

## Interreligious Dialogue in Anime: Future Perspectives for Interreligious Communication Research

**Valentina-Andrada MINEA**  
*University of Bucharest*  
[valentina.andrada.minea@gmail.com](mailto:valentina.andrada.minea@gmail.com)

---

**Abstract:** Japan, as a global soft power, conquers the world through the wise philosophy and mesmerizing art style that it combines in anime, gaining a growing number of fans from all over the world and of all ages. The effect of Japanese culture on the mentality of the young generation is becoming easier to notice. The cultural encounters that we have to face in a global era are an exciting challenge that we must understand and deal with. This article aims to discuss a future perspective for research in interreligious dialogue, based on popular culture. Why should we study anime and what kind of link can exist between it and interreligious dialogue? How does anime, as a global modern heritage, teach us to encounter interreligiousity?

**Keywords:** *anime, interreligious, dialogue, youth, mentality.*

### **Argument**

Once it began to enter the country, Japanese animation (anime) contributed to the emancipation of people from the communist bloc as a form of popular culture. As in discos Romanians were listening to foreign music more than to Romanian music, as well, they were reading foreign books and comics, including manga (Japanese comics based on which most of the animes are created). Even if back then, the influence of Japanese anime was not as vast as it is today, other types of Japanese culture were very appreciated in Romania. For example, Valentin Ceaușescu practiced Shotokan Karate (even if it was formally prohibited in Romania at that time), and Octavian Simu published high quality papers about Shamanism, Yōkai and Japanese culture in general, starting with 1984. After 1990, animes like Sailor Moon, Dragon Ball, Naruto, and many others were televised in Romania. So, being instilled with values such as freedom, friendship (against the idea of denouncing your friend to the party), mystics (word prohibited even in faculties of theology during communism, where its name had to be replaced with ‘moral education’) and other similar values that are promoted by the innocent Japanese animations, people felt that they need to change the way they live as a society. So, we can say that Japanese animation contributed to a change in the mentality of society, helping it to become moral again, after the Revolution. Therefore, if animes helped people to know how to live better in post-communism does it means that they contributed post-Christianity as well? And if so, what can religion do about this?

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Occident began to live in a post-Christian world, even if it was still influenced by people's religious beliefs. The contact with the East has become increasingly common for Europeans, particularly in this century, when people are becoming more interested in Oriental religions such as Buddhism and ancient practices such as Wicca and Shamanism, which are heavily mediated by oriental media and cultural products.

“Whereas missiology had traditionally been understood as the study of how to relate Christian belief and practice to non-Western cultures, there is now an increasing interest in the notion of a missiology for Western culture. For if Western culture is no longer fundamentally oriented around the concepts and practices of Christian faith, then this raises questions for the Western Church as to how it relates to the post-Christian culture within which it now finds itself” (Lynch 2005:33). Due to this reason, a first step to make into understanding the world they live in, is for Christians, to start dialogue with alterity. With the legalization of religious pluralism in the post-communist area, communication with those of other religions has become necessary in Romania as well: “The need for interreligious dialogue, as emphasized at the Canberra Assembly (Australia, 1991), was also linked to the world's new political relationships, particularly after the fall of the communist bloc in Eastern Europe.” (Boldișor 2015: 220).

As Paul Tillich said, since any valuable culture has an ‘ultimate concern’, Christianity should start its dialogue with the alter based on spirituality, religion, morality, and the ultimate concerns of each culture. An easy way to find out the ultimate truths for a generation is to check on culture they appreciate the most. So, since Japanese anime is so popular nowadays everywhere in the world, a good incursion in what are the concerns of generations X, Y, Z, A is to investigate anime. This is a common point to be discussed by religions because of all the things we stated out above, and, because interreligious dialogue is also present in anime and theologians should see what anime is teaching fans about the interreligious communication.

