses physics terms like matter or atoms, presenting a more “scientific” perspective, while the other involves the use of metaphysical or spiritual language. According to the author, “this is relevant for the ritual and therapeutic practices of the group, because human corporality constitutes the privileged place where these two aspects of energy converge.” (2015, 76). Additionally, it is also interesting to note that, besides the above-mentioned ideas, Slavinski's system attributes a correspondence between different sides of the physical body and the layers of consciousness. This connection between them can be accessed through certain specific –ritual– movements, as he explains:

The left brain hemisphere is rational, logical, mathematical, and connected to the right side of the body, to the right face point and to the “I here and now” for feeling. The “I here and now” is related to the present tense, perception of immediate reality and logical reasoning. The right brain hemisphere is irrational; it is the seat of emotions, imagination, intuition and is connected to the left side of the body and the left face point. The feeling that the Entity exists, its characteristics, and our reactions to it are connected to the right hemisphere. Therefore, when we concentrate on ourselves “here and now”, we put the fingers of our right hand on

the first right point (between the nose and the eyebrow.) When we concentrate on our perception of the Entity, we put the fingers of our left hand on the first left point. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 95)

## The Notion of Illness

The idea that illness represents a disruption of equilibrium is a common theme in various New Age groups (Hanegraaff 1996; Bowman 1999; McGuire 1993; Carozzi 2000; Pinal Villanueva 2021). Within these groups, illness is often viewed as a “messenger” signaling an underlying issue, and patients are considered partly responsible for their condition. This perspective is evident in Slavinski’s narrative when he cautions readers that, under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or anesthesia, individuals may make themselves more susceptible to the influence of entities:

State of total anesthesia during surgical interventions, probably the most convenient condition for the penetration and attachment of Entities. This is because in such states we almost completely lose our immunity to psychic influences. Other states of high risk are states of intoxication due to the use of drugs or alcohol. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 11)

This can also be interpreted as a prevention procedure. Similar cautionary discourses are found in another chapter of the book, where Slavinski recounts stories of individuals who ventured to invoke entities into the “material” world, only to encounter problems later:

His appearance, imagined at the beginning of the process of creation, changed gradually. The fat monk with round cheeks was becoming ever slimmer, while his face acquired a shrewd and evil expression. He became imprudent and started to cause trouble. He obviously got out of Dr David-Neel’s control. Once a shepherd brought butter to her tent, saw him and believed that he was seeing a real lama. The tulpa’s presence started to make her feel nervous and after some time turned into a nightmare. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 77)

Regardless, in the first case, it is noteworthy that Slavinski’s perspective on entities and their ‘attacks’ reflects what Bowman (1999) refers to as the “germ model”: the belief that illness is caused by an external agent, and its remedy requires the assistance of an external agent as well. This conception aligns with the prevailing biomedical model, which is not surprising considering Slavinski’s background as a trained psychotherapist<sup>15</sup>. The following quote illustrates

<sup>15</sup> The psychotherapy element will appear through the books in a conspicuous way.

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well this vision, drawing parallels between the “biological” body and “energetic” body:

Just as the skin protects the organism from penetration by bacteria, so the energetic field (aura) protects humans from penetration by unwelcome Entities and energies, from infections by Entities. In normal circumstances, this is enough. There are, however, some conditions in which the defence is weakened, which enables the unwelcome Entities to penetrate the aura. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 11)

Yet, at the same time, some of his followers, like Grega Gregorec who identifies as a PEAT therapist, express a vision of health aligned with a holistic approach, sharing characteristics outlined in the section of this paper discussing New Age’s perspective on health<sup>16</sup>. In a newspaper interview made by Alenka Cevc for *Svet 24* (July 29, 2018), he asserts that:

(...)[He] uses the method of PEAT (primordial energy activation and transcendence), a method, a system that combines knowledge of modern psychology, Eastern and Western philosophy, spiritual technology and thus offers the possibility of quick and effective resolution of many undesirable and unpleasant states. This method is based on the belief that the cause of emotional and psychological problems and diseases arising from it is a disorder in the human energy field, so by eliminating the energy disorder, emotional and psychological problems also disappear.

