



AN UNEXPECTED COMEBACK

- RÖGN -

A SELF HELP GROUP OF ANCIENT GODS

Rögn

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1.

The only orientation in the dark is the green illuminated boxes of the emergency exits.

It's night.

The sounds that creep into the event hall through the Grand Hotel's lush façade and windows are absorbed by thick curtains. Above the ascending rows of chairs where tomorrow more than twelve hundred people will be placed according to a precise choreography, a slight smell of carpet cleaner still hovers.

Nothing stirs in the hall. Tomorrow the twelfth edition of the McP "Milano catwalks Paris" fashion show will be held here. Above the gables and towers of the building the full moon is shifting through the sky and in another smaller ballroom a Russian wedding is taking place, unnoticed by thick walls and ramified corridors.

The front rows of chairs are already covered with precious handmade cards encribed with the names of famous people, while quite a few uninvited guests have already made their way into the hall.

When a few hours ago the twilight retreated over western India, a huge peacock rose from there into the sky, turned into the tone D in one turn and flew towards the setting sun. At about the same time, fish in the Atlantic Ocean were amazed when a swarm of B-tones rushed past them towards Gibraltar, which they mistook for swordfish because of its speed. From Spain, goats in a chain mowed one F further over the Pyrenees along the French coast.

The D first landed on the roof of the hotel and found its way through the ventilation shafts into the interior of the hall. The B sloshed onto the beach, then onto the promenade and flowed through window cracks into the hall, where it shook itself dry. Due to the lack of goats in the immediate vicinity of the hotel, the F had had to take such a run-up from the mountains that it blew as F sharp through the narrow keyholes into the hall and had to calm down by a half tone.

A subtle movement began to take hold of the hall, the plant decorations of the column capitals began to roll out their fern leaves and a gentle revitalization settled over plaster and stone. From the gold leaf of the decorations, insects detached themselves and dispersed like fireflies. The tones swelled on, and out of the fruit high above beings began to peel out, pushing the acanthus leaves aside and sliding down the

columns. They were amorphous, partly removed from description by words or pre-verbal. They greeted each other in small groups, exchanged pleasantries and then sat down on chair backs, window frames or in the air.

On the stage around the lectern the floor began to warm up until it changed color and small flames became visible. It became brighter in the hall. A hunting scene appeared on the wall, reminiscent of cave paintings, and on the ceiling a cuneiform writing pushed the plaster apart.

Then with one blast, all the doors seemed to open at the same time, a window opened and blew the curtain in. Several groups of people entered, some with entourage and flute players, carried by slaves, small flashes of lightning in their hands, some antique-clothed, some naked, with animals in between, either as an attribute or the center of their own flock, a golden boar, two ravens, cats and lions. All of them took their seats in the front rows, one after the other, their togas or fish tails between the armrests.

Meanwhile, in the flames on the podium stood a female figure with a long robe and an excessive kohl rim around her eyes. She had a hair clip in her mouth while she straightened her piled up curls and waited until everyone had found their place. The last to enter the hall was a red-bearded man in Viking dress who sat down at the edge. He had got drunk in a bar in the old town and almost missed the beginning of the meeting. The taxi driver thought he was a bachelor party tourist.

The lady on the stage stepped up to the lectern.

"Good evening, fellow FGA members."

"Good evening Hera!" it chorused back.

"I'm glad you all came again, welcome to the newcomers, and a special thanks tonight to our local deity Nike...", she glanced through the rows of the audience and briefly waved at a lady in the middle of the front row, wearing huge sunglasses and a perfect smile. "And as always at the beginning of a meeting I want to read our program to remind us all why we are here." She took a tablet, held it quite far in front of her eyes and began to read:

"The Fallen Gods Anonymous community is open to all entities from whose worship and cult people have turned away. Our quest for healing is based on the following 12step program:

First: We admit that we are powerless in the face of our dependence on external attention in the form of cult, worship and faith - and can no longer cope with our existence.

Second: We recognize that a power within ourselves that does not come from outside can restore our mental health and authority.

Third: We choose to take care of our inner authority ourselves.

Fourth: We make a fearless and thorough analysis of the human world.

Fifth: We admit our failures to ourselves and to another god or goddess unveiled.

Six: We are ready to eliminate all errors.

Seventh: We humbly eliminate our shortcomings.

Eighth: We make a list of beings we have harmed and are willing to make amends to them.

Ninth: We make amends with these beings - wherever possible - unless we hurt others.

Tenth: We continue the fearless and thorough analysis within ourselves.

Eleventh: We seek to deepen the conscious connection with the inner power through introspection and reflection for our own knowledge and for the will and power to implement it.

Twelfth: After we experience a spiritual awakening through these steps, we will pass on this message to fallen gods and goddesses and orient our daily lives according to these principles."

She folded the cover over her tablet and placed it on the desk as "Thank you, Hera!" echoed back from the meeting in front of her.

"All those who are here with us tonight for the first time, please give me a sign," Hera continued and let her eyes wander through the hall.

All present looked around curiously and stared at the single shyly raised hand. It belonged to a girl in her late teens, in a coarse and rather shabby dress, who held her head under her arm, which she did not stretch up.

"What's your name, love?" Hera asked.

"My name is San... Cathlyn of Sidford."

"Hello, Cathlyn," replied Hera, making her hold her head a little tighter.

"And would you tell us what brought you here, love?"

She cleared her throat.

"Well, I was considered a saint in the face of Roman oppression and therefore I was brought to Isca Dumnoniorum in 263 to be beheaded. Then three years ago the Office for Canonization Processes in Rome announced the revocation of my sainthood, because now they claim I left false traces to cover up the fact that I ran away with a legionnaire...and, well...I really don't know what to do."

"Traitor!" hissed from a corner.

"Calm down, people," said Hera, "we all know the poison of competition," and, addressed to the new member, "Fallen Christian saints are also covered by our statutes. Welcome, Cathlyn!"

A cat with a thick accent said, while she stretched her front paws with a yawn,

"The least she could do is put her head back on. It looks cheap."

"Bastet please -" The lack of emphasis in her voice betrayed that this was not the first time had Hera said that. She looked at her tablet again: "After sharing, we are going to hear a lecture today on 'Is Psychiatry the New Inquisition?'.

Unfortunately, Barrex got stuck in traffic tonight and won't make it to us in time. As we are technically very well equipped here, we will later have a video conference. But now first to sharing. Who wants to share with us today? You know that everyone's got ten minutes. Xiuhtecuhtli is kind enough to stop time today."

"Oh, Mr. Sexy...!"

"Bastet, please -"

2.

The self-help group of the gods met at different places in the world at full moon, preferring luxurious and comfortable locations. The nature spirits and gods could not prevail most of the time and instead of holy groves, lakes or moors, they oriented themselves to G7, G8, G20 or other summits, film festivals and art fairs in order to use the already prepared halls. In particular, the Greek and gods of the Near East insisted on meeting in human buildings that had been erected with a lot of effort and expense, and preferably also a lot of money. Geometry, statics, architecture and all craftsmanship were their work and so every building still radiates some of their influence. They found a meeting in the open under trees depressing and not appropriate for their stand. Christian churches were an exception to the preference for buildings. Gothic cathedrals in particular were a disgust to most ancient European and Near Eastern gods, "These abominations scratch the sky" (quote Hekate).

The whole thing had begun on August 12, 1924 in America. At that time Lucas Parks Dean bought a bundle of gramophone records in Manhattan, which came from the estate of a German-born anthropologist. The latter had made it his mission to document the last remnants of Indian culture throughout his life on American soil. On the records were recordings of tribal elders, men and women, who talked about rituals and an everyday life of which they were partly the last witnesses. Their stories and songs were recorded in their language Lenape, which was understood by only a handful of people in the whole state of New York.

Mr. Parks Dean is actually a spiritual being of the Wappinger Indians, whose last survivors died in 1811. Until that year he was called Òpalanie, which means bald eagle. His tribe had been destroyed by war, land theft and epidemics and even if some descendants were still found among neighboring tribes or within the new citizens of the United States, the cults of the Wappinger Indians no longer had a life of their own. Òpalnie had become superfluous as Manëtu. He gave himself the civil name Parks Dean and looked for connection.

The Wappinger tribe spoke a form of Lenape that had never been recorded until it fell silent due to a lack of technical means. Lucas Parks Dean collected everything that was somehow linked to the customs of the Wappinger and all tribes of the North-East. In his wooden house in Kent / New Jersey he kept fabrics, artifacts, jewelry, feathers and carvings and later with their invention film material and gramophone records. He had accompanied several expeditions of the painter George Catlin and the photographer Edward Curtis to Indian territory. These were difficult friendships, because deep in their hearts they too believed that this was the land of their new god. They needed his knowledge to get to their motives and he needed their art to give his memory a canvas.

On his way home to the train station he had taken a shortcut through Central Park after the auction. The sky had been gray and muggy all day, and when he entered the park there was a distant roll of thunder. A wind came and stirred up dust and newspapers, families packed their things, men held their hats and all the people he met walked in his opposite direction towards the exit. Mr. Parks Dean didn't want to miss his train and continued on his way - until the first thick raindrops formed dark spots on his felt. Not wanting to get his precious new acquisition wet, he looked around for the next shelter, saw a concert rotunda not far away, hurried towards it, took the short curved staircase up and sat down on one of the benches standing there. Shortly before his knees, the rain

from the roof had formed a small waterfall. He held his bundle up to his chest, sat alone and listened to the water.

It was a short strong summer thunderstorm and he felt comfortable under the crackling, trickling and gurgling of the water wall. A round, quiet place in the greenery in the middle of the city.

The sun came back, turned water drops into crystal, birds started chirping again quietly, grass began to smell. The park paths still remained empty.

"My ears are roaring from the screaming!" spoke a voice behind him and tore him from his reflections. He turned around. Behind him on the bench sat a woman in a silver-blue cocktail dress with horizontal stripes of mother-of-pearl fringes, hair ribbon, short hair, long pearl necklaces. She held her elbow in her right hand and had her left index finger against her forehead. Lucas Parks Dean had not seen anyone coming and when he entered the rotunda it was empty in any case. The shock made him stand halfway up, trying to make it look like a courtesy to a lady. He was confused.

"Excuse me?"

She looked apparently into the distance past him, pulled her eyebrows together and the corners of her mouth down and began to sing in a deliberately false and nasal voice:

„...For Native Land their drums they beat
Quick time they keep with marching feet
America for thee they know
"Saloons, saloons must go!"

He thought she was drunk for a moment, but she had recovered immediately.

"Terrible, these patronizing gangs!"

Mr. Parks still did not understand what she was getting at and how she had suddenly appeared here.

"Excuse me?"

"Those awful concerts of the prohibitionists here every Sunday after Mass at 11:00. You know -" now she looked into his eyes for the first time "- my friends and I loved coming to America. But the way things are going here now... Some of them are already back."

"Well, I don't hear anything here."

"You're good. You're sitting in the middle of the soprano voices."

"Today is Tuesday. There is no concert of the..."

"You were too distracted by your shots."

He looked first at his records and then at them in disbelief.

"Oh, come on. You don't need a gramophone. I see you sitting here all the time. You nearly got to the last side. What are you listening to?"

"Lenape, this is the language of..."

"Woh, great! I'm a Hepate, by the way", she stood up and sat down next to him on the bench.

She had left Europe with her girlfriends during the First World War, ("murder only throws art back"). America was coming, they thought, and New York actually seemed very promising to them ("Corinthian columns on facades on the 25th floor, crazy!"). But then these howling and praying female choirs against wine ("and thus against the basic values of any culture that takes itself seriously"). Thank the gods that most of the policemen in Manhattan were Irish and corrupt, she had spent the last night at the Cafe Beaux Arts ("the best wine since the 13th Olympics and nothing but creative people"). Mr. Parks was stunned. He had met a Manëtu from old Europe, or at least something like that. As far as he understood it, they had lived on a mountain as part of a ladies' band and they were heavenly beings for art. Or something like that. She also did not spare with joyful surprise. She hadn't even known in all those years in the States that there were old-established "multi-dimensionals" - as she called the manëtus ("We had no idea!"). She admittedly found his name Bald Eagle "remarkable" ("You have a name for an animal?").

Òpalanïe noticed that she spoke more often of "„us "".

"Who do you mean?" he asked her.

"Well, the other multi-dimensionals."

"Oh, there's more than one?"

"Well, what do you think?"

"And where do they live?"

"At the Metropolitan. You just have to drop by!"

His spirit rattled in the train on the return journey. So, there were others like him living in the Metropolitan Museum of Art who had fallen out of time. Or had Mrs. Hepate simply been lying? She appeared out of nowhere, heard the creasings on his gramophone records, realized his name was not Mr. Parks Dean. She was a little nervous for his taste, but that could happen when you live in the city. The next morning, he stepped out onto his porch and watched the squirrels' jumps in the trees. He decided to go back to the city on the coming new moon.

He met her as arranged in the medieval section. She had told him that if he ever stopped by, he should be near the Spanish armor at the end of the closing time. He had already walked

the knights' trellis several times. A museum guard was already pointing with his index finger to his wrist at the imminent closure when Hepate tapped him on the shoulder from behind.

"Glad you found your way to us!"

She was wearing a cream-colored, less flashy dress today.

"You come on a good night. A new shipment of artwork arrived today and is still stored in the depot. We are all very curious to see if anyone has travelled with it! And of course, I have already announced you. But first I'll show you around."

"But they're about to close."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, the museum's closing."

Hepate pulled her head back slightly, looked at him in surprise and let a few beads of her necklace slip through her fingers.

"I'll show you a secret. My good friend Hermes and his students the alchemists taught me. Here in the graphics department you will find a treasure trove of old works with instructions on the secret arts. So: we will transform into metal and play armor. Just follow my lead." She went to the end of the Spanish knights. "You stand right here beside it. Left arm flat to the body, right arm bent 90 degrees, hand as if holding a lance..." She showed him how to do it, then pushed him herself into position "That's it. I'll do the same and you listen to me. I will cast a spell on us, and the guards will think we are iron armor as well. All right? But under no circumstances must you move!"

"All right," Òpalanie reported back.

Hepate closed her eyes and began to murmur "Sublimatio, solutio perfecta, al-kīmiyá, mercurius philosophorum...." her voice became increasingly quiet, then her lips stopped moving. Nothing happened for a while. A few visitors passed by without paying attention to her. Shortly after them, a museum guard arrived who - although he stopped right in front of them to write something down in his notepad - did not pay attention to them either. They remained in their position for a while. Even from the direction of the entrance hall, all sounds had ebbed away.

"Amphiteatrum sapientiæ Æter...", Hepate did not get any further, as she began to bend in a strong laughing fit, holding on to Don Pizarro's iron arm, which caused his armor to sway dangerously.

"You actually believed it!" she laughed out loud at her visitor.

"Be careful you don't start rusting!" she spluttered enthusiastically about her own joke.

With some acidity Òpalanïe replied: "It's nice that you are having fun - I am not. What was that all about? Did you talk to the people here just to take the piss out of me?"

"No, Mr. Manetu. It's just that..." Her further words fell victim to her laughter again.

"Before I have to spend the night here with you and a guard of conquistadors, I'd better go. Good night, ma'am."

Hepate calmed down and spoke in a soft voice. "Òpalanïe - please stay. Sorry for my special sense of entertainment. You know, fifteen hundred years ago, they pulled Mount Parnassus out from under me and it hasn't been much fun since. You were only laid off a hundred years ago, you're probably still getting used to it. I'd like you to stay tonight. All this alone time isn't good for us."

"And tomorrow when the warden comes back, you'll sit with him over coffee and laugh yourself to death about that stupid redskin because he thought he'd turned into a knight's armor?"

"No. He couldn't see you."

"What's that now."

"People can only see us if we want to and seek contact with them. Otherwise, expired gods are simply invisible to three-dimensionally perceiving beings. My hocus-pocus made you no longer want to be recognized. That was enough."

She led him into the Egyptian section. The evening sunlight bathed the halls in a bloody orange. She stopped in front of a glazed display case in which a long papyrus was rolled out, on which hieroglyphics and rows of geometric-looking figures were painted in red and black letters. Some figures had animal heads. Through the middle of the sheet several figures pulled a barque on a rope, in front of which a huge snake body moved. A large beetle crouched above the tip of the rope. Hepate knocked on the glass "Boys, we have visitors!" With two of the figures on the rope, the paint began to liquefy, flow over the sheet, collect in a corner of the box and then collect on the outside along the leg of the display case towards the floor. There they began to form and straighten up anew in the shape of the drawing, now also going into depth and becoming three-dimensional. They became larger than in the drawing, but their growth ended shortly before Òpalanïe's kneeling. "May I introduce to you two colleagues from Egypt," said Hepate. She spoke little in words to the color beings, but rather in a kind of sign language that had apparently established itself between the three. With her hands she described a circle around her head and then pointed to the

ground "He is God from here!" Pairs of eyes made of black dots were directed at him. Hepate whispered behind his back: "Unfortunately I don't know their names. They wrote them down once, but for whom should these pre-Greek scribblings make any sense?" Then she bent over to them, described their size with the palm of her hand, looked at them questioningly and began to negotiate with them in some kind of gestural way. "They are a little small today because they were looked at by too few museum visitors. Maybe we'll move the display case more to the right towards the entrance later."

All four went on to the Collection of Classical Antiquities in the direction of the Greek Department. Already from a distance, one could see several human-looking figures, some of them in old robes or current attire, lying in a circle on cushions they had taken from the visitor benches. Between them were vases and plates made of terracotta with pomegranates, olives and sheep's cheese. The crockery was painted with Greek motifs and they were all exhibits. A man with horns and fur on his legs, who to Òpalanie's astonishment was uninhibitedly naked, had raised a chalice and he heard him speak into the round: "...in Harlem in this pharmacy you can buy two liquids, completely legal, which you then pour together and then it ferments to a two percent beer and then suddenly it is illegal." The audience laughed. "And how does it taste?" asked one of the women in the group. "It's horrible. We'd better tip it over to the Celtic section on the third floor." The group laughed even more.

"What is the Celtic division?" asked Òpalanie Hepate. "Barbarians", she replied, which seemed to say it all. "Dear friends, may I present, from the Olympus of the United States of America: Mr. Bald Eagle!" Short applause, an "ah" and "oh", hands were shaken. "A God from New Jersey - we had no idea!"

He got to know the world that night. From a Greek perspective. How they all emerged from chaos to bring order to the world and culture to the people. How wonderfully their ideas are still working today, how one can read the level of development of the people from the divine sciences of rhetoric, music and mathematics and how all this manifests itself so wonderfully in America, after leaving the early days of the log houses behind. "Just look at the government buildings here!" The view of beauty through the formula of the golden section, which they - who exactly they left a little vague - would have brought to humans and breathed into nature. The wonderful music of the spheres and the course of the planets, the ecliptic mirrored in the verse of the poem. If they had not

already known that the earth was round, one could not fly over the Atlantic Ocean today.

Òpalanië noted that the influx from Europe had led to the destruction of his tribe. He could not discover in it an import of beauty and order from the old world.

They agreed with him, but that all this was the fault of the followers of the Christian God. Since the time of the Roman soldier emperors, they too had been systematically driven from their world and their ideas had been corrupted.

That night in the antiquities department of the Metropolitan Museum, gods met who had previously known nothing about each other and who all had one thing in common: they were alone and had no affection. Òpalanië was alone because his tribe was dead. The Greek gods were lonely because people simply did not take notice of them. From their point of view the gods were dead or actually worse: inexistent. The beings from ancient Egypt were particularly hard hit. They were incomparably older than the others and had been outside of earthly consciousness for thousands of years. They consisted now only of thin, rusty threads. The less attention the immaterial beings received, the more stunted they became. The Greeks still seemed to be assembled pretty well. Their names and history were still spoken daily all over the world, but without any cultic ulterior motives. That which sustained them had become stale.

They told him how badly the goddess Nyx had been dealt with. She had joined the others a few years ago through a wonderfully preserved vase painting that an American billionaire had excavated in Turkey and then bequeathed to the museum. An existence as an exhibit was repugnant to her and one day, against the strong advice of her fellow gods, she stood in front of a school class in the Collection of Classical Antiquities and shouted: "I am the goddess Nyx!" As usual in large cities, such a statement had little effect. This incensed the goddess and in absolute overestimation of her effect on modern American children she repeated: "I am Nyx, the goddess of night and darkness!" The children began to laugh as if they were listening to an opera aria for the first time.