### **Interreligious dialogue: definitions, background, and perspectives**

Dialogue is a fundamental asset of existence. Everything that exists, exists in dialogue, in a kind of communication. Christian dogma considers that in the beginning, people were all in communion one with another and them with everything else. “Dialogicality is the *sine qua non* of human mind. Dialogicality is the capacity of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of *Alter*.” (Marková 2003: xiii). On the same thought, Leonard Swidler says that “the very existence of our humanity is dialogical, and, a fulfilled human life is the highest expression of the Cosmic Dance of Dialogue (Swidler 2014:16). Neo-Kantians, such as Martin Buber, see the Ego-Alter relationship as the foundation of the dialogical principle. Other philosophers, such as Rosenzweig, believe that there must be something else between “me” and “you” a tension that is the true basis of dialogue. Rosenstock is even more specific, stating that the basis of the

dialogical principle is religion and the dialogue between religions (Rosenstock-Huessy 1969).

While ‘interreligious dialogue’ is a syntagma used to express the communication between members and officiants of different religions, ‘intrareligious’ or ‘interconfessional’ dialogue refers to the communication between denominations of the same religion. So, in this paper I am approaching dialogue between different religions, rather than denominations. Interreligious dialogue is different from the ‘transreligious’ and ‘cross-religious’ dialogue. Transreligious is often confounded for cross-religious dialogue. Cross-religious refers rather to a syncretic mix of elements, that is one of the things that we can find in animes, but this is a different topic to approach that goes beyond the limits of this study. Transreligious will be used here rather when intending to describe path to other fields, beyond religion. ‘Interreligious’ suggests that religions should meet somewhere in between, so, we deduce, it targets religious pluralism. As a mention, we have to say that ‘interreligious dialogue’ was used also to refer to the encounters between Christian denominations, but that matter is totally different since it targets the unity of the Church, not pluralism. So, I consider the terms should be used more carefully from now on and to describe the communication between Christian denominations we shall use words like ‘intrareligious’ or ‘interconfessional’.

Interreligious communications, that aims at pluralism, was a world reality ever since the foundation of prereligious that each tribe had. In *ilo tempore*, only those born in a tribe could be protected by a certain totem, for example, so no one was intending to convert the other. They were all respecting alterity’s faith. Nowadays, there are still many religions that do not intend to make new attendees apart of their born ones. The oldest Abrahamic religion that we have today, Judaism, does not proselyte and it barely accepts people to become Jews. The same goes for Hinduism (in some areas, at least). The practices and traditions of these religions have more sense for those whose history is linked to them, since many celebrations are actually commemorative for their ancestors’ events. So not being born in that religions would make you celebrate something that has no real relevance to you. It is an honour to be part of those religions, but it is a privilege only for those who are bounded by blood with their meanings. On the opposite side were the religions that were trying to make new attendees, in the aims of saving their souls, due to their own faith. This brought a lot of problems to societies, so, nowadays, religions are talking about pluralism. There are also religions like Buddhism or Daoism which do not try to convince anyone about anything, but they are glad to show to the others their path. This is the way most opened to pluralism and the one all religions tend to.

Therefore, in 1893 is brought to life the Parliament of World’s Religions, in Chicago. “The Parliament was planned as part of the Chicago World’s Fair, or World’s Columbian Exposition, which celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ discovery of America.” (Harvard University 2022) The participants, representants of many religions, discussed about how they should relate to such a pluralistic world. The meetings took place in the Art Institute, so, since its official institutional beginning, interreligious dialogue was strongly related to art and culture.

After the Second Council of Vatican (1962–1965), when Catholic Church decided publicly to start aiming at pluralism in a dialogue with other faiths, many scientists started to write on this topic and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was brought to life. First decades after Vatican II most of the papers on this matter were approaching reasons for making interreligious dialogue, mainly asking at the question ‘why is it important?’ Its importance is obvious, as a social need for world peace, but once it has been stated out, the next question that came in front was ‘what should we discuss about?’ since most of them had not enough knowledge on the other religions even though they were all aiming at peace.