But before diving into the analysis of healing practices, it is necessary to include Mihajlović’s categorization of entities, and examine them through the lens of Spiro and D’Andrade’s (1958) classification. These authors propose a categorization wherein entities are initially divided between malevolent (a) and benevolent (b) entities, as perceived by the subject speaking. Each of these can be further subdivided into contingent entities (whose acts, whether good or evil, depend on ego’s behavior) and not contingent ones (which act independently of ego’s behavior).

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<sup>16</sup> It must be considered that this can be an individual opinion and not representative of Slavinski’s point of view, but it is interesting to add it to the discussion, especially if having in mind that, in the same interview, Mr. Gregorec claims to be “far away from New Age”. Self-denomination and the rejection/acceptance of some concepts regarding as belonging to the “New Age” or even “Religion” is a topic that exceeds the scope of this article. For further exploration see Sinani (2010), Stajić and Sinani (2011), Frigerio (2016) and Gracia (2021).

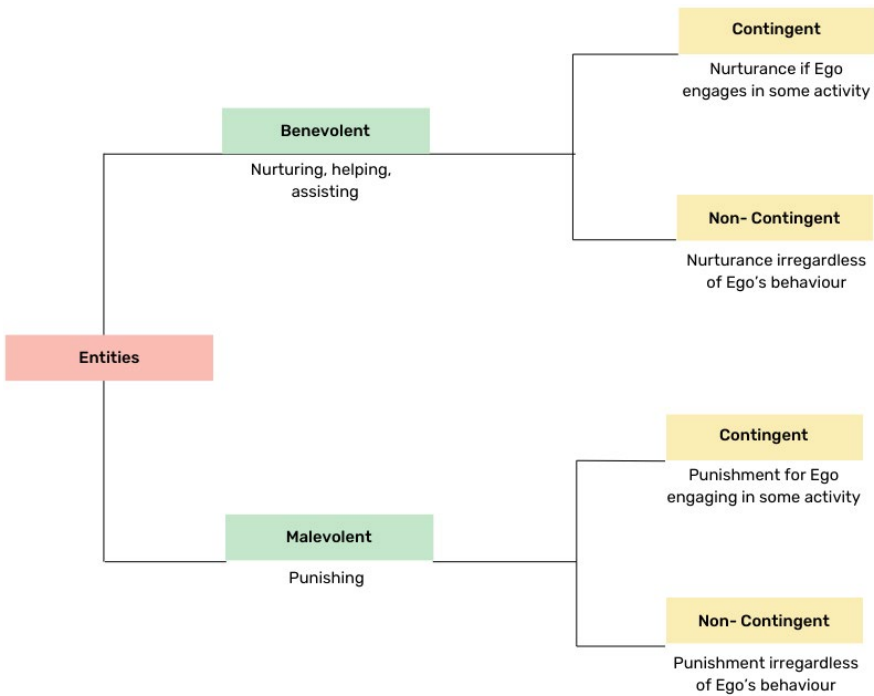


Fig.1. Spiro and D'Andrade's classification of entities (1958)

In Slavinski's book "The Invisible Influences", he proposes a dual categorization of the entities which can be correlated with Spiro and D'Andrade's proposal (1958).

Firstly, he classifies entities based on their origin: By the term "**aspects**", he refers to parts of the patient's self that become separate entities following trauma, making the person perceive them as something separate from themselves. It is necessary to integrate them back for the full wellbeing of the patient. Certain special types of aspects are called "**servitors**", which are "entities which the practitioner consciously and deliberately creates from energies derived from his own unconscious, or the collective unconscious, by means of evocation, so that they would perform quite specific functions" (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 83). These servitors can be either "benevolent" or "malevolent" in Spiro and D'Andrade's categorization, which Slavinski calls beings "of light" or "of darkness". Continuing this classification, aspects could be contingent entities, as they depend on ego's behavior.