"I am the goddess on this vase and if you don't...!"

"Ma'am, could you please be quiet and let the children..."

"I warn you damned earthlings, if..."

"Put the vase back immediately!"

"...then I will...!"

She was taken to a closed facility in upstate New York.

After that night Òpalanië often came back to the museum to be with the others. If you were already stranded in time, it was good to have company. He enjoyed the silence of the closed museum and looked around the other departments. As he entered the small room of the Oceania Collection, something inside him vibrated and led him to a glass cabinet with fly whisks, red pearl jewelry - and a pendant that was labeled with:

"EARRINGS FROM WALNUT, FRENCH-OCEANIA 19TH CENTURY FROM STRANDED ANIMALS, AS THESE CREATURES WERE CONSIDERED THE EMBODIMENT OF THE GODS AND WERE NOT HUNTED."

"Hello friend!" it said, and the Manëtu, who found it easy to communicate with animals, also answered "Greetings friend!" They hit it off right away. The whale creature led a quiet existence in the museum. Most of the time the artefact was packed in the archive, as the visitors' interest in naive art from the South Seas was low.

"I am glad we finally meet! I knew the moment you arrived here last summer that you'd find me."

"You already knew about me?"

"Sure, I can hear very well."

"Why don't you meet with the others? The Greeks and the..."

"Don't bother me with the Europeans. They think their Mediterranean puddle is the navel of the world. The Egyptians are okay, you can still hang out with them. But all the time this self-centered babble. How can you put up with them?"

"At least they're still pretty together after 15 hundred years."

"Perhaps. But you know what their problem is? They think they're nature and the creators themselves. Not just their messengers. The world spoke through us to whoever would listen. Because they still believe they're the world, they dug their own grave. And ours too, by the way."

"How did you get here and where have you been all this time?"

"I'd been traded for cheap jewelry."

"That sounds familiar."

"The exchange devalued me, I lay in a box for over seventy years, then they put me in another and then here in this display case. Now I am being stared at. But people only see bones."

"Do you know where we are?"

"No. I just can't help but notice it smells awful out here."

"Around us live several million people."

"No! That works?"

"Sort of, yeah."

They were silent for a while.

"Could you do me a favor?"

"With pleasure. What?"

"I would like to have seawater around me once again. The coast is not as far, is it?"

"No, not at all."

"So, if you don't mind, the smallest tooth here, you can take it off and with you, dive it into the water, I just want to listen into the ocean again."

"I'd be happy to."

"And if possible, put the tooth back, because you see there's not much left of me."

"Sure, don't worry."

Òpalanïe opened the display case, took the smallest tooth from the string and a few days later, with his closed hand, dipped it into the Atlantic Ocean.

Afterwards he went back to the museum to bring the tooth back. The entrance to the Oceania Department was blocked by a huge whale snout stuck in the door frame. "Thanks, that felt good!"

"Obviously!"

"I'd like to let you through only I'm afraid if I move, I'll destroy the collection."

"Look, I'll show you how to manage that. The Greeks showed me. You take your measurements and you sit in proportion..." The whale's snout showed an offended expression.

"...or you can stay as you are and..."

"All right! Go ahead."

He taught him some basic geometrical knowledge and the whale shrank to a socially acceptable size. Òpalanïe rethreaded the tooth.

"Thank you! Only you know what?"

"Yeah?"

"The sea stinks just like the city. I don't think I want to keep gathering dust here. Would you take me to your meetings?"

The Greeks were happy to see the growth and to hear something about an ocean they hardly knew ("The one opposite Hollywood, isn't it?"). He told them that he was an emanation of the deity Ta'arua, who had freed the world from the darkness surrounding it by pecking through the shell dome. As he pushed through it, he lifted it up and created the canopy of heaven ("We had no idea!"). To the repeated question whether he himself was this Ta'arua he always answered with no and he couldn't hide that this constant incomprehension made him feel annoyed. So they simply called him Mr. Moby without any bad intentions.

The small circle of gods met regularly. They began to learn from each other, discovered common ground and had heated discussions in between. Gods have to get used to the world views of others slowly.

They were worried about the Egyptians. They were getting weaker and weaker. They were no longer even known to Egyptologists. The papyrus in New York was the only thing that still represented them. To museum visitors they were just naive drawn stick figures pulling the sun chariot. A naked ancient statue could still evoke emotions in viewers and provoke a reaction that, however subtle, charged the deity representing it. Without any attention they withered away. The two deities from Egypt already partly did not even appear anymore and if often only two-dimensional, flat and fragile. Their sight made the others shudder. Even if some of them did not admit it: they all threatened to disappear from the world one day and thus from consciousness. In their old days, when the worship of their followers still bedded them on peaks and clouds, their families and sometimes even enemies were numerous. Here in the Metropolitan they were still a dozen and even if there were others scattered somewhere around the world, they had all seen how most of them had simply vanished.

One night, Hepate, Mr. Moby and Òpalanïe sat together and shared their fear. Hepate as one of the muses told that today people do not even know exactly how many they actually were, and while her colleagues Thalia and Urania still managed to keep their names in the conversation, she herself became more and more unknown. Mr. Moby told them that he felt the oceans were getting dirtier and dirtier and that he had the dull feeling that in a hundred years there might not be any whales left at all. Òpalanïe pointed out that in the U.S.A. federal laws prohibit the practice of Indian religion and rituals.

They did not want to die in a display case as fading writing. They decided to help each other. They discussed how it might be possible to continue to give themselves a form in the world - how they could stay alive. They saw that they had become dependent on the people they once believed to control or guide. And they saw how this dependence would destroy them. They agreed to keep their conversations between them. Others might interpret their thoughts as weakness.

That night they founded the Fallen Gods Anonymous F.G.A. Their first task was to save their Egyptian colleagues from fading out. The three of them gathered around the exhibited papyrus and consulted with each other. It was clear that the

figures in the museum had no chance of survival. But how could they make them known to people again? The three of them knew hardly anything about them and the communication with them was almost broken off.

"I've got it," said Hepate. "Occult books, 117 Fourth Avenue. Ancient Egyptian mysticism is the trend right now. We'll take them there."

"You mean steal the paper?"

She pondered, went into the archives of ancient writings and took out of an apparently undocumented pile a parchment containing a biblical text in ancient Greek letters. It was a forgery from the Italian Renaissance. All the better. She tore off a good part of the sheet and returned to the Egyptian section. There she explained her plan to the others in words and gestures. The dwindling deities were to take their place on the parchment, the empty space on the papyrus would simply be redrawn with black ink. She would take them on the parchment to the bookstore, put on a mysterious face and speak in Ancient Greek only. Then she would tell a story that Napoleonic soldiers brought this parchment to Paris from Egypt. It is a remnant from the library of Alexandria and is invaluable because it shows that the Bible is actually made up of ancient Egyptian secret knowledge, since Moses was raised in Egypt. She herself was now in great danger, as many forces wanted to keep this knowledge secret.

Mr. Moby and Òpalanie found the story rather silly but had to admit that the whole context didn't mean much to them and if Hepate thought that something was modern it was more reliable than *The American Weekly*. Those to be rescued agreed to the plan by letting their contours vibrate.

Hepate placed the piece of parchment at her feet and the two Egyptians of the early dynastic period sailed gently like an autumn leaf on their new medium. Hepate rolled it up, threw on a black hooded jacket from last Halloween and marched to "Occult Books". The plan worked. The following spring, the card game "The Secret Oracles of Abu Simbel" was released, representing the two gods as a pair of unifying opposites. The oracles could be used as entertainment or fortune telling game. It enjoyed great popularity in esoteric circles and many psychedelic bands such as The Doors used the cards as inspiration for some of their songs until in June 1973 the fraud was exposed. The television preacher and millionaire James Watson Birnbaum commissioned a study of the card game as part of his campaign "Keep USA Tidy". It turned out that the parchment was the torn off part of a text that had been recognized as a fake by the Metropolitan Museum decades ago. This proved that the Bible had nothing to do with the

satanic stick figures. The part of the investigation that found, not without astonishment, that the sooty ink of the illustrations had to be at least 4000 years old was kept under lock and key and is still causing speculation today.

3.

The male figure in Viking clothing at the side in the back row was the god Rögn. He had a red beard, blue eyes and made the appearance of a middle-aged man with a good figure when he pulled in his stomach. He had been planning to go to the front for "sharing" for a while and this time he really did. For this he had drunk himself courage in the old part of the city in an Irish pub for British yacht owners. He Rögn, the forgotten Nordic god of war.

"We welcome Rögn in our midst, who would like to tell us his story today," said Hera.

He stepped forward.

"Hello. I am Rögn... I am Rögn and a fallen God."

"Hallo Rögn", it echoed back in the choir.

"I was carefree then, as I'm sure your probably were," he began...

Rögn the red-bearded god lay naked with outstretched arms and legs in a stream of thickly flowing thermal water. His ginger mop of hair rested on a soft turf at the edge of the watercourse. He listened to a queen bee that had sat on an orange poppy blossom next to his ear to inform him about the quality of the honey wine for the coming season. Pearls of water in his beard reflected the sun back into the Icelandic high valley, and above the slopes a swarm of puffins was enjoying themselves, watching to bring every wish of their god in their beaks at his wave and call.

Around the watercourse, scattered among meadow flowers and clothes, lay the weapons and armor of Rögn, made of a precious metal so sublime that the sun closed its eyes in front of it, so as not to be blinded, as Icelandic poets were to sing centuries later. Thanks to the dwarves it was them who had forged these things, otherwise it would have rusted away long ago, as they were never used. Rögn had lost the desire to carry the heavy war material a long time ago and most time of the year he lay in hot water and enjoyed it as the current gently moved his genital while he cheered to the stars, drank

brotherhood with the moon, amused himself with animals and insects and held court for the humans. They usually passed by when they were dead, and since he was worshipped as the god of war, they were mostly male and wounded. Rögn received them with finely cut Byzantine glass beakers filled with the sweetest and most golden mead, which made them forget the pain of the tortured bodies and smashed skulls, offered them to get rid of their heavy clothes and burdens and take a seat next to him in the steaming water. In doing so, he always made sure that he was on top in the direction of the water flow, so as not to come into contact with the blood and dirt of the warriors. And since it was proper for Vikings to travel a lot and die a violent death, Rögn heard many stories from all over the world: about the colors of Constantinople, the steppes of Russia, the Viking empires in Carthage or the nightlife in Schleswig. After the round had drunk and splashed blissfully in the water for a while, Rögn allowed the warriors to put on his armor and watch themselves on the water surface. "The stream will take up your image, carry it into the sea and multiply it all over the world," he used to say. The self-image was thus strengthened and an insurance with this world was concluded. The warrior's soul took off its armor, they exchanged complimentary closes and he then followed a puffin who had waiting silently at the side. The bird waddled away in front to lead the deceased to Valhalla. Only the opera later distorted this fact and invented the Valkyries for scenic reasons.

Thus, Rögn spent his existence at the foot of volcanic mountains. He always had it warm through all seasons and he lacked no amenities and company. The people worshipped him as a guide in battle and in afterlife, offered him sacrifices and sent him best wishes with their fallen. Every encounter with the human souls was a happy one and increased Rögn's reputation. There had been no war with the other gods for a long time and between Vinland, Iceland, Scotland and Denmark they sent each other messages through clouds in rune form and other symbols.

In 790 Rögn saw the following message in heaven: "Attention, danger from the south, Christians, greeting F." Frija again! thought Rögn. Sixty years ago it was the Arabs, now it's the Christians. Why do goddesses always have to be so nervous, what did she know about the battlefields of the world. Three years later, Rögn answered with the following message: "Warriors tell have plundered Christian house in England" and the symbol of a bee, which stood for honey wine and can best be translated as no worries.

Frija does not calm this down and every few decades she sends round clouds to all the gods with cryptic messages like "Christians are now Romans" or "Sacred trees felled". There is no nonsense like holy trees, there is only a world ash tree on which they all sit and Frija should take a sip to calm down. About the year 1070 the following message blows in Rögn's valley: "Iceland is now diocese Bremen-Hamburg. Wake up!" Rögn reads the message to the puffins and all break out with him into cackling laughter. Iceland a diocese? The glaciers will melt first. He answers her "Hammaburg destroyed 300 years ago" and the symbol of a dragon boat, which meant something like: you need a holiday.

One day, however, the acting queen bee of his valley hummed to him:

"We're gonna move production and leave this island. We have now been at your disposal for 16,000 generations and we thank you for your cooperation, but life here is hard, there are hardly any flowers and there doesn't seem to be more demand for honey. You have been living on supplies for over a hundred years! That means we mostly sit around and wait to freeze to death next winter."

The puffins told him that the way to Valhalla was so hardly used now, unpaved and full of stones, that they had little desire to take the arduous route with their finned feet. Admittedly, they never understood why they were not allowed to show the way from air.

"Because the Oracle of Trollabür had foretold it so and the souls are attuned to it! They just wouldn't look up to the sky because that's how they have learned! Or do you want them to fail to find their way, and soon this valley will be teeming with returnees?"

"Dear Rögn: When was the last time you have taken a bath with a warrior?"

The God had to think long and hard.

"So now we're over to the neighboring island with the delicious sand eels. Let us know if you need us. In the next valley there are now people living with an Icelandic pony, maybe it wants to scramble over the mountains to Valhalla."

Rögn was lying in his water pinching the feeling with his eyebrows that something was wrong...

He looked around the support group and continued:

"Well, the last few years have been rather bad. I was mostly stoned. I've just been drinking and, yeah, just wasting time and doing useless stuff. I had hit the bottom I think, and yes...a few

years I slept in the engine room of a Finnish ferry. Just because it had my name on it. Simply because the letters R Ö G and N were floating across the Baltic Sea. At night the letters were illuminated, you could see them from far even in fog. Rögn. Only the name remained, and I clung to it. At some point I did not know whether it was still my name at all, but it helped me not to sink. When I was on land, I often stood in the ticket hall and my ears craved for the words 'two crossings with the Rögn please...' and I imagined that I still existed. I would sneak back into the engine room with the sound of my name in my head and shut off everything else so that the echo wouldn't fade out, ebb away, be taken away by something else..." Tears were streaming down his cheeks. "Only, there was no respect in the words of men. No fear, no anxiety, nothing. It meant nothing to them. Just a ship made of steel on water, taking them from one place to another..."

He paused and pulled himself together. He hated to cry. In front of others. Some gods moved nervously in their seats. Bastet held one paw in front of her mouth to hide her grin, a Greek hunting goddess threw her scorn at the ceiling, which knocked out a firefly up there.

"One I was the Lord of the Baltic Sea! People thought I was sending storms to destroy them because they did not bring me enough sacrifices! And there I lay, covered with oil until the summer of 1961 when all of a sudden the ferry traffic stopped and after a few months the ship was sold to the USSR. A few brushstrokes and the RÖGN became PYCb. And there I was on the verge of extinction, I knew if I didn't pull the rudder around now, I could see it clearly, but I didn't have the strength to get out of disappearance..."

"For years you have lived from a ship's name?" asked in disbelief but a notion of hope an amorphous being without any recognizable contours. It was a Mesopotamian deity, who only got her existence through a doctoral thesis. The doctoral student had almost given up his project, as the former cult region had currently been turned into a minefield, which made field research impossible.

"The Nazis had given me another boost. For a few years there were parades for me and a series of tanks with my name. When they finally had to bomb away their ideas, my prestige didn't exactly go up."

"You have got three minutes left," signaled Xiuhtecuhtli.

Rögn continued: "The Rus anchored at a Soviet Baltic Sea port, where at least one rune stone of the Varangians still existed. It lay there unrecognized half covered in water. I liked to sit there at night and drink. One night at the full moon someone else was already sitting there. I immediately saw that it was

not a human being, but an anthropomorphic one. "You look like hell," he said to me when I met him. And then he introduced himself as Prof. Shaktyran, a great pioneer of brain research of his time."

He looked at a figure leaning against a column and greeted with his eyes.

"He claimed that religion was simply a stimulation of certain areas of the brain. He was given an entire wing of a Muscovite hospital for that. He was looking for proof that faith was nothing but imagination, highly subsidized by the state and top secret. The ministry was afraid that political attitudes might also be anchored in the same areas of the brain. Our colleague did research on this topic and compared the brains of popes with those of straightforward communists but found no difference. In the 60's one was simply not ready. And then he suggested that I come to America with him, because they had just dug up a Viking settlement in Canada and that was the big hit on the continent. He would continue his research over there. I went with him and tried to forge some coin finds and rune stones in the US. Nothing. After all, since 1964 a comic series with my character has been published and, in the meantime, movies have been released. That keeps me together. A cartoon character and... "

The time is up, reminded Xiuhtecuhtli.

"Thank you Rögn", it politely resounded in a choir.

"Thank you Rögn for sharing." Hera said again. "And now I wish us an exciting lecture on the thesis " 'Psychiatry as a new form of inquisition' ".

4.

Our present knowledge about the Nordic gods is incomplete and inaccurate and has been falsified by Richard Wagner and Lord of the Rings. Rögn was hit particularly hard, because no rune stones or illustrations have been preserved about him. The Icelandic poets, who bear the main responsibility for our present Nordic image of gods, have mentioned Rögn only in a few verse lines on the margin:

how he defeated a river god far down the south and ordered his waters to flow back so that the enemy ships could not leave, the felling of the wild oaks in Jöngatal, the dissolving of a stitch in the weaving pattern of the goddesses of fate and the fight with the giants in Vinland.

The latter event was of course without any foundation, but it was Rögn who at the end brought the most attention in historical research and pop culture. It is the only mention of a mythological event of the Nordic world of gods that could have taken place on the American continent.

The sixties brought Rögn relief from his mental isolation. A small comic label from the USA took Rögn as their main character for a superhero series which became a great success. Up from the first copy to special editions in different languages, the booklets filled about 200 shelves in his apartment. In addition, there were fan articles, clothing, figures, posters and key chains. Over the years, he himself had written countless letters to the editor and posted comments. He won the first prize in a radio quiz show because of his niche knowledge of the series: a photo wallpaper with a vintage picture from the first edition.

He kept sinking into the world of these comics and was grateful that the authors and illustrators gave him a life, even if he never had one alike. He saw himself saving the world and fighting foreign powers on distant planets. While sitting between empty beer cans on his bean bag and growing belly, he flipped through his life, which showed him as a beautiful strong and belligerent giant, who with his bare fist in the New York subway brought back out of control coaches and blew away Soviet planes from the Californian coast. Since the turn of the millennium, the comics have been made into movies and published so far as "Asgard Protector" parts I to III. The leading role as Rögn is played by Pete Ramperton, the internationally acclaimed American-British action hero, who had a classical acting education and was at home on theatre stages until his role as comic hero for the. Rögn is not dissatisfied with the cast. The "Asgard Protector" series makes millions in sales.

5.

After his return from the meeting of the self-help group of the Fallen Gods Rögn found the following letter in his mailbox:

"Dear Mrs. Brennisteinn,
Dear Mr. Rögn,

Having examined your concept for the "Gullin" thermal spa, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of Halldór Airlines that we have decided to cooperate with you. As part of a pilot project for the coming summer, we intend to offer an excursion to the spa "Gullin" as part of our new flight connections Hamburg-Reykjavik-New York and Copenhagen-Reykjavik-Boston as part of our "Reykjavik-stop-over 1" package. As already discussed, the access road must be made safe for coaches by June 1st. Our gourmet department will contact you shortly for the selection of small meals and drinks from our Halldór product range.

Our guests will be in groups of approximately 20 people and will arrive at yours from the hotel "Aurora Splendid" Reykjavik on the dates and times listed below. We will provide you in advance with a sufficient assortment of bathrobes, bath towels and bathing shoes from our Halldór product range. We would like to take this opportunity to point out that on the above-mentioned excursion days, your facility must be entered in swimwear and a strict nudist ban must be observed.

Furthermore, we assume that on the days of visits by groups in our "Reykjavik-stop-over" package, the "Gullin" spa will not be made available to other groups.

We will send you the cooperation contracts, the agreements on the flat rates and the acknowledgement of the traffic safety obligations with the kindly request for signed return.