Nostra Aetate stated out that Christians should live in harmony with other religions and appreciate everything that is true and moral in their behaviours (Anon 2019: 221-225). Therefore, the research topics proposed the most to be discussed were: theology, pluralism and religious challenges today, peace, hospitality, fraternity of humankind, love and friendship, motherhood, self, freedom (Tamer and Männle 2019), wisdom, mystic experience, dialectic dialogue used regarding soteriology, common good and education, ritual participation and so on.

On the catholic thread, acad. Wilhelm Dancă, approaches in a study the subject of reason and faith in Abrahamic religions, concluding that “If truth is path (as Jesus said that He is the path, the truth and the life), this means that the stake of interreligious dialogue and of fraternal relations between Abraham’s children is in education of faith based on truth and opened to seek the truth.” (Dancă 2021: 47) In previous studies, he considers that “interreligious dialogue does not have a single meaning, because in the sacred books of other religions can be found aspects of the divine mystery less highlighted by Christian revelation.” (Dancă 2015: 52) Here he proposes as a topic of interreligious discussion the topic of the divine mystery, also in the context of the truth, which remains his main direction of research regarding the interreligious dialogue. Before him, another Catholic theologian educated by Jesuits, Hans Küng, advocated universal ethics and the search for truth as ideal for dialogue with other religions because, he says, “dialogue and witness are not mutually exclusive”(Küng 2013: 251).

Leonard Swidler, who appreciated Küng, develops a method of interreligious dialogue that focuses on the pursuit of truth, good, beauty, spirituality, and unity. Swidler’s method of interreligious dialogue is based on ‘Deep-dialogue/ Critical-Thinking/ Emotional-Intelligence/ Competitive-Cooperation’. This is the most authentic way to be human in his opinion, so, since dialogue starts from seeking the truth, we should firstly be true as humans, then interact with the others to learn about them and their perspective of truth. Not to teach them, but to learn from them. He states out many perspectives on the concept of truth (Swidler 2014:153-156):

- historical (as a concept is considered true in a certain period);
- intentional (a concept is true in a certain context);
- interpretative e view of truth (because everyone understands things in their own way);

- dialogical understanding of truth (we learn being in dialogue, in contact with the external reality);
- language-limited view of truth (words are not enough to express everything and, as Wittgenstein said, the limits of language are the limits of the world);
- perspectival view of truth (every statement about the meaning of something is perspectival, depends on the culture, class, sexual and so forth perspective of the perceiver). This idea is based on Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge. Therefore, if we discuss with the others about truth and truth involves and leads to knowledge, and knowledge is perspectival, depending on the culture, in this transcultural world from where do we find out what people consider to be true?!

### **Anime as a cultural phenomenon that exposes contemporary society's truths: a topic for interreligious dialogue**

As a phenomenon that creates transcultural heterotopias and homologies, anime is a good subject to research if we want to answer the question above. But how can anime help us find out what are the values and ultimate concern of anime fandom? Japan, as a global soft power, conquers the world through the wise philosophy and mesmerizing art style that it combines in anime, gaining a growing number of fans from all over the world and of all ages. The effect of Japanese culture on the mentality of the young generation is becoming easier to notice. I found out through ethnographic research, that I did in some online communities, that compared to their parents, anime fans' values are a little different, their opinions and what they consider the truth is different. Even their conception on the 'ultimate concern' is shaped differently, being more relative than what they have been taught by their parents to believe (Minea 2021a). These things may facilitate interreligious dialogue. But for a better understanding of this topic, let's see, firstly, what is anime and the importance it has.

### **What do we talk about when we talk about anime?**

Japanese animation can be classified as a (popular) cultural product: "What makes Japan newly successful in its marketing of games, comics, and cartoons is not simply technological or business prowess, but what some call the 'expressive strength' (*hyo-genryoku*) of Japanese creators. According to some, the stories, images, and ideas generated by these products constitute an 'international common culture' in which Japan's contribution is both significant and historically unprecedented." (Allison 2003:383).