The second category is "**Fleas or Leeches**", a term Slavinski uses to describe entities created by someone else. According to the author, the most common entities in this class are spells or charms casted against the patient, which would be

malevolent, non-contingent entities, according to Spiro and D’Andrade’s classification. There is also a harmless type of these entities, such as, for example, songs that stick involuntarily on the patient’s head. However, as these instances lack a ‘cure’ nor is a reason for consultation, it will not be had in mind for this topic.

The last category encompasses **autonomous beings**, entities with a life of their own, classified either as malevolent (“of darkness”) or benevolent (“of light”). According to Slavinski, “There are several kinds of these: ghosts, souls of dead people who are bound to the Earth for different reasons (...) conscious beings that more or less resemble humans, the so-called ‘forces of evil’; beings from other dimensions, angels, guardian angels, messengers of the higher forces of consciousness, muses who inspire artists, extraterrestrials, etc.” (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 11). This is the broadest category, including numerous types of entities, and within it, the four variants of Spiro and Andrade’s classification can be found.

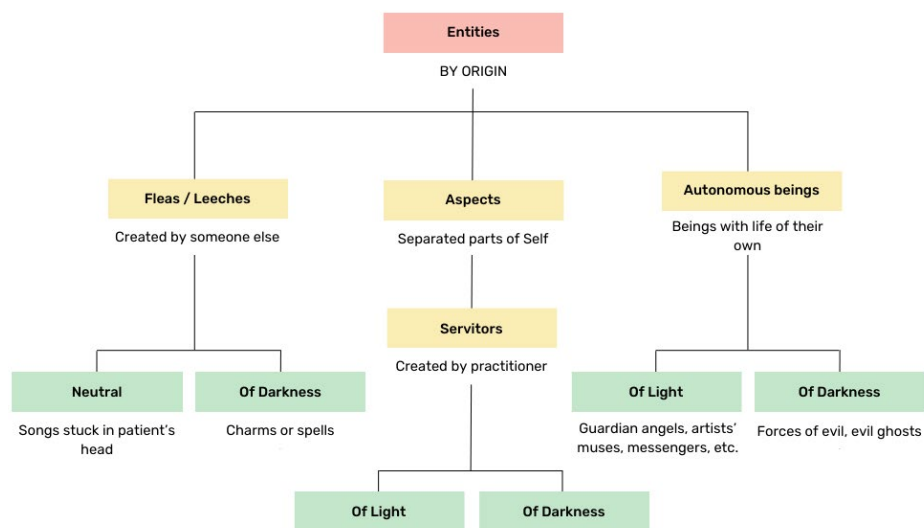


Fig. 2. Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski’s classification of entities (2008)

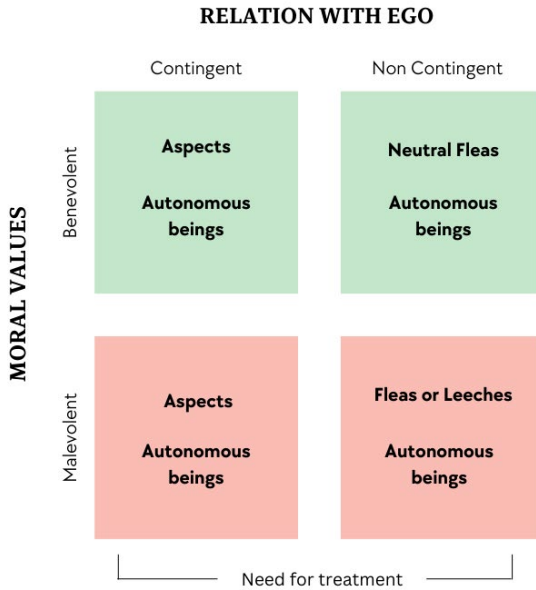


Fig. 3. Combination of Slavinski's (2008) and Spiro and D'Andrade's (1958) classification

A prominent feature of this worldview is the role that energy plays in the existence of entities, as all types are portrayed as dependent on the energy provided by someone else to exist. In the case of aspects, they rely on the energy of the patient, for fleas or leeches, they depend on their creator, and for autonomous beings, it varies according to the type of being. As Slavinski explains in his book "The Invisible Influences":