We are looking forward to a successful cooperation.

Sigrid Petersson-Lindur
Manager Halldór Experience"

Good, Rögn thought. Before another thousand years no one climbs into my stream. He called his business partner, whose name wasn't really Mrs. Brennisteinn. She had never disclosed her real name. He called her Gulli as an abbreviation for

Gullinborsti, the mythical boar with the golden bristles, because he thought she often behaved like him. Gulli was a water spirit. She rules over a volcanic spring which divides into many small watercourses. One of them forms the thermal stream where Rögn had held court. She herself had never been seen there, as she did not care about the hustle and bustle of traffic to Valhalla. It was only when no more warriors came that she realized that something was wrong in her world too. Her spring began to cool down by 0.37°C per century.

The more sensitive she was to temperatures, the coarser she was in social interaction. At their first meeting she accused Rögn of being a complete failure as God and she had been wondering for a long time if this gay plashing was all he had to offer in terms of powers. In addition, he was an egoist, because others were dependent on his job, namely puffins, bees and herself. Enjoying yourself in the stream for centuries, not worrying about anything, heat comes out of the mountain by itself. And now this! With a cold spring you look pretty stupid as a water spirit on Iceland!

All volcanoes cool down with time and she had no proof that he was responsible for it, Rögn replied, which she did not accept. She has been measuring the temperature since the end of the Ice Age and keeping exact records, and suddenly just from the year 1092 with the last bather the water cools down. As God he of all knows that there is no such thing as coincidence.

They still disagree in their assessment of events, but they do have a common interest. Gulli does not want to suffer social descent on the island and Rögn still hopes to make a comeback, for which he needs his holy watercourse without getting frozen and invisible for months in winter.

Gulli would be considered ugly by human standards, has a bluish-greenish scaly skin and twelve eyes around her head. Her eyes correspond to the twelve watercourses on the mountain, her gaze in all directions past and future as she says. Around her neck she has a kind of ruff of pointed skin flaps, reminiscent of tentacles. She does not have a name. She says that names define and restrict and thus contradict the quality of water. The fact that Rögn calls her Gulli does not bother her.

Like water, she can change its shape, although she prefers to remain in her original shape as other forms cost her too much concentration. When she gets angry, she reshapes to her

original. Rögn attributes her choleric character traits to the sulfurous water.

The valley where Rögn had held court had hardly been used over the centuries. This changed in 1923, when the first swimming pool in Iceland was installed there. The hot stream is fed by several small streams that converge in small cascades and picturesque waterfalls over green stone slopes. Until late summer, one can still see some remains of snow at the top of the mountains. In a bend of the stream, the bank is flat at one point, forming an area the size of a rugby field. That is the place where Rögn loved to spend his time but not until afternoon, as only then the sunrays can reach this spot. By making use of the natural location, a pool with a size of 25 by 10 meters was built that consists on one long and part of one cross side of natural rock as a wall. The water is led through a pipe from the upper course of the stream directly into the basin. At the lower end it is discharged and flows back again. At the head of the basin towards the ascending mountain range there is a small white painted rectangular low building with three doors. The two doors on the left are close together, painted green and there are rectangular skylights next to the upper edges. The doors lead to changing rooms, the right door leads to a small lounge, and in front of the building is a longer bench. For many years the pool had been the largest swimming pool in Iceland.

The people came to swim for leisure or as school children without having any idea who had bathed in the neighboring watercourse before them. With the construction of further baths, the complex fell into disrepair, but remained usable the whole time. Rögn and Gulli were initially skeptical about the concept of a fun pool. However, since it was built right under their noses and they wanted to continue to determine what happened in their valley, they leased it with the hope that word would eventually go around that the place was the spa to the heavens.

To do this, people had to come to their valley, which is why they had asked for the cooperation with Halldór Airlines. Now they just needed a plan.

6.

**"Fandomz - Magazine for Virtual Culture" May issue, p. 76 ff.
"Pete Ramperton exclusively - From Westend to Asgard":**

At the last Comax in Ljubljana, the studio Screenworld surprised the audience by announcing that they would be casting Pete Ramperton in their next big blockbuster "Rögn" as a continuation of the "Asgard Protector" trilogy. Ramperton's embodiment of many of the leading roles in the rediscovered English Elizabethan writer Bareth has earned him prestige and international awards on the theatre stage. He had not yet made it into the fantasy worlds. We met Ramperton during a shooting break and talked to him about image changes, playing god and special fans.

Fandomz: "Mr. Ramperton, how does it feel when suddenly the theater stage is changed with the cosmos?"

Ramperton: "You have to get your bearings and see where the audience is sitting."

Fandomz: "You probably won't get to see many of the viewers at all. Your studio is estimating a turnover of \$450 million."

Ramperton: "These are of course different dimensions. On top of that, you have to do justice to comics, that is, to a large number of readers over three generations."

Fandomz: "The spectators know you so far as a king, buccaneer or tailor. How does it feel to be a Nordic god all of a sudden?"

Ramperton: "At first I thought, a little immobile, because of all the muscles that the role had given to me." (laughs) "There was a moment when it clicked, where I realized, hey Pete, kings are something you could get acquainted with, a god is something else. The thing that makes acting is what happens in the space between people. And with Rögn we have a character who is actually placed in heaven and as such completely outside the interpersonal realm. And in the film Rögn has to leave this space and fight the giant oaks on earth. He is in himself aware of the different worlds. The exciting thing happens when he suddenly shares the same space with people. Entering these different rooms is what makes the part so exciting."

Fandomz: "You play a god of war, who is leaving quite a mess. Action scenes make up a third of the film. Do you think roles like the tailor in "Ladies' Mock" will be gone now because of that?"

Ramperton: "You know whether you play a god of war or a tailor, make it good and real. That's my job. And of course, we have the wonderful script by Horne Borry, and of course as a basis the comic, which gives certain guidelines. So no, I don't think I'm now only booked for razzle-dazzle in Beverly Hills, if that's what you mean. The fan mail is already changing though (laughs)."

Fandomz: "In which way?"

Ramperton: "In the film there is the forest elf Gwamp, a two-headed character who first fights Rögn, but then becomes an ally by cunning. Gwamp is mostly animated. My management received baskets of mail with large letters made of leaf juice. They were from the "real" Gwamp. The whole thing got a bit much, but we couldn't even reply because there was no sender. Then one morning there was a huge bucket with an oak tree in front of the studio, in the middle of the street, blocking the traffic. On it hung a note "Gwamp wants to move in with Rögn". That was bizarre, the thing was huge and supposedly nobody had seen anything when it arrived. I had the tree planted at my estate in Sussex. My daughters now have a tree house inside."

Fandomz: "And do your daughters get along with Gwamp?"

Ramperton: "Oh yes, very much. They chatter day and night"

Fandomz: "Apart from training, how did you prepare for the role?"

Ramperton: "Naturally through the comics and generally through sources from the Nordic mythological world. I only knew Rögn from the quartet of gods that I had played as a boy. He was not a strong card, fighting power many swords, but guile and magic rather moderate. Our film will straighten that image."

Fandomz: "Historians doubt that there ever was a cult around him."

Ramperton: "We didn't shoot a documentary. It's definitely a good myth, and myths show us thought patterns that are still relevant."

Fandomz: "How do you relate that to the film?"

Ramperton: "Well, Rögn rules the world and believes he has got the situation under control. But it goes out of hand through the giant oaks and Rögn has to decide: do I destroy everything and thus break off contact forever, or is there a starting point for a cooperation where I have to jump over my own shadow. Relationship work."

Fandomz: "Is Rögn going to make further trips to earth in the future?"

Ramperton: "We should let him decide (laughs), but I can tell you this much: There are big plans."

The film "Rögn - World's Rattle" starts in 2 and 3-D in the USA on 11th of August and in Europe from 23rd of August, runtime 132 min.

7.

The next meeting of FGA took place on the grounds of the Charlotte Convention Center in North Carolina during preparations for the Republican Party Convention. After the fixed program parts of the meeting Hera asked the Varangian-God, whom Rögn had met at the Baltic Sea at that time, to come forward.

"As a little encouragement before the summer break, Mr. Shaktyran would like to introduce to us a smartphone game. So those of you who have mobile phones and tablets with you, get them out, those of you who don't have hands listen carefully anyway, because the professor is working on developing smartphones that can be controlled by line of vision, light beams and thoughts, aren't you professor? May I have the pleasure..."

"Thank you dear Hera! As you all know, I'm a brain researcher, but the mind control could take a few more days..."

Laughter from the audience.

"But joking aside, as you know, usability and accessibility are a big issue for the amorphous among us and it will be the virtual interfaces in particular where they can make contact with the humanoid world. And because we are all looking for this contact we are sitting here!"

Applause, two spotlights burst at the top.

"Today, I would like to introduce to you a little game. It is still in the beta version and I'll be grateful for any criticism and feedback. The game is called "When The Saints Go Marching Bin" and you can download the app by clicking on the link you got in the last newsletter. The object of the game is to shoot down as many saints as possible."

Laughter from the audience again.

"Your position is determined via GPS and mobile phone network and you can see on your screen the environment in which you are actually standing and next to it you as an avatar. You can choose from different characters and I have tried to meet all your needs. You have different weapons to choose from, with which you can knock the saints away. For example, there are thunderbolts, Thor's hammers, or fissures in the

earth that open up. With the GPS signal and mobile phone tracking, you will be virtually displayed on the map on your screen and it works best outdoors. You always see in front of you where you actually are, at least in a simplified form. On the map you don't see everything, but only eye-catching buildings, parks, landmarks and especially all things related to the saints, i.e. the caves where they lived, or the cellars where they were captured and of course all the chapels and churches that were built for them. You can play different levels, just walk around by chance, or follow specific pilgrim paths. There are 15,000 Saints scattered across the map in the game and the aim is to get done with them as many as possible. Let me show you an example."

He connected his tablet to the beamer.

"Here you are standing on a square in a city and around you can see some important buildings, crossroads and street names. Now we turn around and walk across the square and watch the surroundings change on the screen. In front of us is a church dedicated to St. Calendula and right in front of it at the entrance you can see the animations" - one could see a comic-like figure with big eyes and a halo in manga style with a bouquet of yellow marigolds in both hands - "depending on how many followers or places of worship Santa Calendula has, she has got a certain number of power, which you can see above the halo. You yourself have your own power number when you start the game. If your power number is higher than that of the saint, you can defeat her and add her to your collection, and you will receive additional points for your own use. If you try your hand at saints that are stronger than you, you will be unlucky, fall on your face and lose points. Here we have enough points, and now let's take the Fenris Wolf..." - one saw an animated wolf jump towards Calendula from the player's line of sight, devour her and go back tail raised up and with a grinning mouth from which a flower was still hanging. A bell sounded and you could see a number increasing - "Like I said, we're still in development, so if you notice anything, send us an e-mail. The app at present is for FGA-members only and if you want to participate, you have to register after you download the link, so we can offer you a good support.

The game became the hit.

8.

Rögn and Gulli spent days discussing their event, which they wanted to hold with the visitors of the "Halldór-Experience" in their thermal bath. It should become a healing water ritual and convey to the visitors that they were in a place of mysticism and transformation. The content and didactic details caused them to lurch.

Gulli wanted to improve the quality of water, Rögn wanted to re-establish himself as a god of war. It was clear to them that the modern times required some changes. There would no longer be an all-male event for fallen warriors, instead the visitors would be of all genders and enjoy good health. The modern stressed out world soul would not be captured by blood sacrifices and bog bodies.

They leafed through shamanic travel guides and esoteric pages. Gulli would take on a female human form and as both wanted to lead the course, they chose as a program point the united strength from the female and male principle, symbolized by the shape of a spiral and a spear. The guests were to experience a harmless adventure of relaxation and activity. Upon arrival, first there was to be a short introduction, then a walk through the rubble to the actual stream bed at the site of the mystical place of power, where, according to ancient legends, Rögn had carried out the transformation of the warriors. Since the guests were supposed to go home alive and not to Valhalla, they had the idea that each visitor should choose a stone and then think about all the problems and lost battles in their lives that they wanted to let go. The stones were to be a symbol of this burden and then to be put on a pile. According to an old Nordic-Germanic tradition a spear would then be hurled over them. The stones now symbolized the enemy army, which was consecrated to their own strong god and destruction by throwing the spear over it. On the spear was the name Rögn in runic writing. After the throwing over, the problems were to be thrown into the water and the group of visitors was to be led back to the swimming pool. There the actual healing bath, equipped with the towels, bathrobes and sandals of the Halldór product range, should take place. Just as the thermal

water from the stream flowed into the pool and out again, so the bathers were to be cleansed of their problems.

The day before the first group from the "Reykjavik-stop-over 1" package visited, Rögn and Gulli rehearsed their performance. At the swimming pool Gulli and at the watercourse Rögn should have the say.

Gulli reading from a note recited the following text:

"Dear guests, we are especially pleased to welcome you here today at this very special place. Only a few people know about the magic of the place and its historical importance. There are many baths and hot springs in Iceland, but none is as important as the place where you are today, as studies have shown that it was exactly here where the Vikings believed was the gateway to paradise, the way to Valhalla, by taking a bath in this water. Furthermore, it can be assumed that this spring, which is located above us in the mountain, was considered so sacred that the Vikings believed that any undertaking with a previous bath in this water would be successful. Therefore, we assume that it is exactly at the mouth of this stream in the sea that the Vikings carried out their voyages to Vinland, today's North America, and..."

"Wohwoh... stop Gulli!" said Rögn. "Which studies? If we assume that all our guests make intercontinental flights, some of them will have had a newspaper in their hands at some point and we shouldn't look stupid when they ask questions.

"Okay, then how about instead: the knowledge was and is handed down orally in this valley as secret knowledge for centuries. . . and... only to those people who actually put their foot - no better - who actually dip their body into the holy water...like that perhaps? Since the settlement of Iceland, I can name every family that has settled along one of my watercourses."

"We should definitely avoid the words research and study."

Gulli continued.

"You are especially lucky today because it is Durin's Day, that is, a day when it is said that new doors can open for those who seek,"

"Gulli please, that's from The Hobbit! We're not a fairytale park!"

"Durin is in the Edda!"

"Tolkien or Snorri doesn't matter, it's both made-up nonsense."

Three of Gulli's pairs of eyes started rolling nervously.

"And you are coming today on a Wednesday which is a very special day, because according to the old tradition, on this day

in the middle of the week the transition from the old to the new had a special place."

"That's a bit shallow now. The Vikings didn't have the same weekdays as us..."

"Listen Rögn," cried Gulli, "if you had been as attentive then as you are now, we wouldn't have to stand here and watch tourists. If you know better, go ahead. Unfortunately, your religion was too primitive and weak to leave us anything meaningful to help us plan tomorrow's day.

"You have only left your volcano hole when you got cold!" Rögn yelled back.

Silence. The mood was at rock bottom.

"And don't forget to pull in your skin flaps tomorrow."

"What did you say!?" hissed Gulli, blowing steam out of her ears in rage.

They did not speak a word the rest of the day and night. Both were too proud and none of them was looking forward to the event. Gulli as a water spirit was not used to talk to people. Since the formation of her volcano and its watercourses there had never been a reason for it. Her world had been created without humans playing any part in it. The thought of getting in contact with them scared her, which she never admitted to the outside world. Rögn devotedly loved and lived on human company, but deep inside it hurt him that his valley, once the destination of proud warriors, had degenerated into a destination for esoteric excursions.

The next morning both of them sat at different ends of the bench in front of the changing room building and stared at the street in the valley.

"Gulli, here comes the bus. You can't sit here like this. Change and pull yourself together."

"I can sit by my water as I please."

"Gulli, if people here get off the bus and see you sitting here by the pool, they'll probably send the military and drain the spring because they think it leads to nasty mutations and..."

"Shut up! Enough."

She went into the building and came out shortly afterwards as a female figure in traditional Icelandic dress.

"All right, hold on, don't get excited - we're gonna do this and we're gonna get it done. What do we actually have as a spiral shape for the female symbol?"

"Liquorice slugs," replied Gulli.

"Mrs. Brennisteinn, nice to meet you! I am Sigrid Petersson from Halldór-Experience. Mr. Rögn, we have met before," she said and shook hands.

"Great that it finally worked out! We are also very happy that it is finally starting," Gulli replied.

Seventeen people got off the bus, including a girl of about eight years old.

"I see Mister Rögn, you are dressed as Vikings today. I think that's a great idea. Did our parcels with the towels and bathrobes arrive on time?"

"Yes, they did. By the way, we thought as a small item of the program we would go a few steps down to the creek, to the actual stream down there, to give a small introduction or explanation of the landscape.

"Why not. Now I'm not sure if the guests have the right shoes. . ."

"Don't worry, the path is just right here, flat and safe."

"Well, on we go," said Mrs. Petersson with a business smile.

"Dear guests, we are very pleased to welcome you here today at this very special place. Only a few people know about the magic of the place and its historical importance. There are many baths and hot springs in Iceland, but none is as important as the place where you are located today, as it is said that it was here that the Vikings believed that this was the gateway to paradise, the way to Valhalla, by taking a bath in these waters. Furthermore, it can be assumed that this spring, which is located above us in the mountain, was considered so sacred that the Vikings believed that any undertaking with a previous bath in this water would be successful. Therefore, we assume that it was exactly at the mouth of this stream at the sea where the Vikings made their voyages to Vinland, today's North America.

In the valley and around the valley according to records people started to settle since the year 1090 starting with Wingolf Transdottir his wife Vellmar Gundel Gundelkuhn and the children Friha, Frauna and Bemberling. Friha married..."

This was followed by a detailed and lengthy list of names, which Gulli presented without reading, with a fixed view on the tourists. Some began to get bored, typing on their smartphones or taking pictures of the landscape.

In 1349 at the birth of Flenka Flokkonsdir Rögn interrupted her:

"Flenka was the founder of the clan of Mrs. Brennisteinn, who is speaking to you here right now and whose great-grandmother had lived in this valley until 1950. In addition to the uninterrupted oral tradition, an old Nordic proverb says that the counselor for truth is located at the source, which means that only our own experience and direct contact, brings us true knowledge and...".

"...and that the disclosure of the secret mystery of the water outside the valley will lead to the dead no longer finding their way to the other side and haunting the living," Gulli fell into his words.

The visitors looked at their hosts questioningly. The girl clung to her mother.

"Yes, the Nordic fairy tales have their own special charm," interjected Mrs. Petersson, who showed up from behind. " Once again, on behalf of Halldór Airlines, a warm welcome. Here in the right room you will find a small welcome drink and snacks. You will also find your individually embroidered bathrobes and towels, which you are welcome to keep as souvenirs. I suggest you just have a look around and before you relax in the water Mr. Rögn would like to invite you to a short walk down to the water with him to tell you something about the biodiversity and natural history of the valley, isn't it Mr. Rögn?

"Gulli what are you doing?! We mustn't scare people away," Rögn whispered to her and then turned to the group: "Yes ladies and gentlemen, this valley had a very special place in Norse mythology. Rögn, the god of war, who at that time was venerated everywhere and known throughout Northern and Central Europe, is said to have received the fallen warriors right here at this bend of the river, to then lead them to paradise in Valhalla. The god of war has unfortunately fallen into oblivion over the centuries, because the Christian church and historiography had cast an absolute spell on him, as he was of such power and strength that people in Rome were very afraid of him".

From the group came a slight laughter which he could not classify exactly.

"As my colleague told you, everything up here has been passed down orally. When this swimming pool was built, and by the way it is the oldest swimming pool in Iceland, something very special was found during the excavation work,

namely a spear from the 9th century which had the name 'RÖGN' engraved on its shaft in Futhark, the runic writing.

Rögn held a spear in the air and pointed to the engraving at the tip.

"The spear was surprisingly well preserved and was immediately taken to Reykjavik for further examination. However, it inexplicably never arrived there. The construction worker who carried it with him has also disappeared. However, shortly before her death, my colleague's great-grandmother had made a drawing from her memory of what the spear looked like. She could remember it very well because the find was the most exciting event of her life." Again, there was a slight laughter from the group and again Rögn did not know exactly what the people actually thought was so funny.