But anime is not only culture, it's also a beautiful art and an industry (Clements 2013), and it's global: "The Japanese national cultural identity put forward by anime is increasingly, and perhaps paradoxically, a global one. In this regard anime is perhaps the ideal aesthetic product for the contemporary period, at the forefront of creating an alternative cultural discourse that goes beyond the traditional categories of "native" or "international" to participate in what may well be a genuinely new form of global culture. This is partly due to the distinctive properties of the animation medium itself, a medium that is genuinely unique.

Animation, perhaps from its very inception, has existed as an alternative form of representation, a representation that privileges very different properties and conventions from that of live action.” (Napier 2005: 292).

As part of this global culture, we can conclude that anime is an interesting phenomenon and a world’s heritage that involves art, culture, philosophy, religion, science, Anime aims to offer a world for escapism to the actual generation, while also trying to state what does it mean to be human, or real, or in an attempt to answer hard questions that influence the way reality is perceived.

### **Why should religion specialists research on anime?**

My research starts from the premise that in order to be effective with the masses today, interreligious communication should inculturate popular culture. The reason why we must teach intercultural and interreligious understanding to the masses is to enhance world peace. As a global need, interreligious dialogue is promoted through media and cultural products. Discussing interreligiosity on matters related to the popular culture is an important key in achieving harmony in the world. Previously to teaching something to the others, we must learn, so, firstly, we should decide how each religion relates to spiritual contents in artistic and cultural products like anime. The cultural product that I choose to approach in this paper is Japanese animation (anime) because this century is own by the visual power and anime is one of the most popular visual (actually multimodal) product consumed all over the world. We are all under a kind of genjutsu (illusion), to say it in anime language. Visual art is leading the world. Japan created emoji (emotion characters/letters that we use on social networks), and Japan gave us Pikachu, so people can run after Pokémons everywhere in the world. Japan is providing us with anime and other beautiful (especially visual) art and young generation uses more than ever visual elements in all they are doing: drawing, social media, teaching, learning and so on. Video-based social-applications have a terrifying success these days, and, anyway, we cannot escape visual content. Publicity is more video than ever, and it is displayed everywhere, beautiful pictures and videos are everywhere. Even learning adopted this multi-modal way that involves audio and video. Especially during the pandemic educational organisations used media for distance-teaching and it seems very efficient, because young people are always in a hurry and only keep focus if they are shown something that moves. Films, cartoons, video games and animes are also very highly sought today.

Facing such a challenge today, religions should firstly approach visual content while discussing about their inter-relations because most of cultures have (at least) a beautiful art that was born from religion and we all need to understand how young generations relate to it and what does beauty mean to them, what art means for them, what is rising their spirit nowadays.

At the Second Council of Vatican, was declared that “the Church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids which belong to the general heritage of man and which are of great influence in forming souls and molding men, such as the media of communication, various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools.” (Pope Paul VI 1965).

Here it is stated that global heritage is highly appreciated by the Church, which tries to involve it into their work for people's spiritual growth. As we stated before, anime is a global heritage and a work of art, a cinematographic product.

In *Inter Mirifica*, Cinematography was supported by the Council as follows: "The production and showing of films that have value as decent entertainment, humane culture, or art, especially when they are designed for young people, ought to be encouraged and assured by every effective means. This can be done particularly by supporting and joining in projects and enterprises for the production and distribution of decent films, by encouraging worthwhile films through critical approval and awards, by patronizing or jointly sponsoring theatres operated by Catholic and responsible managers." (Pope Paul VI 1963). They did not just say it, but also did it. It is widely known that Vatican asked Osamu Tezuka to create an anime based on the Bible, so today we have an anime on the Old Testament stories (T.O.O. 2021).

Besides all these arguments for involving anime in theologians' preoccupations, we might also consider that we need to approach anime because it is, first of all, beautiful!