Wherever we direct our attention, from whatever point of view we perceive reality, at whichever aim we focus our intention, on those locations remains a fragment of our Being, and our attention becomes captivated there, no matter if we are aware of it or not. In this connection, it does not matter whether the locations where the concentrates of our attention are tied are several meters or several light years away from our body, on another planet or in another galaxy (...). This condition perseveres until we are capable of confronting the emotional charge that is tied there and by doing so liberate ourselves. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 13)

According to the author, all entities can be identified with the corresponding diagnosis and expelled (or integrated) with the correct treatment. There is no case addressed in his books as impossible to heal.

## Healing Practices

In his official website, Mihajlović offers techniques, which can be found in his books, that claim to make “hard and chronic emotional and psychological problems [to] vanish in half an hour or in minutes” and enable individuals “attain a peak, mystical, cosmic experience, a true Enlightenment in group processing lasting less than a day.” The evaluation of some of these techniques will be done using the category of “Religious Practices” (Bandić 1980 in Sinani 1994) divided into prevention and remediation practices. Additionally, for analytical purposes, within the concept of remediation practices three moments have been delimited: Diagnose (determination of the cause of the problem), Treatment (the act of healing is performed), and Prescription (some other practice is recommended either to avoid this happening again or to complete the healing process).

### Diagnose

Slavinski lists a certain number of physical and psychological symptoms that can be attributed to an entity entering the patients’ body. Among others, he states:

Effects can vary from mild exhaustion due to a constant loss of energy, to an almost absolute possession, which has all the symptoms of a mental illness, the so-called multiple personality, a well-known phenomenon in psychiatry. Other symptoms are sudden intensified addiction to cigarettes, food, alcohol or drugs (...), fears and strong phobias, (...) unexpected changes in conduct or emotions, such as throwing tantrums, or having depressive and suicidal thoughts. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 50)

However, he simultaneously cautions that “An attitude based on common sense is required here, for all these symptoms can result from entirely different causes” (2008, 50). Therefore, the question arises: how to distinguish an entity’s attack from another type of illness? The answer lies in performing specific practices that enable the ‘processor’ (the person conducting the healing) not only to identify whether it is an entity but also its type and location in the patient’s body (referred to as ‘the client’). Similar to the diagnoses performed in biomedicine, the sensations and symptoms reported by the patient to the processor play a pivotal role in the course of treatment:

(...) If as the answer to your question “What is happening next?” the Client answers that she goes into the Void, Light, or Nothingness, there is no doubt that that was the Client’s past life. In that case, this is the end of the process! If that

does not happen, the session is not finished, and you should continue to process the Entity. The Client usually states that she is floating in a gray area or around a certain place or person, that she is sitting somewhere, etc. [emphasis added] If you receive such an answer, you can be sure that this is an Entity without a physical body, which has not continued its normal evolution, because it is bound to the Earth for some reason. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 103)

Application of the DP-4 to the Basic Method: Put two fingers (the index and the middle finger) of your right hand on the first right point, feel yourself at this moment and report the elements that appear (image, emotion, physical sensation, and thought). Put two fingers of your left hand on the first left point, feel the Entity and report the elements that appear (image, emotion, physical sensation and thought). If after 4–5 repetitions of the procedure the elements that constitute that Entity do not visibly weaken, you should ask it the question “Who are you?” and inform it of the two rights of the Conscious Being, ask it to point to the Being from which it is separated and finally, proceed to processing the Controller, if necessary. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 92).

The basic method for processing entities. Address the Client with the following words:

1. Get the impression of a certain Entity of yours or focus your attention on it.
2. Where is it located in relation to your body? If it is inside your body, in which body part is it?
3. Determine its characteristics: What is its shape? Size? Weight? Color? Temperature? What is it made of? What is its structure? Does it have energy? If yes, what kind of energy? How old is it? If we could measure its intensity on a scale of 0 to 10, how strong would this Entity be according to your estimation?
4. Should I call it “he”, “she”, or “it”?
5. Ask him (her, it): “What is your attitude toward matter?”