"Cult spears like these were used by the Germanic and Viking tribes to consecrate enemy armies to their god and to destroy them by throwing them over them. That's exactly what we'd like to do with you down by the river, so if you'd like to follow me..."

No one in the group moved.

"Now, of course, nobody here is to be destroyed, but rather symbolically... down there was the place where fallen or better the souls of the Vikings entered paradise. That means that you throw off old ballast and leave your problems behind. Don't worry, nothing is gonna harm you. There's a special power point down there you just have to see."

"Mummy can I stay here? ", one could hear the girl say. Without being asked Gulli replied „Shure, I'll stay as well. "

"I'll stay up here, too," Mrs. Petersson threw an anxious glance at her hostess, who grew suspicious to her.

The group went, Rögn with the spear in front, to the water. From a distance you could see him tell something, pointing into the landscape and gesticulating. Then the people spread out, looked at the ground, picked up stones and stopped for a while, holding them in their hands. Some of them typed on their smartphones or took pictures of the landscape. Then all gathered again close to Rögn and put their stones on a small pile in front of him. The group went aside, Rögn moved away and threw the spear over the pile, which described an

impressive arch and landed on the other side of the water. Because of the stony ground it did not get stuck. From the top left on the other side of the water, Gulli started to notice a figure approaching with nimble movements over the rocks. Rögn broke away from the group, ran through the water, which reached his stomach, picked up the spear and walked towards the person. One could not figure out what the two were negotiating.

"Mama, there's a horse up there!" said the girl, pointing to a spot in the hillside. In fact, there was an Icelandic pony standing there.

Back at the pool, Mrs. Peterson handed out bath towels and robes by reading out the embroidered names. Rögn half wet took Gulli aside: "Shit, that was Sidolfur!"

"Who?"

"The last dead man who wanted something more from me. The puffins were gone, he came, wanted to go to Valhalla and I gave him a pony and said it would take him there. Obviously, he never arrived."

"A pony stood up there. The brat discovered it."

"This is not good..."

"What did he want?"

"He said if I started again telling people stories somehow, I'd be very sorry for myself and all the people."

"He's a fucking returnee! We find his body and bury it with his head between his legs. You should have done that long ago..."

"Not so loud, keep it down!"

"You are a fucking loser! You're a god and you can't even keep your dwelling free from the undead! I don't give a shit about him. These idiots here can't see him anyway. Your group didn't take any notice of him."

"But the little one saw the pony."

"Look, if this bum dares to come up here..."

They saw Sidolfur standing at the edge of the pool with a broad grin. In the water the first guests already started to swim. He looked horrible, his clothes were made of bloody rags. He stretched out his arms with relish and began to undress calmly. His body had unsightly flesh wounds on his stomach. When he was naked, he went to the bathing ladder, climbed into the pool, pushed himself off the wall to the opposite side, where he laid his arms to the right and left. In doing so he looked continuously out of his hollow eyes at Rögn. The other bathers did not seem to notice him.

"I will not let myself..."

"Gulli, you must stay calm now. If you get upset, you change back - wait here, I'll talk to him!"

He went in the direction of Sidolfur, but she didn't think to stay calm and deviate from her plan.

"Dear bathers! This holy water from the bosom of the volcanic mother earth is said to transform the brave. It leaves the cowards behind ugly. Those who are brave have no problems in life and afterwards. I will now take sage as an ancient sign and for purification..."

Sidolfur began to flick water with his fingers at his nearest neighbor, who looked irritated because he couldn't see the cause. Rögn was just next to the girl, tore a liquorice slug out of her hand and said, "Look, like this: You have to throw them flat over the water so that they jump," and threw them into the water towards Sidolfur, so that it looked as if this was the cause of the splashes. He looked pleadingly at Gulli, who was already steaming slightly from her ears.

"I'm gonna get the sage now!" she said, and it sounded like a threat.

"Jessi, you don't throw candy in the water. Why don't you go get mommy her towel from the house, ok?" The girl trotted into the building.

As soon as she disappeared behind the door, she made a deafening scream and Jessi came running back howling.

"Mom, there's a monster in the house!"

The holy peace was gone. The girl's mother tried for a long time to calm the girl down, there was certainly no monster in the house. Her suggestion "Let's go in together and ask the nice Mrs. Brennsisteinn" only caused more panic. The monster must have eaten Mrs. Brennisteinn.

Mrs. Petersson went inside to have a look but found no one.

"Don't you think it might help if your colleague came back now to ease the situation?"

"Uh, no, she can't right now. She's not feeling well."

Even before Mrs. Petersson could answer, Sidolfur started kicking the water. The guests near him gave frightened looks in his direction. Rögn dived into the pool and began to perform the same movement right next to Sidolfur. "It's good and invigorating," yelled Rögn.

The Halldór-Experience cancelled the contract that very evening.

9.

Professor Shaktyran and Rögn had a loose friendship. Both had had historical links, but their ways to get some feedback again were different. When they emigrated from the USSR to the USA their ways had separated. With his insights into Soviet research and propaganda, the professor quickly found access, first to the US Army and then to renowned universities in the field of brain research. With the dot-com bubble, he also founded his own company, which survived the crash and with which he launched computer games.

In the past years they saw each other irregularly at the meetings of the self-help group. After "Rögn's - World Rattle" had started in the cinemas, Rögn received a phone call from Shaktyran, who congratulated him on the great success, which flattered him, although strictly speaking he had nothing to do with the movie except being the name giver. He also told him that he would make a stopover in Reykjavik shortly and that they absolutely had to see each other.

They met in a cocktail bar with a South Sea setting. Rögn told about the disaster with the tourists at the thermal bath.

"Watch out," the professor told him with his nose between parasols and palm trees on small skewers stuck in canned fruit floating in a colorful alcohol. "You will have a comeback! We take place in the head and into the heads, into the brains we have to get back. Other impulses that we didn't understand at the time threw us off. Now we are recapturing our frontal lobes and not just for fifteen minutes of fame like Warhol's soup can, we want 15,000 years. We only become masters of our time again if we go with it, if we know how to reactivate the reward centers, we have to provide dopamine, chemical formulas in the brain."

Rögn did not understand.

"Watch out," Professor Shaktyran said once again. "Your movie 'Rögn's World Rattle' will be a video game, the biggest, most expensive and elaborate ever made. The story: The world of the players, a kind of earth in the future, is threatened by the wild Jönga oaks, who take revenge for the whole destruction of nature and have allied themselves with technology. They overgrow the world and crush all life. All weapon technology used against them only makes them stronger. It's like the Rögn comics of the future. Games are the thing. Ninety billion euros in sales and upward trend. Film is okay, you can empathize and get brain stimulation, but it's static and we can't get in." He tapped himself against his forehead with a paper umbrella. "In this game, players must leave the world and go to Rögn. He sits at the center of the

universe and the players have to search and find him, meaning you, within 16 trillion planets that are generated ad hoc when you land on them. Only if you are loyal to Rögn and solve the tasks according to his demands, you can find him and the center at all, and watch out, here's the clue. When you are with him, he allies himself with the player by giving him a part of his armor, a helmet with virtual reality goggles and diodes with magnetic coils over the brain lobe. With that we activate the belief centers and the more they are activated, the better the progress in the game and bang, there we finally have them reconnecting in the head, in the brain, merging with the deity. Brain research has proven: stimulate the frontal lobes with magnets, put the people in an environment without external stimuli and they already have mystical experiences, they feel a presence, they feel God, but not just anybody, they will feel you again, as if the Christian pack had never ravaged our lands. When the Avatar warriors fall and have enough mysticism points, then they don't die, but awaken at Rögn, in Valhalla, so to speak, bathe in the water, their previous game life passes them by, and they get the helmet.

"But it's a game and you know it's a game."

"Rögn, you frustrate me. It makes no difference in the brain. People will think that they can achieve something with the God, because watch out: we will give them experiences in the central places of the game, where you appear, where you help people to master the tasks, magnetic waves chase through the frontal lobes and people will become more focused. Religious experiences. That's what the studies have found out. And since the research is arguing whether it has anything to do with whether you already think religiously from the beginning and then you interpret experiences accordingly, we create that during the game, before that, through our journey through the galaxy. We bring the players on track, on a course of faith, in line, on brainwave. Immersion. The Absolute. We align the players' moves with the mysticism scale, which is a test procedure to measure religious predisposition, and the more the moves are aligned with it, the better the players' results are, so more mysticism leads to more scores.

Rögn, look how well you are already feeling through the films - and they are only passive immersions! What do you think happens if the players participate with their own personality! The magnetic coils on the frontal lobes cause the feeling of a presence, of a being, possibly influenced by predisposition, this predisposition is developed within the game, the helmet is then given by the god himself and instead of deprivation during the transcranial magnetic stimulation there are 3-D pictures with you as god of war or something!

The 3-D images combined with game moves build up neuronal patterns in a way that we have not been able to imagine before. You know, there are paraplegics who can walk again because they have been stimulated in 3-D! With software, an external skeleton and VR technology, paralyzed people can partially restore movement and feeling.

Our helmet is just the beginning! We'll add more pieces of armor, an arm to fight with, weapons...the effect on the brain will be the same. We, the gods are streaming through the neurons, we monitor and reward and punish! Everything in the brain leaves a trace. We settle like sediment, we rebuild in the mind like stalactite caverns, we create new neural connections, we become part of evolution again! We create new neuronal patterns, we set the fractals, we have the time behind us, the right time to grow. They're going to fly to us because they only think in the moment, but we can plan on a long-term basis.

We do the stories. Stories influence thinking! We set the new right dopamine shots, many are dependent on their reward center, on the likes and pings on their smartphones, that's where we slide in! With virtual reality and brain waves we re-create this eternal connection with the human world. In the past, they used to tell us their experiences and thoughts on their own initiative. We were their projection screen. We are now taking them back by capturing their experiences, motivations and actions in real time and shaping and designing and using them ourselves. We are in the new golden age!"

Rögn stumbled after the words of the professor. He took a shoebox out of his pocket, glanced briefly to the sides to check no one was watching, and then took out a silver helmet, which had the shape of half an egg with a nose strip. Above each temple it had a hump from which short horns grew. As visor it had 3D glasses.

"There under the bumps - that's where the magnet coils are. The impulses are so gentle they won't even notice."

10.

Moving on to our next item on the agenda," Hera spoke at the FGA meeting on the topic of miscellaneous. "Invitation to a collegial exchange with the Tibetan Gods. As a reminder, ten years ago Hepate had sent an e-mail to the gods of Mount Meru, the world mountain somewhere near Asia, asking if they would like to come to our next meeting, and just a moment ago we found the following answer in our inbox, I'll read it out..." (she puts on her glasses) ... "Yes."

"This is fake! All fake news these days. I'm telling you they don't exist! We should watch out like hell, because I think some demon kids have hacked our account and are trying to get at us," Bastet curses.

"But they have temples everywhere and, in the Himalayas, people are making pilgrimages on their knees up mountainsides for them," Hepate replied.

"Of course. And they are said to be 36 million years old. That is about the same as the idea that man descended from apes!"

"Well, I also find it strange that we only get an answer after 10 years," said a Mesopotamian goddess of healing.

"Perhaps we were rude and used the wrong form of address. Maybe they're not called Tibetan gods but... Buddhist gods."

"Stop this Buddhism stuff of that charlatan!" Athena shot out.

"We never saw him on Olympus. My husband didn't see him, I didn't see him, no one saw it. We don't know him in Greece. And then to invent a religion and claim it works without gods, but still have some. Totally illogical and an unbounded cheek. I tell you one thing, the Spanish Inquisition was not wrong about everything and if I had seen one of those Meran goddesses, I would have blown them away!"

Thereupon again the Mesopotamian: "Bastet and Athena are right. We should be careful, because some of the monotheists out there are pretty radical at the moment, and besides, I think it's rude to answer so late. I think we should definitely not react and not announce our next meeting place. If they are actually sitting on Mount Meru, they can supposedly see everything and find us if they want to."

"If Mount Meru existed, we could spit on their heads from Olympus."

"Let's take a vote. All those in favor of answering "yes"? Who's against?"

Okay, majority against. So recorded and adjourned.

Next topic: Performance of the Rhinegold."

11.

A good three months after the launch of the game Prof. Shaktyran called Rögn.

"You must come to the lab immediately. The first player is about to discover you!"

Rögn met Shaktyran in the best of moods in front of a wall with dozens of screens, which looked like the video surveillance headquarters in a station of a city of millions. On the screens one could watch different players from all over the world on their way through "Rögn's World Rattle".

"There, the one up there", said Shaktyran and pointed to a screen just below the high ceiling, tapped something on a keyboard and brought the action to a screen in front of their heads. "The little one is awesome, just 13 years old from Taipei and calls herself Siff. Actually, she has to practice violin for hours every day, but for weeks now she has been hanging around in our world..."

"How do you know that?"

"You can see how they play," Shaktyran laughed. "She's gonna find you, she's gonna make it, she's gonna find you..."

The warrior Siff fought with seven giant oaks at once. They came from several sides, and although Siff was very strong and had reached the top of the weapons scale, she had ventured too far. What the player didn't know was that this was the highest level of the game you could reach. Once you had come into this ambush, you were in a hopeless situation and could not win. On the other hand, this was exactly the goal of the game, which of course had not been communicated. To make it to this level only three months after the launch was a remarkable achievement considering that the goal of the game, Rögn itself, was located in his sacred stream in the middle of a galaxy of millions of ad hoc generating planets. Siff fought bravely, quite bravely with her joystick and in the end, she had no chance, because she would be pierced by a gnarled iron branch of a sneaky oak giant.

Although they knew the outcome, since it was pre-programmed, they followed the battle with excitement and cheered enthusiastically when the warrior's heart was pierced. At first the graphics resembled the usual dying of a character, which usually meant a restart at the last starting point and led to a blurring of the contours of the graphics with the written formal death message on the screen. This time the dying process was different. The contours blurred this time as well, but with the difference that from top to bottom the screen

began to turn into a deep red. The player floated above her avatar, saw him impaled by the murderous tree in the middle of his other accomplices and rose above his own death. The message of death did not arrive, you could see yourself lying dead on earth, but at the same time the power, battle and life points began to increase immensely. One could just watch the events. Slowly sounds of spherical-sounding choral tunes, the murmur of a feast and the voices of birds, which reminded one of seagulls, but actually came from puffins, with whom most players had not made any sonic acquaintance until then. The joystick initially reacted to no commands until the old body was just a little dot on the screen and one had the feeling of having ascended to the level of the choirs. When birds started flying by right next to and below your field of vision you got your control back and the game reacted to input again. You could fly in any direction you wanted, or if you wanted you could zoom back to the surface of the planet. Around the frame of the screen a golden ornament of nordic knots and stylized dragon creatures appears. Then, in the middle of the screen, in the player's chosen language, letters appeared, reminiscent of an Irish early medieval manuscript, announcing the following:

"Congratulations, Siff! Your courage and loyalty have brought you here. You have transcended your past experiences as you no longer need them."

As the writing dissolved, the background was replaced by a new graphic, which took the view directly over the surface of a steaming water and showed around it a lovely green and rocky landscape under the sun, a meadow where flowers bloomed, bees swarmed around and puffins landed from time to time and looked at her with faithful round eyes. Almost within reach, you could see the outline of a helmet next to you on the shore in a brilliant silver light.

The Irish looking letters continued and announced the following information:

"You are on your way to the Rögn's paradise of glorious warriors. Click on the link below to get a free upgrade to the next level of the game. As a sign of acceptance into the Warrior Rögn's round, you will receive a helmet with 3D glasses as part of his armor, which will be sent to you immediately. Click here if the address you entered at the beginning of the game has changed to ensure that you will receive the helmet you need to continue to the next level of the game.

The picture ended with the image of a red-bearded proud unclothed god lying in the water on the opposite bank with outstretched arms.

"Tomorrow, when she's wearing the helmet, she'll play life. We can watch it on youtube. She just posted that info to 43,783 followers."

12.

"Well, I put this thing on...So, here it says that the humps should sit... exactly over the notches of the temple for best game result...you can move the coils over small buttons...so..." (you see her fiddling inside the helmet and putting it on) "So now folks! How do I look? The humps here are supposed to vibrate, so when you get hit on you head your skull goes boom. But nothing can happen to me as I'm already dead and resurrected again. The design of the helmet is pretty amazing, here in front with 3D glasses."

You can see Siff in a small box on top of the screen, the rest is showing game world.

"So, here comes a bird approaching, ah, cute, cool beak, cute eyes, aha, he speaks...ok, let's follow him, he looks friendly. Strange, actually. Yesterday I was beaten to death by that crazy Eichbrummer, thought ok, go back to my ship, had the choice between "reset" like all the times before after dying, but suddenly there was the option "Rögn is ready for you", clicked on it and thought first I'm in the Easter Egg, there is this naked guy lying in the water in front of me, grinning at me, pointing at his helmet next to him and saying if I want to have it, so I do, and then suddenly it says yes: Congratulations, you have reached the goal on this level! A free upgrade including equipment with VR helmet is on the way to you! And bang, in fact, the next day a delivery of helmet, upgrade and VR goggles. How cool is that!"

13.

This time as an exception the self-help group met in the open air. The members of the FGA met at a football stadium in California. It was the eve of the Super Bowl and they wanted to be part of the suspense of 800 million spectators around the globe.

They met at the edge of the field at the bottom rows of a curve, because some gods, especially the southern European ones, refused to take a seat on the grass. The stadium was built in the shape of an elongated oval and was a massive stature. The longitudinal buildings, which were directly connected to the spectator stands, had several stories. A stage for tomorrow's pre-match show was set up in the middle of the field. The lighting was switched on and over the advertising and display panels flickered the time countdown to the start of the mega-event. The sky was starlit.

In addition to the usual sequence of events, like the reaffirmation of the twelve-point program and the sharing of those gods or goddesses who asked for it, the presentation of a team of Olmec gods was planned as a special feature. They were supposed to give a lecture on the topic "Sports events as a re-enactment of the fight against cosmic forces". This had been preceded by months of discussion in social networks, as the Greeks claimed that a sports facility could only be a transcendental medium, if at all, if exactly the length of a stadium was maintained. The Maya and Olmecs therefore had no reason to be surprised that their culture had perished, since they had not had the dimensions of their football fields under control. One could speak of good fortune that their cultic ball games in exorbitant squares had not led to the collapse of the whole universe. In order to avoid further conflicts, it was agreed to let the Central Americans present their concept in peace today, in return for which the Greeks should be allowed to speak at the next meeting of the FGA on the subject of "3000 years of the Olympics as uninterrupted ambassadors of peace and culture".

Even before any speech could be given, the evening was completely disrupted and to this day there is no agreement about what actually happened.

First the Menëtu Òpalanie noticed that something was odd. The sky was suddenly covered with myriads of stars in a way as he had never seen even before the arrival of the whites in America. The light pollution of the surrounding city of Santa Clara also spoke against the sight he was offered.

Shortly thereafter, the earth shook, and the electricity failed. Such occurrences do not yet cause gods to be upset. After all, one was in California, or perhaps one of the colleagues had not been able to control himself, or perhaps he had even found his old strength.

But then matter drifted apart. The lawn with the stage began to shoot up into the sky, the grandstands with the outer buildings broke off the playing field and folded back like playing cards. The gods in the rows of seats could only save themselves by jumping forward. At breakneck speed the top of a mountain rose up. The lawn of the playing field became a tiny carpet on the top, to which the support group clung tightly. Around the foot of the exploding mountain, the earth tore in two and formed a deep trench that seemed to rip open the layers of the earth all the way to its center. The clouds formed a wreath around the mountain and lay far below the gods. Around them was a kind of ether, which they knew partly only from legends. By a miracle they all remained intact and unharmed. As if after a roller coaster ride at supersonic speed, the gods lay there dazed for a moment. Around them were still the headlights and a scoreboard from the football stadium where they had been sitting before a flap of their wings. The bent spotlights began to give light again and the scoreboard also started up again. Following text began to flicker across the screen in constant repetition and in every font or symbolism of those present:

"Welcome to Mount Meru. Please feel free to look around and feel at home. If you should meet our friendly staff, please let them know your time continuum."

From then on the experiences of the participants diverted.