Following Pope John Paul, the Second, father Dancă says that he sees great advantages in the dialogue between art and religion because, firstly, art develops the capacity for astonishment, admiration or wonder and thus introduces man to the world of mysteries. Then, art accustoms man to the world of gratitude and gives birth to and maintains solidarity with other people but also with the transcendent (Dancă 2015:83). "In short, with ontological faith, one anticipates encountering God in the beautiful; with moral faith, one anticipates encountering God in the good. And while these two types of faith tend to pull in different directions, Tillich insists that each one is in need of the counterbalancing effect of the other. For religious faith to thrive, it must strike a balance between the moral and the ontological. Because God is both beautiful and good, at least as evoked in the experience of the holy, the human response of faith must take account of both." (Cobb 2005: 110).

Secondly, "On closer inspection, anime has the potential to challenge traditional notions of society, identity, art and critical thinking. This potential is waiting to be met, by critics and scholars as well as by anime viewers." (Berndt 2010:97).

Visions on reality and how it is perceived are a concern of the world's religious philosophies, and new ways of relating to reality are often proposed in anime, as described below in a summa cum laude PhD Thesis: "Understanding popular culture as a force that generates heterotopias per se, but also emotional heterotopias, in particular, opens up new avenues of research, making the analysis of cumulative fandom productive in this light. Real-invented spaces, especially in the context of globalization and digitalization in which we find ourselves, seem to be multiplying, and popular culture is one of the major keys to understanding. If we add to this equation the world of video games and advertising with its augmented realities and virtual realities (let's not forget the mass production of virtual headphones like Oculus Rift), then the following research should address the issue of measuring reality itself, beyond the close to ubiquity 'ideal worlds'. Being a fan has become a natural thing, and escapism is

now taking place in the digital environment, which is becoming a real-invented medium that functions as an emotional heterotopia, in turn, interrupting everyday life at every step through devices that are always connected. always at hand. Paradoxically, we 'run away' from the "reality" in everyday life, to be caught up in the digital everyday life, where popular culture and other types of culture mingle to confusion, and fandom is the prolific ground for observing and understanding this 'phenomenon'." (Teodorescu 2019: 233).

Thirdly, I want to discuss the arguments Gordon Lynch gives us for approaching popular culture in general. He says that there are 4 main arguments for scholars of religion to approach popular culture (Lynch 2005: 20-42): 1. it helps with studying religion in relation to the everyday life; 2. it is necessary to study the religious function of popular culture; 3. it has missiological engagements; 4. Some elements of popular culture such as texts can be used for theological reflection. All from above is important motivation for studying popular culture, especially if we think that he seen form before the transcendent potential of popular culture to rise people souls as much as they can turn it into a religion (which keep on happening these centuries, from Maradona's Church to Jedi Church).

### **Interreligious dialogue in anime**

Anime contains a significant amount of religious content. This content is extremely diverse, typically exposing local religious backgrounds for each location where the action takes place. This means that characters in the series will have to interact with people from various cultures and religions. Apart from discussions, there are three major ways interreligious communication is depicted in anime:

*1. Animes that present symbols or concepts from the perspective of a religion (real or fictional), but which are, in fact, universal (in real life and in the series' religious universe).*

In this category we can approach many concepts that most religions agree with, like love, friendship, atonement, and many others, but one that is very occurrent in anime, that is more religious than moral concepts I suggested before, is the Tree of Life. This mythological element is presented in many animes as a basis for creation for that religious and cultural universe constructed in the series. As an example, I will investigate the Tree of Life in Naruto.

A reference symbol of Narutian mythology is that of the Divine Tree. The Tree of Life is one of the most famous mythological elements, present in most cultures and religions, under various names and with different peculiarities (Minea 2021b).

Naruto's Divine Tree is associated with one of the most important aspects of Naruto's mythology, namely, the beginning of the ninja world. It is presented the story of Kaguya, a rabbit goddess (mythological symbol relevant to Asia) who came from heaven to take care of the Tree of Life, which bears fruit with chakra (here, the term chakra refers to a special energy) once every 1000 years. At one point, Kaguya takes it and eats it, using the power gained to try to stop the



fighting between people. The divine tree is trying to take back its energy, so Kaguya has to send people to the Tree, where their energy is absorbed.