The answer is usually an adjective or a description containing one or two words. Acknowledge the answer (this means that you should tell him “Thank you”, “I understand you”, or “Very well”, etc.) (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 92)

### *Treatment*

Once chosen by the healer, the treatment begins. All procedures require the patient to perform specific movements with their bodies, assume particular positions, and, in some instances, visualize or imagine what the processor indicates. The patient is not merely conceived as the “receptacle” of the entity; rather, their body is also seen as the medium through which the processor can communicate with it, either expelling or integrating it, as illustrated by these examples:

The procedure of the Memento method: The Client should lie down with her eyes closed on the bed or on the floor, on a soft mat, so that she is comfortable and relaxed. She should not wear tight clothes. The Processor or his Assistant massages the ankles of both legs simultaneously for several minutes. A minute or two after the massage begins, the Client should begin massaging the third eye area with the base of the palm of one hand, with circular movements — 5 minutes of such massage will suffice. The Client is then instructed to visualize her feet and imagine her whole body becoming longer through the legs by about 5 centimetres, so as to become that much taller. Then she should imagine that the feet return to the initial position, so that she is now again as tall as she normally is. You should instruct the Client to repeat the stretch with her head, so that she becomes longer by 5 centimetres on that side, and then to return to the normal position and height. (...) (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 99)

Notice the Entity that manifests as the unwanted emotion (feeling?) or Aspect. Determine its characteristics: the place where you feel it most intensely, its shape, size, color, intensity (on a scale of 0–10), age, energy and constitution. 2) Say to it: “Manifest as strongly as you can, so that we can communicate.” 3) Address the Entity: “Please create consciously and deliberately... (the unwanted feeling).”

This will guide the Entity into consciously doing that which it has previously done subconsciously and compulsively. In fact, it should duplicate the state and by doing so, discrete it. Repeat this request several times, so that the Entity will repeat the same procedure, until you feel that the feeling is gone. After this, the Entity usually changes its position and size. Notice the Entity’s new location and address it in that direction. Tell it: “Please create... (the opposite positive feeling) in the same place where the unwanted feeling was”. If the feeling was hatred, it should create the feeling of love, if it was nervousness or tension – peacefulness and tranquility, etc. This will transform the unwanted Entity into a Spiritual Teammate. (Mihajlović Slavinski 2008, 106)

### *Prescription*

Finally, once the entity has been appropriately treated, the processor would suggest certain actions to the client (typically involving physical gestures, visualization, and guided meditations) to symbolically conclude the healing process and prevent its recurrence in the future. This marks the last part of the cycle, which can also be understood as a prevention practice, in terms of Bandić (1980).

### Healing as a Ritual

For a deeper comprehension of the implications of these types of practices, I find it useful to consider these healing techniques as rituals (Spiro & D’Andrade 1958), “techniques for interacting with and influencing the supernaturals.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> About the concept of “supernatural” see footnote number 11.

and at the same time, as processes of ritualization, understood as “a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’” (Bell 1992, 74). In the case of Spiritual Technology, this is achieved through specific and stereotyped gestures and body positions, indicated for both the patient and the healer, along with the presence of specific words and dialogues. It is crucial for both parties to perform these actions with engagement to achieve the necessary symbolic efficacy.

Coinciding with his phenomenological perspective, I propose, agreeing with the author, that these ritualizations in practice, lead to the creation of ritual bodies: “holistic modes of embodiment and consciousness that absorb the cosmological narrative of the ritual, and naturally reproduce this cosmological narrative as the phenomenal field of the ritual setting. This in turn renders the reality of ritual intelligible, constituting it as a meaningful context for action and reflection” (Lycourinos 2017, 72). This suggests the presence of a specific knowledge unique to this group, shaping a manner of inhabiting and conceiving not only one’s own body but also the universe that surrounds it. Therefore, from a Merleau-Pontian perspective, we can affirm that the healing practices of Spiritual Technology entail a distinctive and particular way of being-in-the-world (1968), as these practices involve an intertwining of the individual existence with the larger cosmic order in which these “entities” are found. This fusion between the personal and the cosmic spheres echoes the author’s notion of the “flesh” (1968) understood as the interplay between the subjective and objective worlds, where the body is not just a passive object but an active agent in the creation and understanding of reality.