Athena straightened her palladium and went to the highest point of the summit. From there she looked for Olympus, which she discovered in the far distance to the east. The summit of Mount Olympus was far below her, which, as she knew, was only an optical illusion, since Mount Olympus was far away from Europe and the earth was curved. Shortly afterwards she was welcomed by two friendly fauns, who greeted her with canapés and soft drinks. They said they were delighted that she had found her way up and that she was just in time for the talk about mathematics and cosmic order. Without any detour via the mask, she was led to a television studio, where she took a seat on a pedestal next to a green-faced goddess with eight arms on one side and an empty armchair on the other. Polite hands were shaken. Opposite

them were about twelve hundred cameras pointed at her. Then the moderator appeared, bald, wearing glasses and an orange robe, who, to her great surprise, was obviously human in composition. How could it be and what occurred to him that he was travelling Mount Meru as a human being? He is also happy to welcome Mrs. Athena and explained to her that it is a small family tradition and he tries to visit every reincarnation as far as possible. He had just been on a US tour in San Francisco anyway and from there it was only a stone's throw away. So, in a few seconds they went on air. Athena asked where the third guest would be. He was already there as was explained to her. A Brahma without form and from pure consciousness. A very nice continuum that doesn't bite. I'm sure you will get along fine. You hear the jingle of an amazingly pathetic sounding Hammond organ and the talk show started.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm glad that you've tuned in again in such large numbers and as you know everything here is live as always. Even for those of you who will not receive these signals for several light years, I would like to introduce a very special guest in our midst today. ...the goddess Athena of Olympus, or Mount Meru in Greek.

You could hear laughter from a tape recorder.

"Our subject today is nature, evolution and mathematics. We are therefore particularly pleased to have Mrs. Athena join us this evening. She and her Greek family have made a special contribution to teaching mathematics, like arithmetic, geometry and music to mankind. This has led to many cultural achievements and in many cases has helped to reduce suffering in the world".

A tape and the four pairs of hands of the green-skinned goddess gave a short applause. Athena felt flattered. The topic itself calmed her down, because she knew it inside out. She felt a little sorry for the green goddess because she was so unshapely. But then again, you can't choose your parents - probably Titans in this case. She found the empty chair a bit silly, but she had manners and would try to respect foreign cultures.

The first question went to her. How she and her colleagues would have taught people how to calculate and what was their motivation to do so. She told the cameras that they originally did not want to teach people the laws of nature at all and that they had therefore punished Prometheus for his industrial espionage.

Again, there was polite laughter from the tape.

Then Athena was in her element. She told of the flashes of inspiration they had sent to Pythagoras, of the creative and magical powers of numbers as the basic pattern of natural order, the possibilities of measuring beauty, the perfect geometric bodies of Euclid and, of course, the singing of the planets through their intervals at a distance from Earth, jokingly adding that she hoped Mount Meru would not cut a disharmony in the sound of the spheres.

Then man and the green eight-armed woman asked interested questions. Athena noticed that her talk partner was holding artifacts such as cymbals, daggers or prayer chains in her hands, that were constantly changing according to the content of the conversation or emotion.

Then it came to a somewhat unpleasant situation. The moderator said that the supposed God in the armchair had a question. The name of the god sounded so complicated in Athena's ears that she could not remember it. The green woman, who was later introduced to her as Sudassa, and the person looked attentively towards the empty armchair. Athena heard and understood nothing. Then the man said to Athena:

"Please, what do you say?"

She looked confused into the twelve hundred cameras.

"Um, sorry, I didn't understand the question..."

The moderator solved the situation elegantly and professionally by remarking that the Brahma with the unpronounceable name here had accidentally switched the Greek word Chronos with Kairos.

"Yes, these are different concepts of time," said Athena, who still did not understand what was going on.

"A good point, thank you Mrs. Athena," said the presenter and, with a barely perceptible movement of his little finger, ordered an applause from the tape recorder.

Then it was Brahma Sudassa's turn. She was asked for her opinion on natural laws, cosmic order and harmony. Athena felt left behind, as she did not understand a lot of things, but she did not show because everyone was so friendly with each other and because it was apparently not a discussion but only a presentation of different points of view.

Sudassa raved something about the fact that mathematics, intervals and forms are certainly something wonderful for people on existence level number five. The view of a flower or listening to music is certainly something harmonious and beautiful there and thus contributes to joy. Joy, on the other hand, is certainly a helpful factor on the path to knowledge. From other levels, however, one could assume that flowers or music are received as beautiful because the recipients are

conditioned to perceive these things as beautiful. The same applies to the beauty of the mathematical laws of the cosmos. This experience is perceived as beautiful by many beings because they assume that these laws originate from a mind or consciousness similar to their own. This leads to the opinion that a higher creative being is at work in the background. The truth, however, is that the mind of the recipient is simply formed according to exactly the same laws as the mathematics of the world he lives in. The beauty of things is simply a part of their functional design and not the product of a Creator God.

For Athena, the subsequent conversation with the third guest consisted of a long silence until the final applause woke her.

"Thank you, Ms. Athena, for participating in this vertical exchange," said the presenter as he left the studio.

"May I ask you something?"

"Yeah, sure."

"The colleague in the empty chair. Did he really exist?"

He pondered her question for a moment.

"Brahma Akincannayatanupa?"

He and all the gods on Mount Meru know that they do not exist."

Rögn came back to his senses with his stomach down. He froze. He raised his head. Snow stuck to his face. There was snow all around him. He lay in a mountainous, snow-blown landscape. He stood up and tried to orientate himself. He was on a plateau and every direction looked the same. He started walking. He moved not because he had a goal, but simply because he was cold. He had hardly walked a few meters when he saw footprints in the snow that must have been made by a huge creature. He followed the trail that led him along a winding path to a hot spring. In the spring a shaggy creature was bathing, which he had only known from comics until then. He friendly waved his wet fur arm to him and signaled to make himself comfortable in the hot water as well. It was a Yeti. Rögn undressed and slid into the water. The two understood each other at first go.

The Yeti seemed to have a similar job like Rögn. Sometimes the souls of the deceased also came to catch up with him. Mostly they were people from the region, now and then also mountaineers from far away countries. Some did ask him the way to the gods and Mount Meru. The Yeti then informed the

human souls that they were already on Mount Meru, which usually led to great joy. But he did not know the way to the gods. He had been searching the plateau for a long time. It seemed endless and he could only move away from the hot spring for a certain time, as he had to come back regularly to warm up. He had never found a trace to the gods. They had to live somewhere further up.

"You are a god and must know where the others live," the Yeti asked and handed Rögn a cigar and a glass of whisky.

"Thanks. You know, I'm off duty. At my place it looks a lot like yours."

"But if you are a god, you must know about the world. You helped create it, didn't you?"

"I honestly don't remember creating anything. My first memory is that I was in hot water and a dented man came to me and asked me the way to Valhalla."

"What is Valhalla?"

"It's a kind of an eternal party."

"Have you been there yourself?"

"Actually, no. I wouldn't know exactly how to get there. Others have accompanied them on the way. I had to stay at the spring in case new guests arrived."

The Yeti emptied his glass and refilled both of them.

"And what does that mean, you're off duty? Is the party over in Valhalla?"

"At least it doesn't seem to be very hip anymore..."

Rögn told the Yeti his story and about the self-help group of the Fallen Gods Anonymous.

"You're making yourself dependent on people?"

"Why dependent? Without them we're worthless, aren't we?"

The two of them sat there for quite a while and smoked the cigar box empty.

When the Yeti squeezed the last butt out in the snow, he said:

"You know, maybe humans have a lot of things advanced to us. I often find them annoying when they pass by, because many of them just leave their rubbish and thoughts lying around everywhere and I am allowed to clean up afterwards, on the other hand they all manage to get away from this plateau. I mean, they come, and they can just leave again. I never see them again on my walks. I don't know if they find your weird party or the gods up there or whatever, but in any case, they seem to know a way out.

So, if I were you, I'd try it as a human. It seems like a short-term position, but it's a flexible one.

"As a man? Are you crazy? With the madness they do every day?"

"But they seem to have the huge advantage of being able to choose their gods or their party. So, if I were you, I would try it right away. You already look like a man. I don't even have to think about it. First of all, I can't get off this plateau here, and secondly, look at me, I'd certainly not look good and be stuffed in a display case right away."

"But as a human being I would have been dead for ages! I wouldn't know what progress that would bring for me."

"You're right, but I've been taking a hot bath here for 5,000 years and I can't find my way up. Your bath is already getting cooler and your party seems to be over, and then - please don't me wrong - you try to make a comeback with people's attention, which is as long-lasting as a snow hare's jump!"

"People have long been afraid of me! I hardly believe that the jump of a snow hare takes 1500 years! I am a god of war, who leads the people to the other side."

"You were a god of war. If you're something just by being something to others, you're nothing."

"What's all this fuzzy Eastern nonsense now?"

"You want to live in total dependence because you're scared."

"I'm not afraid of anybody, especially not people!"

"So, you would show yourself to them even without armor?"

"Who could possibly harm me?"

"Cheers, brother!" said the Yeti and toasted with Rōgn. "Ready for a little game?"

"Sure. What kind?"

"Eight hundred million viewers at one stroke. Full attention, exactly what you're looking for and what you think will bring you forward."

"Go ahead, I'm ready."

The Yeti supported himself on the icy shore with his hands and quickly rose out of the water. Only now did Rōgn realize how huge the Yeti actually was, building up several stories in front of him. He walked behind Rōgn with a single step, grabbed him under his arms, pulled him out of the water, lifted him into the air and set him down on the ground behind him with his back to the spring. He laid his left paw on Rōgn's left shoulder, with his right he pointed past Rōgn's ear into the distance.

"In that direction, as quickly as possible. The longer they don't get you, the more airtime."

Before Rögn understood what was going on, he got a strong kick on his bare bottom and saw himself streaking across the grass of the packed stadium of the Super Bowl final.

The crowd cheered. Thousands twitched their mobile phone cameras, the camera drones hovered over him and he was broadcast live around the globe. The kick had temporarily distracted him so much that he could no longer make a decision whether or not he wanted to be seen by the people at all. The commotion around him was clear. Hundreds of millions of viewers saw a red-bearded naked man followed by security and the annoyed looks of dozens of football players. He raised his arms, made the Victory sign and gave back the cheers. The booing did not bother him. His nakedness did not bother him. Nothing bothered him. Nothing stopped him until a quarterback ran over him to finish his entry.

14.

How real the visit of Mount Meru was is still disputed under the gods of the support group until today. Some reported that the mountain had simply receded, and they were sitting in the empty stadium again. Others had gone down with a ski lift, others had slid down on rainbows, woke up at home again or were kicked out rudely like Rögn.

Bastet claims to this day that she has not noticed any of this. On the field of the stadium she had eaten a tasty looking butterfly, which made her feel so sick that she didn't regain consciousness until it was all over.

Rögn's streaker appearance on the other hand was real and was the hit on social media for a week with millions of likes, clicks and tweets. Never before had he received such attention in one moment. During the 33 seconds of his performance he had the feeling that he could shake off his complete oblivion from the past at once. As God, he had a good feeling for who was giving him his attention and during this naked run of his life he felt exactly those 100 million who were with him undivided. He was the center of attention, he moved, he inspired, he repelled, he entertained, he triggered something. The run across the football field put him into a rapture and trance at the same time, which gave him the feeling of running towards the restoration of his old divinity. However, it only

lasted 33 seconds. Even during his fall, he had the image that the spectators would immediately jump up from their seats and demand the death of the quarterback with thumbs down. But this did not happen and instead people applauded. He was led off the pitch roughly and with insults by the security people, with one of them holding his baseball cap in front of his groin to cover him. No one objected to the war god Rögn being treated like a criminal. Nobody rose up against his mistreatment because nobody saw a god of war. For the spectators he was simply a naked lunatic and perhaps also courageous person. That he had jumped in from another world was only felt by Rögn alone through the echo of the Yeti's kick on his backside.

Short detention, formalities, police, paperwork, taking down the personal details and announcement of a fine and the attention was done with. He was placed in front of the entrance of the stadium on the large parking lot where he had to wait for the next bus in a T-shirt, shorts and slippers of the host team. The fan articles had been given to him, as he had no own clothes. This would be charged to him with the fine. Some passers-by ran past him and gave him thumbs-up signals, as they thought his performance was cool. Two women in a convertible offered him a ride into town.

As God, he felt deeply fallen. But when he later followed the news he saw that for a short moment he was world famous as a human being. He watched his appearance on the web countless times and tried to understand and order the different feelings he had.

15.

Prof. Shaktyran picked up Rögn with an electric limousine. He did not drive himself but had a chauffeur do so. Rögn sat with him in the back seat.

"What happened to you?"

"I...", Rögn looked forward to the chauffeur, from whom he saw only his cap and gloves on the steering wheel.

"Don't worry, he's one of us. So what happened?"

Rögn told him about the meeting of the FGA from the previous evening and about the visit of Mount Meru.

"I think they're just a bunch of hippies who can do good animation, but in fact are bad contemporaries. They want to be on top. We should never have invited them. They still have a big market share with their Eastern "everything's a circle" philosophy. But I still don't understand why the Yeti has chased you across the field?"

"We talked about all sorts of things and after a few glasses of whiskey he said that maybe you are better off as a human being because then you have options. And then he claimed that I would only become dependent out of fear and that the worship I was looking for was just something very elusive anyway. I told him that I wasn't afraid and I ran across the field."

"He got you drunk. Those are cheap intelligence methods. He was just trying to get information of all of us."

"He claimed he could imagine himself trying as a human being."

"Rögn you are naive. He was just pretending to be your friend. You know why he chased you through the crowd? To take all the divinity from you! Everyone was staring at you: but not as a god of war, but as a naked joke! That's a total downgrade. He was trying to push you out of the god realm. One mouth less to feed, you understand? The Asians are not stupid. They know exactly how to do it. Struggle for resources. Humanity is growing, but so are the countless beliefs that need to be articulated. That's where the Yeti beast did a good job. Right now you have a chance to make a real comeback because millions of kids are thinking of you and about the World's Rattle game."

Rögn's fingers revealed that he became nervous.

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Didn't tell what?"

"That we already have a thousand players in helmets. That's supposed to get me ahead, right?"

Shaktyran remained silent, took out his mobile phone and typed a message. Shortly afterwards the exit sign for the airport slid past them.

"Aren't we going to...?"

"Later. I have an important meeting first. Make yourself comfortable. We're going to Arizona."

The following twelve hours of driving were rather tense. Rögn was confused. He was ashamed that he had been fooled. On the other hand, the Yeti hadn't done anything sneaky to him. What if it was a trap after all? He didn't feel any different than before. Maybe humans didn't feel any different than gods, at least not those who looked humanoid anyway. A fear still lurked in his mind. Perhaps the performance had indeed destroyed something. He would have loved to look at himself in the mirror to see if there had been any changes, but there was no mirror in the back of the car and he wouldn't have wanted the professor to watch him anyway. All he could do was to secretly look at himself through his cell phone camera. Afterwards he felt urged to look at the recordings of his performance on the net again and again and to read the comments about it. He could only do this on a few occasions while driving and only when they took a break and separated for a short time. He could see the hashtag #sexystreaker, where a small fan community seemed to develop. It made him smile.

Most of the time the professor was busy with his computer on his lap, over which rows of numbers were flickering incessantly. He didn't seem divine in himself either, Rögn thought to himself. He had been hanging around in research laboratories for over eighty years, holding posts and titles. He didn't know anybody from the self-help group, or from his old colleagues, who pursued such worldly activities, unless it had something to do with a comeback attempt. He, however, seemed to have a real interest in his own work. Although he attended the support group meetings constantly for years, he had never revealed anything about himself. He had never stepped forward to share. For some time he had stayed away. After they had already passed the Arizona state sign in the evening sun for several hours, Professor Rögn informed that he would meet important investors in the computer game who wanted to be updated. As he would certainly understand, he unfortunately could not take him inside after his appearance yesterday. The business partners are rather conservative and since it was the most important sports event in the country, it is rather unlikely that Rögn will not be recognized as the streaker.

They drove past some settlements of the Navajo Indians and Rögn thought he had read something like Painted Desert at the front of the navigation system, when they turned onto a

private road, which was interrupted after two miles in the middle of nowhere by an illuminated barrier with black dressed security people. Two men came to the car, took a quick look at the passengers, gave an ok sign and let the barrier up.

A business meeting at such late hour seemed a bit strange to Rögn.

"We're going off the road for a moment," Shaktyran explained. "Our partner has a lot of money and as a private pleasure he holds a collection of old carousels. There's a small visitor center, we'll take you there. There'll be something to eat and drink."

They would pick him up after the meeting and take him to the Phoenix airport.

Rögn looked for a light switch. He found it and neon lights on the ceiling started to blink warm. Outside he heard the car leaving. A simple room, a counter, behind it a sink, a few small round tables and chairs and a big fridge, next to it a small door. The refrigerator was two-thirds full of soda. The food was toast, but no toaster, slices of cheese and a lot of avocados. He made himself some sandwiches with what was available, took a glass of water, sat down at one of the tables and took his mobile phone to watch the latest videos and comments.

It seemed to him as if the posts were already decreasing compared to the previous day. On #sexystreaker they were still celebrating him, on a gay blog they posted and discussed his appearance and in a comment line of a news channel they demanded a prison sentence against him for showing himself naked to hundreds of thousands of children.

In between he remembered Shaktyran's words about the Yeti. He closed his cell phone and looked at his hand to see if it had changed while he was traveling. Nothing had happened.

He sat, waited, three hours went by without an event. He went to the door next to the fridge. There was a small padlock hanging there. He wanted to know what was behind. He was bored and out of a childish fear he didn't want to look at the reports about him any longer. Perhaps it robbed him of all his strength after all and made him mean.

He couldn't find a key for the padlock and he was already thinking about how to break it when he notices it was not locked and could be opened easily.

Behind was a chamber with three pallets of Mexican beer cans, some garden and other tools and a dashboard on the wall. There were several switches, controls and levers, in

addition to four lines of adhesive tape. On the tapes was written: "Ragnarök", "endangered species", "Lollypop" and "Western". Rögn took a can of beer from the pallet and emptied it in a handful of moves. He wondered about the buttons and opened another can. Where was Shaktyran? He thought again about whether the Yeti had set a trap for him. More cans of beer were opened. He wrote the professor a text asking him where he was. No reply. He looked again for his fan club #sexystreaker. He wanted to answer some people there, get in touch with them. The beer made him feel good. The Yeti had been a nice guy. The professor was probably just jealous because he missed Mount Meru. And what was all this secrecy about the players? And if they were already playing with the helmets at Rögn's World Rattle, why didn't he feel it? He took off his T-shirt, made a selfie of his face and naked upper body, created a new account with this picture and posted it into the group #sexystreaker, Hi, here I am! Other users jumped on it and immediately there were little dopamine pops in the reward center of his brain. Then his battery ran out and his charger was left in his bag in the car. He cast a loud curse, which just saved his mobile device from being smashed.

The first pallet of beer cans thinned out.

He felt lonely.

He stepped outside the door. The sky was cloudy, and as far he could see there was no other building or Shaktyran in sight.

When he took the next beer he stopped in front of the dashboard and tried to focus the "Ragnarök" with his eyes. He dug up the words for a short monologue: "Black is the sun, the earth sinks into the sea, from the sky the cheerful stars are fading. Blazing whirlpools churn up the world's nourishing tree..."

I wish he'd thought. He pushed the button. Nothing happened. He nodded to himself. "I knew it. It's all a lie. Valhalla nonsense." He's taking a deep breath. Then he thinks he hears a melody. Not Valhalla horns but a soft and playful rhythmic melody like a small fairground organ. He goes straight to his mobile to see if the source is there, but it's still off. He looks out the window. About fifty meters away, a carousel is lit up, turning and playing Wagner's fire magic from small organ pipes. Rögn steps outside. The center of the carousel represents the trunk of an ash tree whose branches spread out round and dense and form the roof. The various carriages hang from it and are pulled by boars, wolves and bears. On some of them there are figures sitting, some squeeze under the carriages, on others they grow out of the backs of the seats. Baldr, Fryr, Odin, Thor, Loki, Ymir, the Fenris wolf and all

sorts of invented creatures spin peacefully hunting in circles. Everything is carved out of wood, colorfully painted and illuminated by hundreds of light bulbs, which only shine red in the Fenriswolf's pair of eyes. The Ragnarök carousel shines its light on the surrounding and Rögn recognizes the silhouettes of three other carousels.