When Hagoromo, one of Kaguya's sons finds out, he decides to separate the Divine Tree into nine *bijū* (尾獸tailed beasts), and then the people in the cocoons regain their vitality. He marries the girl he was in love with and has two children: Indra and Ashura.

Hagoromo divides the power of the divine tree (Gedo statue with 10 tails) into 9 different spirits, which he will guard in various corners of the world when they grow up. The nine *bijū* are in ascending order of the tails: Shukaku, Matatabi, Isobu, Son Gokū, Kokuō, Saiken, Chōmei, Gyūki and Kurama. Because of the despiritualization of people, they have become misunderstood and oppressed, manipulated, and used by people for selfish things like winning wars. In order to better control their power, they were sealed in humans. These human hosts are called *jinchuriki*.

These animals are inspired by mythologies such as the Japanese one, in which the motifs of magical animals common. Even if the European elements are definitely present as well, it goes beyond the purpose of this study to analyse them now, so I will skip it.

So, when the Forth Ninja War broke out, Naruto did his best to not let the villains touch the tailed beasts they wanted to manipulate for recreating the Tree of Life and controlling it to induce to everyone an Infinite Dream.

The idea of the infinite dream, *Mugen Tsukuyomi*, is also linked here to the Divine Tree, which, controlled by the eye power of those with *Sharingan*, can induce anyone who sees the projection of the technique on the moon, a continuous sleep, in which dreams become vivid dreams and the life force is absorbed by the Tree of Life.

During the Fourth Great Ninja War, the Akatsuki organization wanted to rebuild the Divine Tree to use this *genjutsu*. The implementation of this technique was, in the mindset of Akatsuki, an attempt to free the world from suffering, because in a dream, everyone lived the most valuable desires.

This is presented as a utopia in Naruto and freeing the world from this danger is the main reason why the Allied Forces are fighting together during the Fourth Great Ninja War. Other reasons include the protection of *Jinchurikis*. In order to be able to implement *Mugen Tsukuyomi*, it was first necessary to collect energy from all the *bijū*, which would have led to the death of the *Jinchuriks*, who die as soon as the tailed beast is extracted from them.

These shinobi are not from a single nation, nor from a single village. While having to face such a global problem, shinobis from all villages from all Five Great Nations collaborated to protect the World.

They were practitioners of different religions, not clearly stated, but inspired from religions from real world. We might say (even if it might be exaggerated to choose just one religion for each area) that Naruto's village (Konoha) was Shinto (it is shown that Uchiha Clan from Konoha had a Shinto Shrine and their funerals follow the Shinto-Buddhist way), Mist Village is Christian (the only village where crosses are present in funerals. Also there is an arch where typical Romanian funeral rite is exposed), sand village has African

religions, and so on. The thing they all believe in, despite of chakra, transcendent, afterlife, and some other values like this, is the Tree of Life as a basis of creation, even if it is firstly presented from Naruto's religious background. So here, aiming to save the world, they collaborate. Naruto shows them the real meaning of Friendship (which is also an occurring theme in Jesuit writings), enduring everything to save and protect his friends. Everyone becomes his friend for he almost died to save them. This bond makes him very powerful. So, this power of love and friendship was used by him to create bonds and save the world. All these were possible because they were under threat, and they all believed in the Divine Tree. So, emphasizing this, he created harmony in the world, appreciating the faith of the others (because each village was rather specialised in a certain technique and had their own secrets of power related to tradition, which were important for saving the world). After the Forth Ninja War, villages never fight one against other, but only one for another. As we can see, Naruto leads to interfaith and intercultural peace and harmony, using a feminine type of discourse (Tannen 2007).

*2. Animes that show how the concepts of certain religions are inculturable by others.*

To keep this short, I will approach Naruto here, as well, but discussing the case of Itachi Uchiha.