## Conclusion

When approaching a holistic study of any religious phenomenon, the conceptions surrounding the body, healing, health and well-being should not be overlooked. These notions are a vital part of the cosmivision of a group, influencing the way they relate not only to themselves but also to the Universe surrounding them. Health has always been intertwined with religious concerns, as religion is one of the interpretative frames through which social groups conceive themselves and their surroundings. When analyzing healing practices, it becomes one of the elements that give them significance. This importance becomes even more pronounced when working with New Age groups, as health and the body have a predominant role in their worldview, leading to some authors to consider health and healing as the soteriology of these groups.

Biomedicine stands as the prevalent discourse in contemporary Western society, characterized by its exclusion of supernatural and extrasensory elements

regarding health and healing. However, it is not the only perspective, as numerous groups contest and criticize this approach. Spiritual Technology is one of them. Founded in 1996 by the occultist and psychologist Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski, this group centres its practices on achieving well-being through several therapeutic and spiritual procedures.

The interpretation of health in New Age groups share several characteristics, such as a holistic interpretation of health that includes the mind and soul as interconnected spheres, the selective appropriation of elements and discourses of other traditions, an energetic conception of the cosmos, and a critical viewpoint towards biomedicine, portraying it as insufficient for focusing solely on the physical aspects of illness. Illness and health are also negotiated senses, without a fixed meaning but rather an agreed-upon one between the patient and the healer, with both actors sharing responsibility regarding the healing process. As mentioned earlier, health and wellbeing play a pivotal role, which can be described as a cultural ideal – a pathway to achieving the best version of the self through prescribed practices, emotions and behaviours.

On a more theoretical level, this work views the body through a phenomenological lens as a psychophysical entity modelled by a psychophysical habitus shaped by experiences. The body is not merely an object in the world but a means of communication with it. Representations of the body in Slavinski's books also align with the concept of the "energetical micro and macro cosmos," a common approach in New Age groups, where human processes are analogous to cosmic processes but on a smaller scale.

Within this framework, Spiritual Technology conceives the body as formed by entities – agents both internal and external who correspond with the universe in general. Their equilibrium (or integration) plays a crucial role on the well-being of the patient. Therefore, illness is seen as a disruption of this equilibrium, with the patient potentially bearing different degrees of responsibility, especially when not following the prevention practices prescribed by the group (such the use of drugs, alcohol, invoking entities without proper knowledge or even undergoing total anaesthesia).

In Spiritual Technology's view, all entities depend on energy to exist, whether given by the patient or someone else, aligning with the energetical vision of the universe. Therefore, cures and healings should also be applied on an energetical level, utilizing both the body (stereotyped movements and physical procedures) and the mind (words, intentions, and imagination) as the mediating spheres.

Healing practices are understood as religious practices, categorized into prevention and remediation practices. Within the latter category, three stages can be found: diagnosis (determining the problem's cause), treatment (performing the healing act), and prescription (recommending further practices to avoid the situation from recurring). Because of their interaction with the supernatural sphere,

their distinction between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane,’ and the stereotyped, repetitive steps procedure, these practices can also be seen as rituals. In these rituals, it is crucial for both the patient and healer to fully engage in achieving the needed symbolic efficacy. We propose that, in the case of Spiritual Technologies, these ritual practices lead to the creation of ritual bodies—holistic ways of embodiment and consciousness following the cosmological narratives of the group. This process of creating ritual bodies is also deeply rooted in Bell’s concept of ritualization (1992), which she defines as a culturally strategic way of acting that differentiates certain activities from others, making them more significant. Through the repeated enactment of these practices, the body becomes a site of transformation, where the individual’s relationship to the self, the community, and the cosmos is renegotiated and reimagined. This conception of the body as a meaning-making space for experiencing life that transcends its physical limits can be also connected to Merleau Ponty’s concepts of flesh and being in the world.

