



**Gabriella Pusztai and Ágnes Lukács (eds):
Közösségteremtők – Tisztelgés a magyar
vallásszociológusok nagy nemzedéke előtt
(*In English: Creators of Communities:
Tribute to the Great Generation of Hungarian
Sociologists of Religion*)**

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Creators of Communities: Tribute to the Great Generation of Hungarian Sociologists of Religion was written in honour of Ferenc Gereben, István Kamarás, and Endre Nagy J., whose jubilee we are celebrating now and who undertook to render a kind of the summary of their life-work and life-philosophy for the present and future generations, on the pages of this book.

The editors, Gabriella Pusztai and Ágnes Lukács, paid special attention not only to the authors, who provided the high-quality intellectual content of the book, but they also looked at its layout, where – symbolically – a tree with deep and far-reaching roots, producing plenty of fruits, can be observed.

In this book, we can read the writings of the above mentioned three researchers, in the first place, composed in different but remarkable styles. Among others, we can get to know Ferenc Gereben, whose area of research was cultural behaviour, self-awareness, and value orientation. In the beginning, he was interested in arts and literature, but later, in the mid-1980s, he got more and more involved in the sociology of religion in addition to cultural sociology. One of his most important researches abroad (Gereben and Tomka 2000) was carried out by using the multidimensional scaling method (MDS). The research points out the positive connections of the various parameters of national identity and religiousness, as well as the nature of native and reading culture. In this work, the peaceful and harmonious self of a believer and researcher emerges, who is passing down his work to the younger generation and is soon resigning.

We can get to know the life-work of István Kamarás (OJD, Ordo Joculatorum Dei) in seventy concise lines containing thought-provoking metaphors and one-word renderings of his life-experience as well as expressions like “disabled youth,” “catcalled singing birds,” and “butterflies strung on leashes” (p. 21). It sets questions and visions to the reader about the historical and religious sociological past of the former 70 years. The researcher of sociology, assuming the role of a sociographer on occasions, lays the largest emphasis on the question “what could be,” one of the main results of which has become the invention and creation of subjects such as the knowledge of the human character and ethics. After his research into the environmental effects of the Catholic Church, which has been regarded by many as provocative, he carried out research into the latest Hungarian religious phenomena in an extraordinary way. In the course of time, he turned out to be a talented writer producing radio plays, fairy tales, and story-books. His important message as a deep believer is as follows: “Apart from God, nothing and nobody should be taken seriously....” (p. 27).

One of the most significant focal points of Endre Nagy J.’s work can be learnt about in the complex message of a philosophical study in which he attempts to interpret two relevant social problems. He examines two tendencies: on the one hand, how the various subsystems of society assume autonomy and how they get reified and, in response to the former, the individualism’s cult of self and revolt against society. The main message of his theoretical examination is boiled down to one thought-provoking sentence: “The holiness of Impersonal Order and the revolt of the subject” (p. 29). The first part of the study introduces the growing rule of the Impersonal Order, in other words, the reification of society as well as its becoming an autonomous entity: how the personal transcends itself and thereby becomes holy, dissolving in impersonal love. He refutes both from a religious and scientific standpoint the views according to which no brotherly communities based on the religion of love can be established under the above-mentioned social conditions. In the second part of his study, within the context of the effects of individualism, he explains man’s proclivity for weakness, which can cause man to fall into the “abyss” by standing against morality, a value-oriented life-style and by acting antisocially. Today’s Christians and Church have to face both these tendencies while looking for suitable solutions for the future. The author uses a well-selected special literature to introduce the two tendencies and to justify their hypotheses.

The next three chapters of the book introduce religious, educational, and youth sociological topics from home and abroad, based on the empirical research of two dozen scholars. The chapters are interspersed with references to valuable special literature. They are written in a pleasantly readable style.

The chapter entitled *Individual and communal religiousness* introduces the circle of young sociologists of religion and value, which is closely connected to the name of Ferenc Gereben. The organization FIVÉSZ (Fiatal Vallás és

Értékszociológusok. In English: Young Sociologists of Religion and Value) fulfils an especially important mission as it attempts to motivate the young generation to take an active part in public affairs, which is the basis of a democratic community.