He approaches the comfortably circling end of the world in amazement. From the left he sees puffins turning around the corner. A joyful shiver spreads from his heart - the birds in pairs pull a wagon open at the sides, which is steered by a standing figure at the rear end. An upright standing man with a shield, helmet, spear and breastplate of silver, his beard red and his gaze firmly fixed on the front. Rögn sees for the first time a representation of himself from a time before his life as a comic figure. He feels emotion and pride as the little parade rotates through his field of vision.

He stretches out the back of his hands in front of him and observes the movement of his ten fingers. He thinks about what these fingers had achieved over the last 1500 years. In imagination and legends they had conquered worlds. In fact, they had had little contact with the world until then. He wiggles his fingers until they seem like a foreign body part. What did he need fingers for anyway. Probably just to make him look like a human as gods that look like humans look better imaginable by humans. To intervene in the course of the world however he had never bent his fingers. The world didn't care about him at all and for millions of years it had been revolving through day and night and not around him. The thoughts and the beer made him dizzy and he sank to his knees, supporting himself with his hands. He thinks for a moment he might get sick, but this turns out to be a false alarm. He points his upper body upwards and sees the marks of his hands on the floor. He stands up and takes a step back to look at the prints of his knees and feet on the ground. He feels the urge to continue to make himself noticed and he begins to make clicking noises with his tongue and then bubbling sounds out of his throat and with his whole body. The organ music on the carousel accompanied him. He sings into the World Ash and watches it turn. Pictures of his performance in the stadium come back to his mind. He stands in the light of the carousel, climbs onto the platform and begins to ride the horses, boars and dragons, sits in the wagon under his own image, grabs Thor by the nose, pulls the tail of the Fenris wolf and is enjoying himself. He sings all the songs he has picked up over the past centuries. The thought of whether someone can see him in this state does not bother

him. He goes to Valhalla, the end of the gods, with a children's carousel. There is nothing to care about anymore. He has to pee from all the beer, stands at the edge of the platform and has huge fun when his beam closes in a circle on earth after one turn. Then he says goodbye to his figure as Rögn, descends, stops once more to salute all the gods and then goes back into the chamber to set "endangered species", "Lollypop" and "Western" in motion. Soon cheetahs, cakes with faces and stagecoaches spun through the desert accompanied by animal sounds, birdsong, bebop and banjo music.

The wooden gods are fixed in their path, their destiny, their history. As soon as their story is written, it must be fulfilled and if not, they are simply dropped. People are their true authors, because it is up to them whether they want to tell their stories and take them seriously. Afterwards, with a little luck, they are just good as children's toys.

Rögn's hands are not made of beaten and painted wood. His feet are not. His mouth is not. He can tell stories himself, move to any place in the world and think what he wants to take in and take out again. He feels the warm air on his skin and begins to laugh. The universe balances on his fingertip, nestles up against his retina and rises in his nose.

I can, he thinks, touch the earth, plant something, walk on it. I could, and he begins to imagine all that is offered to him. What the world offers him. It is placed around him, swishes through the air, lies under him, hides behind the next bush, sits in the carousel, it unfolds in front of him and pours into a golden ocean of possibilities. Making contact with everything. No longer waiting for warrior souls of perished societies to come and speak to him, for someone to throw an offering into a swamp and suck life from it, for others to do something for him, for others to set up a life for him. He feels a compassion for other gods who are still trapped in a cult, determined by mankind, in danger of being pushed out of focus at any time. How free he is! How many opportunities he has got! He doesn't need to wait for the professor anymore, he doesn't need people who spend the night in front of the screen, hollow-eyed all over the world and ally with him through their avatars. He no longer has to fear a power failure and the breakdown of the internet. He would only pass away if he believes that he would pass away due to a lack of attention, as he had already seen it with

many others in the self-help group. You only die if you believe it! Stop believing!

His awakening had to be celebrated. He fetched a pallet of beer cans and sat on an elephant. He toasted himself, watched the rotation of the other carousels, watched the rotation of the stars that became visible and how everything adjusted itself. He began to make plans about what he would do from now on. He could go to the movies, as he was still famous at the moment because of his appearance at the Superbowl. He was no longer interested in computer games. He was no longer interested in the brains of other people. He probably had one of his own and it felt like he was using it for the first time in his life.

The channels in his head were the channels into the world and this world was finally exposed and thousands of blockades crawled out of his head into the desert never to return.

He sat in a dark room and lit a match.

Then break of dawn set in.

"¡Señor! ¡Despiértese!",

it shook his shoulder. Rögn lay asleep in a giant donut of the lollipop carousel, the pallet of empty cans covering the middle of his body. Two men stood before him, one had picked up Rögn's clothes and put them over his arm. The carousel was turned off.

"Señor, que se vaya o llamamos a la policia."

The two men were only half serious about their threat, because if they had done their nightshift job properly, this strange man would not have been allowed to lie here at all. Rögn blinked at them. He straightened up, the pallet slid down on him, one of the men held out his pants. He took them and pulled a note out of one of the pockets.

"Here" and handed them a banknote of a foreign currency for 10,000, showing a portrait, mountains, plovers and a shell. The men looked grimly.

"¿Que coño es esto?"

"But there's even a poem on it," Rögn said.

"¡Dollares!" replied one of the men and pressed the note back into his hand. His money had remained in the car. Rögn offered them his mobile phone. They were satisfied with that and showed him a way to leave the area unnoticed and let him go.

As he walked along the street in the rising sun, a car stopped next to him. If he was Rögn? Yes, I am Rögn. Here, the professor had left his bag for you unfortunately he could not

wait because an urgent appointment had come in. Rögn knew it was a lie. Before the guards he had seen the professor out of the corner of his eye as he stood before him but had pretended to be asleep. Without any attempt to wake him he had left. That's good. Rögn did not want to be part of his game anymore.

He walked for a while along the street in the direction he had been shown. The only traffic was a school bus driving towards him, taking a class to the carousel exhibition.

He came to a silver-plated diner called "Journey's End", which at first glance made no sense, as there was nothing on the outside that looked like a journey might end there.

He was the only guest. He stared at the surface of his coffee and blew little rings on it. He avoided to raise his eyes, because he was afraid of a boredom that could lurk outside the cup's rim.

The doorbells were ringing, he heard another person sitting at the counter who also ordered a coffee. Rögn looked up. He saw an older man with long hair, a conservative skirt, pantyhose and shoes with medium high heels. He talked to the woman behind the counter and it seemed that they were familiar with each other. Rögn had headaches and rubbed his temples and eyebrows. He felt how the residual alcohol began to dissipate in discomfort. The sight was so bizarre for Rögn that he had to suppress a laugh.

As if the man at the counter had heard something, he turned to Rögn. His face remained without expression, his eyes signaled that they were above things and the corners of his mouth moved a breath upwards, expressing a hello without further invitation.

Rögn looked into his cup again.

The woman at the counter turned on a jukebox and a bebop sounded, which he thought he had heard at the carousel. He looked again at the man at the counter, who started to rummage in his handbag as if he wanted to leave. There was a pickup truck in the parking lot.

Rögn had no telephone, no car and it didn't look like a public transport network outside. Rögn did not know yet what he wanted to do, but so much that he did not want to stay here any longer. A god of war would never be with a man-woman, Rögn thought, but that was yesterday, so he stood up and stepped to the counter.

"Hi, I'm Rögn."

"Felicity, nice to meet you," she said with no particular emphasis and without looking up from her purse.

If you're looking for your keys, they're under your bar stool," said Rögn, bent down and gave them to her. She took it wordlessly with a homeopathic nod. "May I invite you for another coffee?" "Rogan, what do you want?" "Well, I need a ride." "Yeah right. Drunk as you look and after you've apparently had a great laugh at me. Do you have a certificate that says you're not an escaped psychopath?" "I don't want to hurt you." "And I don't want to take you with me. I don't know you." "I was on TV the other day." "With you mug shot?" "No, the Super Bowl. I could show you, but I have lost my phone." Felicity sighed briefly and handed him her cell phone. "Well, I'll be damned." Rögn showed her the streaker scene at the final. "You pervert!" Felicity laughed resoundingly. "I'm heading for Phoenix."

In the car Rögn asked, "Why are you wearing women's clothes?" "Why are you running naked across a field?" Rögn had the feeling that they did not know each other well enough to tell her about the Yeti. "I did ask first." Felicity told him her story. Although Rögn had been travelling the world for several centuries, it was quite new territory for him. Felicity was a man who liked to wear women's clothes, but who wasn't gay, as he said. He simply enjoyed putting on women's clothes and going out with them. Since he lived as a farmer in a village, there were few opportunities to live that out close to him, so he often drove long distances to clubs where he wouldn't be looked at in a weird way. These were mostly clubs of gays and lesbians, but it was at least somewhat liberal there. Why he takes on all this stress? Felicity replied: "You know, there was a point in my life where I stopped looking for justification. So now you. Why are you running naked across a football field? Are you an exhibitionist?" "No, I'm not an exorcist. A yeti kicked my ass, and all of a sudden he ran across this field here." "A what?" Rögn tells Felicity his story. "Man, and I thought I was weird for a long time."

"Don't you believe me?"

"And even if I didn't, would it make any difference?"

"Okay, Felicity, what would you do now if you were me?"

"Have a drink with Felicity at the next bar over there."

She turned off the road and parked in front of a small cafe next to a gas station with a single gas pump. The cafe was called "Sugar Cane Stop".

The owner behind the counter, a fair-skinned man with a turban, was happy to see the guests. Unfortunately, there was no alcohol because, as he explained, he had recently had a spiritual awakening and had not wanted to participate in the distribution of alcohol since then. However, he could offer them a delicious fresh mango lassi. Rögn was not sad about this, as he still had enough of the binge drinking at Ragnarök. The lassies were actually very good.

"What you should do now? Well, I could offer you to throw something decent on you and go out with me and the next few days I would actually have some work for you on my farm, but I assume that would not be the breakthrough for you. You just threw your religion overboard, now you might as well ask the Lassie-man here if you can join his, only I think it is the question that is your problem.

"What do you mean?"

"The question of what to do. The question is wrong and has accompanied you since you have left your pond in Iceland. The question is not what to do, the question is what you want."

Rögn was silent.

"Hey Lassie-man! Our friend here has lost his job as a god and is looking for a new one. Any ideas?"

The man with the turban came to her table with a tray of pakhoras.

"Being God is a lousy job. It's only for confused spirits or like sugar for kids who don't know where they're going. It's about time you learn something decent."

Rögn wondered which of the three was actually the craziest.

16.

Instead of flying back to Iceland, Rögn needed a change of location. Mount Meru seemed like a fun place. It doesn't have any coordinates, but it's most likely to be in India. There he flew.

He moved into a dilapidated palace, of which a magnificent columned hall with the throne still stood. At night, when the grounds were closed to visitors, he kept a court for flocks of flying foxes and a few beggars and anyone else who wanted to know who was residing here. There were not many, but it was all the same to him. At first he was inspired by the new knowledge about his freedom, he enjoyed the fact that the air was warm all the time, he enjoyed his new look, the figures, the flaked colors, almost all of them showed foreign gods all the time, but they were no longer a threat to him. Beautifully formed figures made of stone, red, yellow, green, colorful shapes on the wall, outlines that were supposed to push all kinds of things into his head. He was the master of what was to be set in motion and what was not.

Weeks passed and he felt like on holiday after a thousand years of hard labor. At first there was still a hypochondriac part in his heart and every unpleasant movement of the body heralded the expected end. But the end did not come and didn't seem to be interested in him. He sat at his new place with the oversized arm and back rests and entered new territories that were huge and like Mount Meru nowhere to be found on any map. His oversized seat made him look like a child.

The verve of a fresh start began to lose momentum and he thought it might be about time to make contact with the people of his new dominion.

He wondered what he should do.

When he could not find the answer himself, he rose from his throne.

He asked the flying foxes. To hang yourself with your feet on a branch, to be woken by the moon, to collect fruits and enjoy company.

He asked the cows. Not to lie down on asphalt in the midday sun, one of them said. Not eating too many plastic bags, said the other.

He asked the beggar on the corner. Learn a few words of foreign languages and ask tourists for money. He asked him what he generally wanted in life. Not to starve, he said.

He asked a soldier. To serve my country. What his country would be. Where he was born. But it was a different country a hundred years ago. Yes, but there was no one left to defend that one.

He began to travel further.
He asked a priest. He said serve God. He asked an imam. He said to serve God. He asked a rabbi. He said to serve God. He asked another priest. He said please the gods.
He didn't tell anyone he once had been a god too.
He changed his question. What would you do if you were a god?
He should not ask this question so loud. It might cost him his life.
Live forever.
Save the climate.
Punish people with a flood because of their stupidity.
Bringing the deceased back to life.
Indulge day and night.
Having sex day and night.
Predicting the future for people for a lot of money.
Kill the president with lightning.
Fulfill all desires.
Rögn began to understand the misconception humans held about divine powers.
He purchased self-help books about the meaning of life, which he found bestseller lists. Interesting. The Meaning of Life. Whether life had to have a meaning at all. Whether simply having fun was the meaning of life. That the love of one's parents' home was crucial to one's future happiness. Which parents? In the self-help group, hardly anyone had parents as far back as they remembered. And those who were usually the result of some lapse or affair and got chased by other jealous beings. Most of them were simply born out of the ideas of their followers. And even if not, it seemed absurd for Rögn to blame parents for the happiness of today after two thousand years.

Curiosity became his purpose for some time.
After several months of travelling he longed for a fixed place again.

17.

In a Roman suburb for over 500 years the Vatican has operated an anonymous contact point for ancient gods, the "Office for the Integration of Heretical Entities", also just known as the Contact Office. The office was set up at a time when the Catholic Church was very concerned about the sudden and tremendously renewed popularity of ancient gods. At one point academies dealing with the ancient gods were springing up and throwing every text they could get their hands on among the people a hundred times over by printing. Artists suddenly painted Mercury, Hercules, Athena and all the other criminals into Christian iconography and polluted the modern souls of faith with old pagan ideas. Attempts to quickly burn all ancient scriptures in monasteries had unfortunately failed. In addition, the Arabs, for their part, willingly handed over Roman and Greek writings to the Humanists, a move they certainly made intentionally to weaken the Holy Roman Church. Internal studies of the Inquisition showed that all the scholars and artists who flirted with the ancient gods should have been put out of business. In addition, nobility loved nothing more than to see themselves in a silly succession of ancient gods and heroes. A ban would have turned off the money supply of the princely houses to the church. For months church dignitaries sweated and discussed the bad news they had received from all over the Christian world, which drew attention to representations of pagan gods in books and iconography. The greatest aesthetic-theological transgressions were still being addressed, such as the removal of sculptures of ancient gods from all cathedrals and churches along the Way of St. James. On the other hand one was aware that one had to take a step forward. The contact office was created to approach the ancient gods and to make them an offer to integrate. If they already had reappeared, then at least under observation.

The Vatican's fears did not manifest to its full extent. Although the humanists abused the ancient world of gods to develop their own autonomous thinking, which was bad enough and unfortunately was met with great approval, the emergence of new temples and cults did not occur. Thank God.

Today, a job in the contact office is one of the most relaxed activities in the world. On average, every 100 years an ancient deity registers to participate in the drop-out program. It is officially aimed at deities who are afraid of fading out because of their oblivion. The office offers a new identity and legend in a secret place. A permanent care according to regulations from 1547.

"Good afternoon, my name is Giopetta Saltandini, everything we discuss is confidential. What can I do for you?"

"I need counseling. They say you offer a drop-out program and you can give accommodations?"

"Absolutely right! Very nice and welcome, you are the first one this century. Our advisory service is for all entities that have lost their cultic connectivity." After she saw the questioning look of her counterpart she added:

"So those who have lost their cult or faith.

From your looks I'd guess you are more likely to be from Nordic mythology?"

"That's one way to put it.

"Would you like to tell me your name?"

"Is this actually anonymous, or am I under some kind of obligation here?"

"But of course, absolutely confidential!" She laughs. "We couldn't just lock you up like we used to. We try to offer our clients the best possible solutions. To do so, we need some information from your former life. So, would you like to tell me your name?"

"Rögn", he answered.

"Thank you, Mr. Rögn. Let me see if we had you listed."

She went to the shelf and took a heavy hand-written book bound in leather from the shelf.

"You know, we had put the details of our potential customers with short biographical notes in here back in 1567. At that time, we only got as far as the letter S, the Counter-Reformation had simply swallowed up all our personnel resources. So, we might still be lucky with you..."

She flipped through the register and her finger ran over the keywords and names with R.

"Okay, I see we don't have much here. 'Icelandic god of war and tree god of oaks' ... they don't have much, so excuse me, I mean the colleagues back then didn't seem to have enough time to gather information about you..." She looked at him and her eyes widened. "No, now I recognize you! You're the guy from the movie and the computer game! My kids are crazy about you! If you don't mind, maybe you could sign me an autograph later?" She closed the book. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm not in the mood for a comeback and I don't know what to do about it."

"Wonderful! You came to the right place. We can offer you two programs. You know, my employer is very understanding,

he himself came from antiquity and had to figure things out to make himself noticed.

We offer the "comfort" program and the "plus" program for dropouts. The dropout program "comfort" means that we look for a nice place for you, preferably with a colleague who has already dropped out and who matches your profile.

With the dropout plus it would be that we offer you to join our cult. Yes, I know what you are thinking, but let me explain. The old days of confrontation are over. We all live in a modern common world now. The package "drop out plus" could be attractive for you, because it could be worthwhile to work with us. We are still very successful on the market and not only because of the ingenious idea of incarnation. We had dared to do something innovative to build a bridge between above and below. Even though it may not have been comprehensible to many people over the centuries, we have always had our finger on the pulse of the times. From the very beginning of our implementation on the market, we integrated current philosophical ideas, namely the truth claim of the New Platonists, into our system. Furthermore, we have felt obliged to administrative and economic interests from the very beginning. We were a decisive factor in the discovery and cultivation of the New World. And as you can see, we are not standing still. We continue to deal with current issues that may have a direct impact on the way people live their lives. Ecology and the peace movement are again at the top of the agenda. In addition, we are flexible and can also adapt to political and cultural blocks under the heading of "defensive faith". Especially we in the Catholic Church offer fallen entities like you the possibility to find your own niche. We could provide you with your own post and your own powers, and you might soon be able to enjoy participatory cult worship yourself again".

"No, thanks, I'm not interested in that. The faith circus is no longer for me."

"No problem. It would also be possible to upgrade to plus any time later. Let me see what I can offer you in terms of comfort..."

Here I see that a colleague of yours has already made use of our services. Of course, I cannot tell you yet where and who that is. I suggest that we first go through our placement test and you think again to what extent you like our program. The procedure could take a few weeks. For this time I can recommend a pension nearby, which is run by former Etruscan colleagues of yours. A very charming property!"

18.

A few months later Rögn stood with packed suitcases in front of a monastery in the Montsec mountain range. His new home that the contact office had arranged for him. The Fenriswolf had already been accommodated there in 1992. When Rögn saw the saying "Catalunya sea cristiana o no sea" over the entrance, he was overcome by the shadow of a doubt whether it had really been the right decision.

It was early in the morning. Behind the rocks the first sunrays shot up. The morning dew still hung over the meadows. He had been told to wait for Padre Feliu, the abbot of the monastery, under a free-standing group of holly oaks not far from the monastery gate. Rögn leaned his bags against the trunks. He had arrived that morning without any specific feeling but under the branches an unpleasant anxiety overcame him as if something heavy had come between him and the sky turning blue. It was an old and largely forgotten feeling that made fine nervous clots from his belly run through his body. He tried to locate it, went back in time, the landscape changed in front of his inner eye, the monastery disappeared, a simple stone building, he heard other ancient languages as they were spoken in the area, saw Arabic horsemen, shepherds, Gothic warriors staring at him. A hand lay on his shoulder and he flinched.

"Mister Rögn! How nice to meet you! I am father Feliu. Come with me, I have something to show you - just leave your things here."