Despite being considered an obscure factor in Serbian society, given its limited membership and non-mainstream status, Spiritual Technology’s proposition transcends being merely an “alternative” approach to healing. Through the creation of shared narratives on corporality, health, healing, and a comprehensive cosmovision of how the world operates, it provides its followers with a cognitive framework to contemplate and interact with the surrounding universe and with themselves. Therefore, we conclude that Spiritual Technology is a noteworthy subject for study regarding the formation of contemporary subjectivities.

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*Procesuiranje entiteta: prakse isceljivanja i koncepcije tela  
 u New Age grupi "Spiritualna tehnologija"*

Gotovo je nemoguće sprovesti holističko proučavanje bilo kog verskog fenomena bez uzimanja u obzir njegovog odnosa sa zdravljem, isceljenjem i telom. U slučaju Nev Age-a ili samoimenovanih "duhovnih" grupa, uloga zdravlja poprima još veći značaj, delujući kao soteriologija ili kulturni ideal. Ovaj članak govori o konceptima tela, isceljenja i blagostanja, kojih se pridržavaju članovi srpske grupe "duhovne tehnologije", koju je osnovao Živorad Mihailović Slavinski 1996. godine, i srodnim praksama. Zahvaljujući detaljnoj analizi različitih tekstova, čiji je autor Slavinski, isceliteljske prakse se smatraju verskim praksama podeljenim na preventivne i restorativne, kao i na njihove naredne faze (dijagnoza, lečenje i propisivanje lekova). Na osnovu energetskog pogleda na telo, gde su blagostanje i loša stanja pojmovi o kojima se neprestano raspravlja između iscelitelja i pacijenta, telo se shvata kao da se sastoji od entiteta koji su klasifikovani i podeljeni u smislu njihovog porekla i njihovog uticaja na pojedinca. Može se zaključiti da ove ritualizovane prakse doprinose stvaranju ritualnih tela, kao i opštih pojmova telesnosti, zdravlja, pa čak i opšteg pogleda na svet, služeći kao osnova za tumačenje interakcije sa sobom i svetom oko sebe i stoga igrajući važnu ulogu u oblikovanju savremene subjektivnosti.

*Ključne reči:* telo, isceljenje, New Age, novi verski pokreti, Srbija

*Traitement des entités: les pratiques de guérison et les conceptions du  
 corps dans le groupe New Age « Technologie spirituelle »*

Il est presque impossible de mener une étude holistique de n'importe quel phénomène religieux sans prendre en compte leur rapport avec la santé, la guérison, et le corps. Dans le cas du New Age ou des groupes « spirituels » autopromus, le rôle de la santé est encore plus grand, agissant comme soteriologie ou comme un idéal culturel. Cet article traite les concepts du corps, de la guérison et du bien-être, adoptés par les membres du groupe serbe « technologie spirituelle », fondé par Živorad Mihailović Slavinski en 1996, et les pratiques voisines. Grâce à une analyse détaillée des textes différents, dont l'auteur est Slavinski, les pratiques guérisseuses sont considérées comme des pratiques religieuses divisées en pratiques préventives et restauratrices, comme aussi en leurs phases suivantes (diagnostic, traitement et prescription des médicaments). À partir du

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regard énergétique sur le corps, où le bien-être et les malaises sont des notions dont on discute continuellement entre le guérisseur et le patient, le corps est compris comme s'il était constitué des entités classifiées et divisées du point de vue de leur origine et de leur influence sur l'individu. Il est possible de conclure que ces pratiques ritualisées contribuent à la création des corps rituels, comme également des concepts généraux de corporalité, de santé, et même d'une vision générale du monde, servant de base pour l'interprétation de l'interaction avec soi et le monde autour de soi et par conséquent jouant le rôle principal dans la formation de la subjectivité contemporaine.

*Mots clés:* corps, guérison, New Age, nouveaux mouvements religieux, Serbie

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