Regarding the universality of the moral content in Naruto, from the many universal values it promotes, such as love, friendship, the importance of life and others, I choose to give the wonderful example of Itachi, one of the wisest and most beloved characters in the series. The author attributes to him the role of talking about self-research, the importance of which is discussed by the leaders of all religions. Itachi says in ep.337 of the Naruto Shippuden series that: "He who forgives and knows his true self is the strongest. It's okay to imitate someone you respect, but don't rebuild after him! If you have linked your value to something external to yourself, even something admirable and praiseworthy, then you become nothing. Those who cannot know themselves will lose." We can understand from here the author's beautiful exhortation not to get lost in the idolatry of his work, something less common among creators and truly magnificent.

Even though Itachi's appearance and some of his abilities are inspired by shamanism (in some places, ancient shamans attested to genjutsu-like powers or believed that the soul could come out of the body through the mouth in the form of a raven (Simu 2018b), an animal with an important role and in certain shamanic myths of creation), we see that Itachi promotes Taoist philosophy in his teachings to others, the above also being inspired by a poem from Tao Te Ching, about the importance of self-knowledge (Cleary 1992: 29). Before leaving Konoha, Itachi frequented the Shinto temple of his clan, to which he still shows great respect. This situation suggests the compatibility between Shinto and Tao, which is not at all surprising, considering the principle of harmony with the whole universe, supported by both Taoism and Shintoism.

Although Itachi made a mistake during his life, the series shows his repentance, full of devotion to the village he loves and what is the cause for

which he sacrificed himself. Thus, we see how Itachi fully assumes everything he did, at one point even returning from the dead, to save the world. These references to the Resurrection must remind us of the glorious Resurrection of Christ who took up His Cross and rose again, coming to save the world through His Birth, Death, and Resurrection.

### *3. Animes that discuss concepts through characters of different religions*

The third category that I stated above is that of animes that obviously show people of different religions discussing. There are many animes to be considered here: Shaman King, Saint Young Men, Earth Maiden Arjuna and so on.

For example, Saint Young Men, is about Jesus and Buddha coming in vacation on Earth and while they are trying to decently relax, many elements with religious content appears. When they see water, they explain in a funny way the purifying power of water in Buddhism and Christianity in certain celebrations. Even if the graphic is very atypical and the movies are satiric, it has a good interreligious catechetical role. Regarding Satire, in an interesting study, Terry Ray Clark says that religious “satire holds the potential to improve the world by abolishing what is believed to be a false and foolish tradition.” (Clark 2012: 16). He states out in this study, also that he is a teaching a course on this matter, and he is trying by this to make his students think more critically, following Griffin’s theory regarding this rhetoric functions of satire.

More serious series like Earth Maiden Arjuna suggest the compatibility between Hinduism and Christianity when it comes to transfiguration of creation. And Shaman King shows that people from all religions are trying to become one with the Great Spirit, and in the end, even if the chaos will lead the world, becoming one with the Great Spirit, religions will be there to make them a decent Shaman King. Each religion with its own assets and ways, only in their diversity, will be able to reach the Great Spirit and only with the power of love, the power of the Great Spirit will be used properly, for a better world. This is actually the main idea of the interreligious meetings that take place nowadays.

## **Conclusions**

Anime, as a global heritage that is becoming increasingly popular among the younger generation, is an important factor in understanding contemporary societal values. It also offers distinct perspectives on reality and the transcendent. Japanese animation teaches fans how to relate to others in different ways, and it promotes intercultural and interreligious peaceful dialogue. Interfaith dialogue seeks the ultimate truth, which can be found in all eras’ cultural matters. Nowadays, culture is heavily reliant on visual media products, one of which is anime, although anime has transcended it by becoming a very intriguing phenomenon. Anime fandom is displaying signs of new ideologies, which are primarily composed of a syncretic and heterotopic mix of elements, resulting in a transcultural homology that represents an intriguing challenge for religious mission. As a result of these considerations, we conclude that popular culture in general, and anime in particular, is an important topic to be discussed among members and officials from various

religions, in their efforts to establish global peace. Global peace begins with global heritages, global culture, widely accepted notions, popular culture, and, implicitly, anime.