The man in robe took him by the hand and led him away from the trees over a slight hill to a hollow in the ground. Inside was an apparatus consisting of a glass funnel, which was placed horizontally in a round glass vessel. A tube ran out of it on the other side into a second vessel, which was followed by a third. The three spherical containers were elevated on four-footed pedestals. Under the first vessel a gas cooker burned on a light flame. Under the second and third vessels there was another receptacle in each of which apparently some liquid had collected, which had run down through glass tubes from the upper vessels.

"Look!" said Feliu enthusiastically. "So much lunar humidity has never been gathered here before! A good omen on your arrival!" he laughed.

He explained to him that he had built the apparatus according to a model by Sigismund Bacstrom to collect mercurius, prima materia. To Rögn these substances were unknown.

"Well, the secret fire! The primordial substance of which everything is made. It is radiated from the sun, lunar drops

generated from the moonbeams, because, you know, extracting it from the sun is extremely difficult. It is obtained most purely at night through the magnetized sunrays that reach us through the moon.

Rögn was surprised to meet an alchemist as first contact in the monastery.

"For heaven's sake - don't call me that! That suggests that I am trying to make gold or something. Faith is sacred! The soul is the sulfur extracted from the mercurius, the mercury. The soul in and out of the nature of things. God in creation and the circle is complete. Do you understand?"

"I may not see it the same way..."

"All right, never mind, there's plenty of time to chat."

Father Feliu turned off the flame and put the glass balls in a box, which he put together from boards lying not far from the hollow. He clamped the box under his arm, which was just long enough for this task and they headed back to Rögn's luggage.

Just before the holly oaks, a shadow came loose from the leaves, jumped to the ground and ran towards them joyfully as a dog with its tail raised. It was a husky, grey fur on his back, white belly and face with bright blue eyes. He ran briefly to Rögn, sniffed at him and then accompanied him on their way, being distracted again and again by smells and noises he found on the way. A husky did not quite fit into the southern European landscape, but the padre obviously knew the dog, so he seemed to belong to the monastery.

"I'll show you their living quarters and then introduce you to my brothers. Only I know that you are from the drop-out program. The others know that you were sent from Rome to be given asylum for a certain period of time. We are currently renovating the house and since we have been informed of you at short notice, you will unfortunately have to share your living quarters with your colleague for the next few weeks. You'll have your own kitchen, you can of course also take part in our meals, you have internet, there is a scooter in the garage that you can take, the next train station is about five kilometers from here, from there you can reach Barcelona in about two hours if they feel like it.

"And where is my colleague?"

"Oh! I thought you already knew each other. Right here beside us."

The husky sat on a boulder and looked at him panting with his tongue hanging out.

"No, we ain't had the pleasure yet. The plan for us was to meet only at the end of the world."

"Then we should all thank God that the world took a different course."

The monastery was a beautiful property with a Romanesque cloister in the middle of which there were several orange trees. The church, which Rögn initially did not want to enter, was kept simple. The once rich and gilded interior had been burned by anarchists in the 1920s. In the apse behind the altar there was a large wall fresco in Romanesque style, which depicted a friendly looking Jesus as Pantocrator. It was a replica. The original was sold to American collectors before the civil war and is now in a private collection in Wilmington. The monastery inhabitants all made a friendly impression on Rögn and seemed more alert than expected despite their secluded way of life.

The Fenriswolf had adapted its appearance. He dyed and shaved his fur in certain places, tried not to appear too large, only ever looked at people from certain angles so that its tongue and flews hid the size of its teeth, never flared his tail in public, never arched his back or howled to the moon. He behaved and moved droll like a cute dog that would be the first thing you would want to take from a shelter. Only in the secluded area, that the Fenriswolf shared with Rögn, did he put down his mimicry and his shadow grew to the width of the wall. They had their beds in one room, on Fenrir's side a big dog basket. They had some simple furniture and a flat screen.

At the beginning Rögn felt a bit awkward. The first nights he slept badly and had to get used to the strange roommate. Actually, fate had intended that the Fenriswolf would be loosened from its chains at the end of the world and attack the gods with an army, which landed on the ship Naglfar, which was made from the nails of the dead. The Fenriswolf would devour some of the gods, then the wolf itself would be killed by one of the gods climbing on his lower jaw and pulling the other jaw so far up that it would die from his wound. But nobody believed in this fate any more.

Fenrir could quickly convince Rögn that he did not need to worry about an attack.

"You know, I never found the view particularly thrilling while being chained up for centuries. Of course, it was not nice and I have to admit it was quite boring, but on the other hand I often thought: why give up the peace for a barney and then it

would have been over with me anyway. When I began to notice that my chain was starting to dissolve, I thought, oh no, now the end of the world begins, until I realized that I didn't have to eat any of you anymore. We all just disappeared like that. One day I could just walk away, the chain was completely rusted through and I entered into the world and all I saw were crosses. Everywhere only crosses, crosses, crosses and people were perhaps still afraid of me, because I was a wolf, but nothing more. I had heard rumors that some of you went to this psychogroup to try to rebuild your little Asgard. So I always figured, what's the point? If this worked out I'd have to eat you later."

"We honestly thought that you were already completely gone and we would be able to create something new and relaxed without you. How are you doing here with the Christians?"

"You know, they only baptize with water and try to keep their business running. Actually, they're okay. The few up here who know about us at least take us seriously and understand who we are. By the way, could you go into town with me tomorrow? I need new peroxide to bleach."

19.

The two became friends. Although they didn't really have much to say to each other, they enjoyed each other's company more and more. Both were in the same situation, which brought them closer together. At some points Rögn noticed however, that his centuries of captivity for nothing did not leave Fenrir unaffected. Rögn found some of his behavior conspicuous and had to get used to it. For example, after the initial shyness was gone, he began to tell stories at night for hours. Mostly he told fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm in all possible variations and of course gladly those in which a wolf appeared, but he always mixed up the roles of good and evil. "The old woman was friendly, but Hansel and Gretel were evil criminal children who deliberately ambushed rich widows, and they had only picked out the little bread house to eat it away from its owner until she was homeless. When they caught a widow they killed her, cooked and ate her and it was a feast for them. The children have got red eyes and can not see well, but they have got a fine scent like animals and notice when people have got filled pantries. When the old woman came

near them, Hansel and Gretel said, we have her, she shall not escape us again.”

In this way Fenrir told for nights on end about heroic dragons who protected the virgins from violent princes, about Snow White who, together with her stepmother, poisoned the seven dwarves and enjoyed the sight of them in their little glass coffins, Rapunzel who deliberately wore a long wig, thus bringing the prince down, and so on.

The monastic life did not hurt, but it was not very exciting either. Although they had a place and were provided for, often they were simply bored. They went on excursions into the city, bought game consoles, gadgets, drinks, sweets, tobacco and all sorts of other things to fill time. They were not interested in Feliu's strange experiments and they did not care about the monastery's contents.

Rögn was able to inspire Fenrir with comics and films that depicted their old world. Whenever Fenrir saw himself portrayed by an animation or another character, he howled with laughter. What strange ideas the entertainment industry had about him.

When they moved outside Fenrir always passed for a dog. They quickly became a well-coordinated team. What Rögn had feared, namely that he would lose his invisibility for good through his contact with people, did not happen. Except with padre Feliu, who could always see him. Either it was due that people who had once perceived him as a god could always see him afterwards, or maybe it had something to do with the alchemy of the old guy.

One night in summer the two of them lay awake on their beds as it was much too hot for them to sleep. Rögn got up, opened a bottle of cava, poured a cup to himself and the rest into Fenrir's bowl, took a deep sip, put the cup down, took his mobile phone, opened the camera app and started filming Fenrir in his basket.

"Ladies and gentlemen, here you see the smartest and most amazing dog on the Iberian Peninsula. It is an Andorran Wolf Husky, one of the last of its kind. His pack had fled to the mountains before the Spanish Inquisition. Today it is a cultivated animal, drinks champagne from its bowl and sleeps in a magnificent Parador. Right Husky?" Fenrir played along, put his head to one side and pulled his eyebrows up in the middle.

"So Husky, now show us just how smart you are. We want to see Rocky III now, in Korean with French subtitles. You got two minutes. Go!"

Fenrir rose, landed with an elegant leap in front of the beamer, raised his right paw theatrically, extended a claw and pressed the power button, pushed the laptop apart with his snout, his claw operated buttons, on the wall the opening credits to Rocky III began to flicker, one could hear Korean and Fenrir leaned with his back to the edge of the bed, his hind legs stretched forward, his front legs slightly bent and he looked into the camera with the most faithful and foolish look he had practiced for the last 1000 years. Rögn pressed stop. "Perfect! Shall we upload it?" "Sure," Fenrir said, slurping the cava empty. "But there are no French subtitles."

One week later the Andorran Husky was world famous and the two of them were kicked out of the monastery and the drop-out program.

20.

It was the middle of the night when his mobile phone rang.

"Father Feliu, hello?"

"This is Saltandini from the contact office.

"Oh...good evening Mrs. Saltandini..."

"I'm calling about the guests who were staying with you until recently. I "m sorry to disturb you at this hour, but it seems urgent. Are you still in contact with the guests?"

"No. After we noticed that you started posting videos from within our premises, we immediately informed you and then..."

"Yes, yes, I know. But ever since the got kicked out. Have the two of them contacted you at any time in the past?"

"No. No more. Except they keep on posting on the Internet."

"You should urgently avoid contact with them, should they ever get the idea. Absolutely. We can no longer be sure whether the two were sent by the other..., I mean the competition, the dark side to infiltrate us. Did they participate in internal discussions within your order?"

"No, they always stayed in their area. They never entered the church or the other monastery rooms. For my brothers, one of them was just a dog..."

"...in whose presence they held conversations because they thought the dog doesn't understand anyway?"

"Signora Saltandini, even if they did, I would not know what interest it would have had for the Northern Gods. Except perhaps local discussions about independence, we have got little to do with world politics above. What happened?"

"Yesterday, an individual of this gang of gods published a pseudo-scientific article that doesn't suit us. I'll send you a link later."

"Who did this?"

"A certain Professor Shaktyran. We strongly suspect him of being a heretical identity. Our contact in Moscow has determined that he worked in research there before World War II and now he continues his research in North America. A professional life of over 80 years seems a bit long by human standards. And then he also deals with questions of faith. Appears suspicious. Now he claims that his research shows that belief is a stimulation in the brain."

"What does your index say about him?"

"We haven't listed him. Our list ends with the Egyptian god Seth. He sailed under our radar over the centuries. It has now also been finally decided to close the contact office. It is completely out of date with the new requirements. The drop-out program has been terminated."

"Oh! And what happens to the other entities in the program?"

"There is none. This wolf and Rögn were the last. They had used their stay only to draw attention to themselves. Do you know they run a show in Las Vegas now?"

"No way, really?"

"Yes, the wolf plays the sly dog and Rögn gives the tamer. Cheap. As long as they don't start making fools of us like that pop star who sang on a glittering crucifix."

"Oh, you mean back in Warsaw." Feliu had to suppress a laugh.

"Tomorrow, a member of staff will come to your house and ask you a few questions. If there are any of their belongings left, do not throw them away. We'd like to examine them."

"I will do so."

"Goodbye Padre."

"Good night Signora."

Father Feliu took his self-made brandy from one of his vials, got dressed and went to the office of the monastery where the only computer was located to look at the article about the brain.

21.

"Faith as product loyalty - religious experience as positive identification and attribution of cause to a product.

Introduction of new world views by transcranial stimulation of the frontal lobes after presentation of pseudo-religious content with psychometrically based microtargeting"

Prof. Shaktyran, Summary of Research Results on the Study of Religious Attribution, University of L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, in cooperation with the Vinland Foundation

Keywords: customer loyalty, magnetic stimulation, neuromarketing, neuromysticism, religious attribution factor

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1.Summary

By religion we understand a belief, i.e. being convinced of a certain world view. Many of today's world religions have been practiced for centuries, some for millennia. For some decades now the question of where and how faith originates has been part of brain research. Even if there is still disagreement about

the exact location of faith in the human brain, some studies suggest that faith or spiritual experience can be generated by transcranial brain stimulation, i.e. the application of magnetic currents to the frontal lobes.

An analysis of what people believe in a broader sense has become comprehensible and individualizable thanks to the digital revolution. Every day millions upon millions of digital fingerprints are left behind, which can be precisely localized and assigned to individual personality patterns using the possibilities of psychometrics, meaning the analysis of the utterance of individuals on social media. Through a combination of psychometric evaluation and classification according to personality profiles, predictions can be made about how people will react, and conclusions can be drawn about what people believe in. Through digital selection, advertising and influencing can be character-adapted and individualized. This so-called microtargeting of people can be used to try to influence purchase or choice decisions and also the world view.

In the present case psychometric models, meaning the personality evaluation and analysis of digital data, were combined with conventional methods of transcranial magnetic stimulation of the frontal lobes. The manipulation with religious content could thus be personalized and character adapted and examined.

In the economic field there are a large number of studies that deal with customer satisfaction and product loyalty. Customer satisfaction is defined as the state when the customer's expectations of a product or service are met and exceeded. Long-term product loyalty occurs when the customer considers a product or service to be the cause of a positive feeling or added value, which happens when he attributes a certain causality to a product or service.

Up to now religion and business have mostly been examined sociologically for their mutual influence but have not been subjected to a structural comparison. The studies presented in the following have shown that mechanisms of product loyalty can be transferred and applied to mechanisms of the introduction of a new world view or a new belief. A religion can be regarded as a product with long-term customer loyalty which spans over generations.

In an experiment in which participants in a computer game underwent phases of transcranial magnetic stimulation after being manipulated with fictitious religious content, it was shown that a new religion can be introduced in the same way as a new product. For validation, the faith values of a group of believers of a real religion were compared with the faith values of the computer players. Followers of a currently practiced world religion were examined for their religious attribution factor. Therefore, values were determined for a scale of how faith influences decisions and attitudes of daily life. This religious attribution factor was averaged among believers and compared to the religious attribution factor of computer players. It was found that at the end of the game, the computer players' values of faith in the pseudo-religion they had been exposed to had come closer to the values of believers in the world religion that had existed for thousands of years.

According to the results of a further comparative study it can be assumed that transcranial brain stimulation was decisive for the generation of the new world view or the fictitious religion. For this purpose, the attempts of representatives of past religions to reintroduce their cults were examined for their effectiveness. The results indicate that microtargeting without brain stimulation is not suitable for generating relevant values of a religious attribution factor.

2. Faith and brain research

2.1 Religious experience through transcranial magnetic stimulation

In science it is assumed that faith can be localized in certain areas of the human brain. On this basis it is further assumed that faith or forms of extrasensory perception can be generated by stimulating certain areas of the brain. For this purpose, signals with a strength of 1 to 5 μ T (microtesla) were applied to the frontal temporal lobes by means of transcranial magnetic stimulation. Studies (Gersinger et al.) concluded that in this way a religious experience can be stimulated in 80% of the population. For this purpose, the test persons were connected to an apparatus via a type of headphone, placed in a 2 x 2 m large dark room and applied with magnetic currents for 30 minutes. Afterwards 80% of the test persons reported mystical or paranormal experiences, such as the feeling of the presence of another sentient being or a strong presence.

According to some reports and theses, the neuronal stimulation between amygdala and hippocampus should lead

to extrasensory perception and trance, or to a synthesis of the left and right hemisphere with a feeling of unity.

This triggered a popular debate about the seat of faith in the brain. Using coloring systems from magnetic resonance imaging, especially by examining the neuronal activity of meditators, further possible areas of cause were localized. It was argued that the assumption of the frontal lobes as the seat of belief may not be sufficient and that attention-controlling and cognitive aspects should be considered.

Despite a second study with a comparison group (Grandvik et al.) which did not establish any connection between transcranial magnetic stimulation and extrasensory experience, devices for magnetic stimulation of brain areas are now being sold for private use. Users can choose for themselves what effect the magnetic stimulation should have, for example "relaxation" or "concentration". In some countries, transcranial magnetic stimulation is used to treat severe depression.

2.2 Presetting as a condition of religious experience

However, further studies which assumed that the magnetic stimulation had no effect (Grandvik, Brönsen, etc.) showed a connection between the religious pre-setting of the subjects and their later interpretation of any extrasensory experience during the magnetic stimulation. The values were determined by means of questionnaires before and after the application of the magnetic currents in a closed room. Immediately before the experiment, the subjects were asked about the general presence of religious attitudes (VRE according to Bracks and Kögler 1983) in the cognitive system. This included questions about the role of each faith in decision-making, activities such as attending church services, prayers, etc. Still in the room test persons filled out a questionnaire according to the scale of mystical perception (Ashavanta, Heidrun, etc. 1972), where the questions were specifically limited to the experiences during the experiment and not to the general everyday experience. It was asked whether the test persons had extrasensory experiences during the last 30 minutes. The description of the experience, if perceived as extrasensory, was argued religiously by those who also scored high on the VRE scale. This means that the religious default setting determines the interpretation of the experience as religious. In the context of this experiment, it was suggested that the effect of brain stimulation could be of a subordinate nature in itself and that instead the state of deprivation, here the extensive exclusion of external stimuli, is responsible for a mystical

experience. A lack of external stimuli favored the focus on inner states, which is why inner contemplation or retreat is a part of many religious systems. A religiously shaped presetting with the focus on the inner states could be responsible for a mystical experience.

2.3 Thesis: Controlling religious experience through prior activation

For the present study with the participants in the computer game, a reference by Grandvik, Brönsen and others was taken up and further developed. They had hypothesized that the interpretation of certain experiences on a religious basis might be related to the fact that the religious attitude was queried directly before the experiment, with the consequence that immediately afterwards during the experiment the cognitive religious schemata were activated and thus influenced perception ("activation of religious primes"). As an example, it is assumed that a particular perception within a religious building such as a church will automatically lead to an interpretation as extrasensory and religious rather than the same experience in a supermarket. It has been suggested that further religious manipulation immediately prior to an experiment, e.g. visually by showing religious symbols or audibly by playing mantras or spiritual music, would lead to higher values on the scale of mystical perceptions. This could be confirmed by the present study as will be explained below.

3. Psychometry

3.1 Predicting and influencing behavior through digital personality analysis

The analysis of human behavior can be seen in consumer behavior, movement behavior and expressions in the social sphere. In the past, a particular difficulty in measuring a person's personality was often the insufficient availability of usable data. The previous means of questionnaires and surveys have proven to be inaccurate and not very meaningful. Thanks to the digital revolution, researchers today have a mass of data at their disposal that provide indications of personal attitudes and how they are influenced. Research into the classification of human behavior can make use of all the digital data that is freely available on the market. This includes mobile movements, consumer behavior, behavior with apps and games, and especially the expression of personal attitudes through symbols of approval or rejection ("likes") within social media. People react differently to challenges. The reactions

depend on the respective personality profile or world view of the persons. A comparison of reactions to a particular challenge alone allows only limited conclusions to be drawn about behavior patterns or their control, as long as the respective basic personalities are not taken into account. If, for example, a person who is willing to take risks shows risky behavior, this should be evaluated differently than if an anxious person shows risky behavior. In the latter case, a closer look should be taken at what has led to behavior which in itself lies outside the personality profile of the person concerned.

3.2 Personality profiles and microtargeting

According to the recognized "Atlantic model", the personality of a person is divided into six categories with the following determining character traits:

- Openness
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Social centeredness
- Egoistic centeredness
- Hybrid forms

The latter category includes personalities whose traits appear to be equally distributed. They usually make up 12% of the population.

Once a person's character trait has been determined, their needs, fears and future behavior can be identified. In order to determine this trait, the test persons were given a questionnaire, which was designed as an online quiz as an app. By downloading the questionnaire, the test persons agreed to the analysis and use of their digital data.

After creating the respective personality profile, the individual digital data was evaluated. As in the classic psychometric studies and their commercial use to influence voting, special attention was paid to the evaluation of the approval or rejection functions in social media. The comparison or combination of the respective character trait with the digital positioning allows, on the one hand, predictions of future behavior and, on the other hand, conclusions about other characteristics of the person. According to the current state of research, it is assumed that from an analysis of 100 "likes", i.e. expressions of approval or rejection in social networks, predictions can be made with 80% accuracy as to how a test

person will answer certain questions. It is also possible to draw conclusions about e.g. skin color, religion, sexual orientation and voting behavior.