In two further studies, we can read about the results of a research into the effectiveness of small religious communities, carried out with the survey method, on the one hand. They also offer intriguing information about another research done by conducting interviews about the religiousness of the elderly living in old people's homes. The two studies are concluded with a concise passage about learning and understanding, employing the technical terms of P. L. Berger's mythical matrix, which is in perfect accordance with the chronological arrangement of the chapter's studies. The passage, in effect, sums up the message of the previous chapters.

Further on, we can read about a remarkable rarity within the sociology of religion in a recent analysis of the original sin originating in a research data basis from before the turn of the millennium. It points out that there is no determining connection between the original sin and religiousness. Moreover, conservatism and traditionalism within a religious group accounts for the belief in the already mentioned dogma.

The chapter introducing the topic of individual and communal religiousness is concluded with two highly different studies. One of them presents the changes of youth religiousness derived from ISSP (International Social Survey Programme) and EVS (European Values Survey) examinations. This study shows the nature and measure of the religious practice of the youth from the beginning of the 90s to the end of the 2000s pointing out the decrease of religiousness among the youth but, at the same time, also reassuring us about the fact that several tight connections can be observed between the dimensions of religiousness with the young practising religion. This chapter is concluded with an impressive study presenting the motivations of the monastic profession as well as the circumstances of becoming a monk, and reflects the author's wide and firm knowledge of the subject. In relation to those who choose this profession, he points to certain influencing factors such as the religiousness of the parents, attending church services, and religious classes in childhood.

The chapter *Religiousness and education* focuses on higher education and on students. Each study, with almost no exception, presents an individual research analysis, which can, first of all, interest the young generation. Introducing special courses in higher education is a relevant subject because we can learn about differences in students deriving from belonging or not belonging to a denomination, for example, the performance characteristic of denominational students taking part in the research.

Although competence tests seem to be of crucial importance for those interested in public education, in the next study, the partial results of a special research give us an idea of the performance of church schools and their students as well as

about part of the factors lying behind the results. In essence, we can read a study made prior to the analysis of the results of competence tests done in church schools concentrating on forming further questions for research while providing a profound survey. The study presenting the further training of teachers after changing the schools' financial management takes us closer to teachers working in church schools who, according to the survey, are satisfied with their situation as they can take part in more trainings than before 2010.

Two other interesting studies take us to the international site of the PISA researches, presenting data from home on the knowledge of 15-year-old students, highlighting research data on understanding texts and good examples. We can also follow the research analysis of the reading and Internet habits of university students, where religiousness as a factor influencing these habits is given special emphasis.

The closing study of the chapter aptly evokes the Horthy era as well as the financing of denominational schools. The author does so rightly because the 1930s, similarly to the past few years, demanded an extensive re-planning in denominational financing as a result of the economic crisis.

The closing chapter is entitled *In minority or majority*, and in it first-rate studies give us an even closer look at the indices of the relation of university students to religion: we can see proven that if the younger one experiences the different rites of religiousness, the more certain the survival and preservation of religiousness in adulthood will be.

The study presenting the connections of religiousness and voluntarism abroad supplements well the previous studies as it emphasizes the positive effects of denominational diversity in relation to religious practice in the first place, which often results in voluntary work. We can also learn about the fact that religiousness inspires voluntarism; moreover, it is communal existence that gives voluntary work real impetus. The topic of the sociology of religion is completed with a study on the religiousness of gypsies. It presents their denominational division and its changes on the basis of two consensuses while creating a positive image of the growing number of gypsy communities and their members.

The closing study of the chapter illuminates the assessment of culture and its consequences on the basis of the value surveys in different countries.

This book on the sociology of religion puts together at least two dozen authors and fulfils its mission, and transcends the celebration of the anniversary of the great generation. It invites the reader onto a new road by reintroducing the forgotten topic of religiousness in order that the reader can get to know the current Hungarian and foreign tendencies in the individual and communal religiousness of the youth. In this way, the reader can gain an insight into the inner changes taking place in church schools after the change of their financial management and can take notice of the qualitative and quantitative transformation of the religiousness of denominational communities and individuals adhering to them as well.