### WORKS CITED

- Allison 2003: A. Allison, "Portable Monsters and Commodity Cuteness: Poke´mon as Japan's New Global Power", in *Postcolonial Studies*, 6(3), pp. 381–395, available online: <https://web.mit.edu/condry/Public/cooljapan/Feb23-2006/Allison-03-Postcol-Portble.pdf>.
- Anon. 2019: Anon., *Conciliul Ecumenic Vatican II: Constituții, Decrete, Declarații*, București, Arhiepiscopiei Romano-Catolice.
- Berndt, 2010: J. Berndt, "Postcritical Anime: Observations on Its "Identities" within Contemporary Japan", in "Osaka: The International School Office Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences", Osaka City University.
- Boldișor 2015: A. Boldișor, *Importanța și acualitatea dialogului intereligios pentru lumea contemporană: istorie, perspective, soluții*, Craiova, Editura Mitropolia Olteniei.
- Clark 2012: T. R. Clark, *Saved by Satire?*, in *Understanding religion and popular culture: theories, themes, products and practices*, New York: Routledge, pp. 13-27.
- Cleary 1992: T. Cleary, *The Essential of Tao: An Initiation into the Heart of Taoism Through the Authentic Tao Te Ching and the Inner Teachings of Chuang-Tzu*, New York, Castle Book.
- Clements 2013: J. Clements, *Anime: A History*, London, Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute.
- Cobb 2005: K. Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Dancă 2015: W. Dancă, *Teologia are nevoie de filosofie? Contribuții la înțelegerea conceptului de teologie fundamentală*, Iași, Sapientia.
- Dancă 2021: W. Dancă, *Și cred și gândesc: viitorul unui dialog controversat*, ediția a II-a, București, Spandugino.
- Harvard University 2022: Harvard University. "Parliament of Religions, 1893", in *The Pluralism Project*, available online: <https://pluralism.org/parliament-of-religions-1893>, retrieved 1 May 2022.
- Küing 2013: H. Küing, *Ceea ce cred*, Iași, Institutul European.
- Lempert, 2015: M. Lempert, *Discourse and Religion*, in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by D. Tannen, H. Hamilton, and D. Schiffrin. Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, pp. 902-914.
- Lynch 2005: G. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.
- Marková 2003: I. Marková, *Dialogicality and Social Representations: The Dynamics of Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen 2007: Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, New York, Morrow.
- Napier 2005: S. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, (Rev. ed.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Penaskovic 2016: R. Penaskovic, *Interreligious Dialogue in a Polarized World*, in *Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by V. Latinovic, P. Phan, and G. Mannion, New York, Palgrave Macmillan US, pp. 29-40.
- Phillips 2016: C. Phillips, *Cultural-Linguistic Resources for Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue*, in *Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by V. Latinovic, G. Mannion, and P. Phan, New York, Palgrave Macmillan US, pp. 15-28.
- Pope Paul VI 1963: Pope Paul VI, *Inter Mirifica*, in *Vatican II*, available online: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19631204\\_inter-mirifica\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html), retrieved 7 May 2022.

- Pope Paul VI 1965: Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*, in *Vatican II*, available online: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html), retrieved 7 May 2022.
- Rosenstock-Huessy, 1969: E. Rosenstock-Huessy, *Judaism Despite Christianity: The Letters on Christianity and Judaism Between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig*. Alabama: Univ of Alabama Press.
- Simu 2018: O. Simu, *Șamanismul: Călătorie între două lumi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, București, Herald.
- Swidler 2014: L. Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Tamer and Männle 2019: G. Tamer and U. Männle, (eds). *The Concept of Freedom in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Berlin Boston, De Gruyter.
- Tannen 2007: D. Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, New York, Morrow.
- Teodorescu 2019: A. Teodorescu, *Japanmania în spațiul cultural românesc*, București, Editura Universității din București.
- T.O.O. 2021: T.O.O., "In The Beginning. The Bible Stories", in *Tezuka Osamu Official*, available online: <https://tezukaosamu.net/en/anime/49.html>, retrieved 15 August 2021.