By using the psychological "Atlantic Model" in combination with the evaluation of psychographic digital data, a much more targeted marketing or influencing behavior can be placed than before. Where up to now an address was made on a large scale and to supposedly homogeneous groups, for example "men", "women", "young people", "pensioners", targeted addresses can now be made. Using psychometric procedures, groups with certain characteristics can be precisely localized and addressed. For example, a group of "lesbian adult women with a vegetarian diet and a migration background in certain districts using a specific telephone provider" could be found and addressed digitally. The address can be specifically adapted to the personalities and attitudes ("microtargeting").

4. Product loyalty and faith

4.1. Customer satisfaction

Product loyalty and customer satisfaction are a thoroughly researched area. Customer satisfaction is the subjective attitude of a consumer towards a product or service with regard to the correspondence of the actual experience with this product ("actual performance") with a comparison of the expectation of the product ("target performance"). This theory of the discounting paradigm is widely accepted as an explanation for customer satisfaction. If there is a correspondence between experience and expectation of the product, it is called confirmation. If the experience exceeds the expectation, it is called positive disconfirmation and customer satisfaction is achieved. This customer satisfaction in turn can lead to product loyalty.

Causes of customer satisfaction have so far only been researched for products and services. In the present case the thesis is that identical mechanisms can also be analyzed and used in the area of beliefs, world views and religion. The major world religions can be regarded as companies that have managed to establish customer loyalty, sometimes over several millennia. To try to explain this generation-spanning customer satisfaction or product loyalty solely by means of forms of coercion or subjugation is misguided, since all world religions have remained and will remain in existence even in times without state support or a repressive apparatus. In a

figurative sense, the product religion is consumed by its believers as consumers over centuries.

Customer loyalty is a psychological construct of a person's attachment or obligation to another person or company. Long-term loyalty over generations is a decisive factor for the success of a cult. It can also be accompanied by a sense of obligation, which in turn can be evaluated positively or negatively. For example, a believer may feel a sense of obligation to his cult because he has been trained in it or has been participating in cult activities himself for years. As long as he himself is satisfied with the performance of the cult, for example in-life assistance or after-death protection, the obligation can be felt positively. If the believer is dissatisfied, the obligation can be felt negatively, which must not necessarily be met with avoidance.

4.2 Satisfaction as attribution of effects of a product

The mechanisms of the so-called attribution theory play a major role in customer loyalty, which means how people explain events in their environment by attributing causes to them. People try to find causal explanations for their experiences. For example, a long-awaited rain can be attributed to climatic conditions or divine will.

The question of how causes are attributed depends on the presumed place of their origin, their controllability and temporal stability (Völking 1984). A special role is played by the place of causation, which can be attributed internally or externally (Heidrun, 1958).

In the case of internal attribution, events are explained by the fact that they lie within the acting person himself. If, for example, a potential customer meets a follower of a certain cult who has a special charisma, this could be attributed to the character of the person. The positively perceived characteristic is not associated with the cult here.

In the case of external attribution the event is attributed to factors outside the person. If, for example, a potential customer meets a follower of a certain cult who has a special charisma, this could also be attributed to the cult and its effect as such. Here, conclusions are drawn about the cult in terms of it having a certain effect.

The controllability factor depends on the extent to which an actor can influence a cause. If, for example, a person believes a certain divine being could control the cause of an event that

does not meet his expectations, this leads to greater dissatisfaction than in the case of assumed lack of control. If, for example, a person assumes that prayers to a certain divinity can create rain and this does not happen, the believer will be dissatisfied with the product or God accordingly.

The factor stability refers to the fact that causes can be stable or variable. If, for example, a person assumes that a certain deity can create events through prayers and this does not happen, the person can assume that this was an exception (not stable in time) because, for example, too few prayers were spoken. But it can also be concluded that the deity is generally not able to influence natural phenomena (temporally stable). In the latter case the product binding will be worse.

The general attitude of a person, their character traits and characteristics also plays a major role in how events are perceived and attributed. This is referred to as habitual preferences or attribution styles, from which certain expectations can be derived (Schneider, Raisam 2012).

Attribution styles correlate with the above-mentioned personalities according to the Atlantic model. As far as a person attributes unpleasant experiences rather situational, e.g. declaring the failure of rain as an exceptional event and not as an inability of the chosen deity, this will not influence satisfaction in the sense of product attachment to the deity. People who can be assigned to the group of the personality profile "openness" do more often attribute situational experiences than people of the personality profile "egoistic centrality".

4.3 Thesis: Faith is a form of product attachment

In the present case, the hypothesis is that the mechanisms of customer loyalty to a particular product are comparable to the mechanisms of belief in particular religious systems. Customer loyalty is high when a product is attributed certain characteristics that exceed one's own expectations. In other words, faith is high when a religious system is attributed certain effects that go beyond expectations. The more the causes for positive or negative life experiences are attributed to a religious system, the stronger the faith or customer loyalty is likely to be.

5. Religious Attribution Factor (RELAT factor)

5.1 RELAT-factor within living religions

In order to measure customer loyalty within the framework of a religious system, the Religious Attribution Factor (RELAT Factor) was developed for this study. It measures how large the share of everyday experience and decision-making is attributed to religion, meaning religious or divine effects.

For this purpose, a survey was conducted at an international meeting of young and adolescent followers of a monotheistic world religion in Poland and another national meeting of majority adult participants of the same monotheistic world religion in Germany. The answers were then psychometrically evaluated.

In the survey, the religious attribution factor for certain experiences of life and decision-making was asked. On a scale of zero to ten, the test persons indicated the extent to which experiences are attributed religiously. Here, "0" meant "not at all" and "10" meant "absolutely". Questions were asked about health, choice of occupation, consumer behavior regarding everyday products, consumer behavior regarding cars, mobility in general, sexual orientation, political commitment, income and choice of occupation. For example, the questions were: "What part does your faith in God have in your health?" or "To what extent does your choice of career coincide with your faith?"

Subjects who had an average value of less than "1" were rated as areligious and were not considered in the further analysis. Subjects with a factor above "9" were evaluated as extremist and also areligious, since it was assumed that this group of people had autocentric motives which were covered by religious motives.

The participants in the surveys (n = 2,576 in Poland, n = 986 in Germany) were generated via an online game or an app. It was an interactive game in which the players moved around in an environment that corresponded to their actual surroundings, with saints placed in the virtual view to allow the players to make contact with them. The contact was graphically represented by medieval scrolls as speech bubbles. As soon as a saint was touched, the player was awarded a certain number of points. The players could interact with each other. The game could be downloaded as an app free of charge. In order to get the ad-free version you had to fill out the questionnaire above and agree to access to your personal

data. For this study only the data of the users of the ad-free version were used.

The relation-factor was 27% on average. This means that 27% of life experience and decisions were attributed to religious reasons. It is assumed that the RELAT factor in a functioning modern religious system is 27%.

5.2 Thesis: RELAT factor can be increased by magnetic stimulation and microtargeting

The present thesis is that with the techniques of transcranial brain stimulation, psychometry and microtargeting not only a new product but also a new world view or cult or religion can be introduced.

In an experiment, players of a computer game were confronted with the fictitious cult of a war god based on Nordic mythology. By classifying the players into certain personalities according to the Atlantic test and evaluating the psychometric data, a targeted microtargeting was carried out with regard to products related to the cult outside the game.

Furthermore, players received a helmet as part of the game, which was equipped with magnetic coils to stimulate the frontal lobes in addition to 3D spectacles. After certain moves, which were coordinated with the game's decision-making options and always stimulated a certain power of the fictitious Nordic god, weak magnetic waves were applied to the frontal lobes. A further analysis of the game-, click- and consumption behavior in combination with the evaluation of likes and other psychometric data could be concluded to a RELAT factor of 23% for some players with regard to the fictitious cult. In a comparison group of persons who were also confronted with the contents of previously non-existent cults after personality analysis and psychometric evaluation within the framework of microtargeting without transcranial magnetic stimulation, an average RELAT Factor with regard to these other cults of under 2% was found.

6. Experiment

6.1 Magnetic stimulation and microtargeting in relation to a fictitious Nordic god in the context of a computer game

The author's laboratory has been involved from the very beginning in the development of a computer role-playing game, which is based on a filmed comic series about a fictitious god of war borrowed from the Nordic saga circle. The game was developed with high financial expenditure, modern technology and attractive graphics. It was awarded numerous prizes when it was launched and was played by about 2 million players worldwide shortly after its launch on the market. The content of the game is based on a mixture between fantasy and science fiction and is about travelling through a galaxy to find the god of war at its center. Those players who survive the adventures and solve the various puzzles along the way will be rewarded with a gift upon arrival at the god of war, which included free download of the second part of the game and the sending of a helmet in Viking form, which was equipped with 3D spectacles and magnetic coils. A game of part 2 was not possible without the helmet.

By downloading or installing the game, the players agreed to have access to their psychometric data. Based on the questions of the Atlantic Test, the players were divided into the corresponding personalities at the beginning. This test was integrated into the game in such a way that only after completing the personality test was a corresponding avatar assigned, which could only be changed later in the game. Only the gender was freely selectable from the beginning. For example, those players in the personality category "Extraversion" were given an avatar as a juggler, those with "selfish centeredness" were given the mage, and those in the category "Openness" were given the warrior.

In order to avoid the so-called "avatar-gap", meaning the discrepancy between actual and assumed virtual personality, the results of the personality test were continuously compared with psychometric data such as expressions in social networks. If there was a big discrepancy, the player "died" in the game and was assigned a different avatar based on a new personality test. Only when the personality showed a certain temporal consistency with the psychometric data could the players freely choose their avatar.

The goal of the first part of the computer game was to find the Nordic god in the center of the universe. Several battles had to be fought, puzzles solved, and supplies had to be stored. From the very beginning of the game, players were confronted with

products and content in the form of microtargeting through posts and character-controlled advertising, which were initially loosely and, as the game progressed, increasingly directly related to the fictional cult of the Nordic god. Thus, this character-driven approach was initially related to the comics and films, and later became more and more centered on the fictitious god himself, e.g. with offers to buy books such as "Lost Knowledge of the God's Herbs", "Practical Ancestral Magic", trips to his holy sources, non-fiction books on the subject, etc.. As far as the offered products did not exist, they were posted as crowdfunding actions, meaning as projects that required a certain amount of donations to be realized. Clicking on the respective ads led to a faster progress in the computer game. It was not necessary to buy products or donate money, but it was sufficient to draw attention to the topic of a cult around the Nordic god.

As soon as the goal of part 1 was reached and the players had discovered the god, they were rewarded with a helmet and access to part 2 of the game. The second part could be played partly without helmet, thus without 3D animation, and at certain points only with helmet.

After finding the god in part 1 of the game, the god became an ally of the player and was able to help in case of emergency. The goal of part 2 was to pacify a planet of wild and technically mutated giant oaks.

Before particularly difficult moves, such as certain battles, the players had to keep their helmets on. In each case directly before difficult tasks, the players were introduced to the cult of the god according to the respective click - behavior in part 1. The players who were more interested in factual content such as the herbal book for example, were given "facts" about the cult with filmic reviews in 3D. Those players who were more interested in the journey were given a 3D animation with a virtual bath in the holy stream etc. During this cultic manipulation weak magnetic currents were applied to the frontal lobes. As far as the players failed in the following tasks, there was the possibility to ask for the god's "support" again, while light magnetic currents were applied again. During the phases of the application the 3D graphics and sound were kept very quiet.

In order to be able to measure the extent to which the stimulation and manipulation with the contents of the fictitious cult triggered attribution mechanisms in the players, the above-mentioned RELAT profiles from the meeting of the monotheistic living cults were compared with the profiles of

the players. At the same time, microtargeting was intensified and the players were targeted with advertising, e.g. in the form that players could not only book trips to the holy stream, but also order a bottle of water from the stream. As far as products were offered for sale, the price was kept so that it was slightly above the economic possibilities of the respective player, in order to see to what extent the players would have made "sacrifices". In addition, a blog was set up that was only accessible to level 2 gamers, where messages were left independently and controlled by different avatars. They speculated whether changes they seemed to feel in their lives might have been triggered by playing the game, the helmet or even the cult itself. As far as players got involved in these chats, the six controlled avatars tried to carry out an indirect questioning about the RELAT-Factor, e.g. with questions like "Don't you feel that you are going through life more purposefully since the game of level 2? "or "I ordered the water and imagine that a lot of things are happening since then, e.g. I found a new job, has something like this happened to you as well?"

The answers in this hidden test were also compared with the psychometric data. The attribution factor was 23% at the end of the game of part 2, which means that 23% of the players considered the fictional Nordic god from their computer game to be the cause of actual events and decisions in their lives. 67% of the players reported special experiences during the magnetic stimulation that they could not explain with the game alone. Since they were exposed to pseudo-religious content directly before the magnetic stimulation, more than 50% of the players tended to attribute this to an invisible action that was directly or indirectly associated with the Nordic god.

6.2 Comparison group of representatives of dead religions

A comparison group was formed to investigate the influence of magnetic stimulation on the activation of religious commitment. This group consisted of persons who were also confronted with religious content not currently practiced by microtargeting and who were in a comparable situation to the players of the computer game without the use of transcranial brain stimulation.

For this purpose, 37 persons were selected who are regarded as representatives of past religious cults, meaning those who are no longer practiced anywhere in the world. The generation

of this group of people took several years, since the following criteria had to be fulfilled for each person:

1. the person had to be the last representative of a religion that he/she considered to have actually practiced in the past.
2. the person had to assume that the religion he or she represented in the past was still relevant, i.e. that it was capable of triggering a value on the attribution scale as opposed to mere stimulation in the form of entertainment.
3. each of the participants must have tried to make the religion they represent relevant again before the study by trying to attract new members, meaning to create an attribution factor in other people.

To this end, the author's laboratory had invited tenders for a qualitative field study entitled "(Re)activation of religious systems", which 37 people finally agreed to participate in. This study involved regular meetings over a longer period of time, during which qualitative surveys were conducted on the ways in which the participants tried to reactivate their religious systems in other people, i.e. how they tried to win new customers or restore customer loyalty.

Within the framework of this study, the participants were given the opportunity to download a computer game individually programmed for them in the form of an app. The content of the game was similar to the game about contacting the saints in the respective virtually enriched real environment as offered at the monotheistic meetings mentioned above. The difference was that in this case the saints could not be contacted but bowled away, which gave each saint a certain number of points. With the download all participants agreed to the psychometric use of their data. In this way, the interaction with potential new customers or new followers could be analyzed. It turned out that many of the participants tried to achieve a comeback of their cults through targeted product placement. In the foreground were artistic/performative and esoteric offers, by means of which the respective cults tried to get a relevance again. By analyzing the social networks 132 interactions between representatives of past cults and potential new customers could be analyzed. The answers or reactions to the advertising of the cults were qualitatively evaluated. From the point of view of attribution theory, the attribution of causes for life experiences or decisions of potential new customers to the cults advertised tended towards zero or was in the areligious area at 2%. This means that the 37 representatives of past cults did not manage to establish relevance or customer loyalty.

7. Conclusion

Faith can be measured by the religious attribution factor in the sense of an interpretation guideline for life experiences.

The religious attribution factor, i.e. the attribution of causation for experiences and decisions to religious constructs can be increased by manipulation and brain stimulation.

Just like a new product, a new religion or world view can be generated with the techniques of brain stimulation and psychometrically based microtargeting.

The techniques of marketing in the form of psychometrically based microtargeting do not differ between goods and immaterial beliefs.

The mechanisms of customer loyalty to a certain product are comparable to the mechanisms of belief in certain religious systems.

22.

The Egyptian cat goddess Bastet, the Manëtu Òpalanïe and the muse Hepate had become curious and wanted to know what their old colleagues were doing. They visited Rögn's "Wolf Moon Show" at the Hotel Milagro in Nevada.

"The animal moves strangely," Bastet said. "It fixes Rögn's neck. I can see that. Us cats would jump the same way. The movement of the muscles in his hind legs that I see and the trembling in his flews that I hear tell me that an instinct has taken over."

"A spider, in a panic, roped down from the ceiling," said Òpalanïe. "I saw its shadow on the wall as it fell in front of the spotlight. She's too small for this path. Her thread couldn't reach down and there is no escape place along her path to where she could layaway. She'd rather jump into the uncertain void as if death was lying in wait for her."

"The connection between Rögn and Fenrir is broken," said Hepate. "What was until now a river is now dammed up and threatens to burst and carry them both away in a flood. The Fenrir wolf has taken off the mask under his disguise."

I look into the blue of Fenrir's eyes and at first I thought it was the reflection of a spotlight, but it is not the technology. The sun had once plunged behind the sea and colored the sky red. A night that does not follow the natural course has broken inside him. Ember swirls in the eyes of Fenrir. It is nothing artificial, it is not a game like the light bulbs of his eyes on the carousel. It happens too fast to name. I'm not afraid. I've practiced it for thousands of years without knowing it. His eyes stare, they're fixed on me. Whether he sees me, what he sees at all, I don't know. His head and upper body are lowered, his body seems wider than usual, he has cancelled our joint choreography, it got carried away with the light, I know he will jump at me, not for entertainment of the audience, he will attack me. The embers are racing around my neck, my throat, my artery. I'm not surprised.

I don't have my armor, I wouldn't even know any more where my armor is. I'm not prepared for the moment. But if something is going on here that I have no control over, what is there to defend? Fenrir has opened his mouth, his forefeet are already rising from the ground. A break before the next exhalation. Why? Why after all these years? That's how it was written in our script, but the audience has been dead for a long time. The audience doesn't want to see blood. The

audience wouldn't understand blood. He'll jump to his end here. If he kills me, they'll kill him. Modern and gentle, with a stun gun and then a syringe to put him to sleep. Two red bullets and fangs framing a throat fly towards me. The paws of the hind legs detach from the ground. Adrenalin rushes through my body and stretches apart every millisecond. I can remain frozen and wait to see how the jaws of the Fenriswolf will bore into my neck and shoulder. This is how it was predestined to happen. By who? By people who no longer know anything about their own existence? By the Norns themselves, already extinct? Their fate woven from the bowels of fallen warriors long since decayed? The Fenris Wolf, they say, will devour the gods at the end of the world, but one of them will tear his jaws apart so wide that he will die from it. Is it me? Am I his prey or his destroyer? The leap comes from a time long past and out of time. I believed the battle was canceled. Now I understand that it had to come after all. It was part of the deal we made. The contract with the world that we are their Gods and therefore we have a predetermined end. The clause that forever holds us to eternity is worthless if the other part is taken away. We knew and have known this all along, but we didn't believe it and are no less stupid than the people who wrote the script for us. They determine us. They determine our roles. We call ourselves immortal and yet we look at the fangs of the predator all the time. We think we're going to quit, become someone new but in fact never move. The wolf is in free flight, from the left a horror spills out of the audience, blowing a small spider between us out of sight. I will raise my arm up, repel the wolf, he will fall to the ground. I will kick his lower jaw with my right boot and pull his upper jaw towards the ceiling until it bursts apart. The audience will not understand that I am trying to save their world and mine from destruction. They will simply take me for an animal torturer. They won't even see a wolf, but a pet. I have no grievances against Fenrir. Just like me, he has no choice.

I'll open my mouth. I will devour. That is how I take in the world. I must absorb it. Things die in the process. There is no other entity but me. There is no unity in two. I'm not taking revenge, even if that's what they say I did. I'm just restoring balance. I don't kill out of cruelty. No wolf kills viciously. It's the victim's resistance that makes it cruel. I don't enjoy the blood or the scraps of flesh or the screams or the innards. I just don't close my eyes to the fact that there is a

process that is unpleasant. My wolves are called murderers. When people do the same they abstract into safety. My leap is not devious. The revelation of truth takes no account of time. I am more powerful than myself. I will kill Rögn. I will attack him. That is my mission. He is not a curse. There is no curse, only things that not everyone can and will do.

There is no after. The after is a concept. There are only the weapons of my jaws and the specific order. The ship from the nails of the dead has landed. Everyone in this room was already dead. Everybody in this room is staring at me. They are frightened because they think and live in concepts. They think they're above the animals. They use it to create gods for themselves and they even think they're creating their world. Their thinking makes them stupid. A concept has no life. That is why it is not brutal to kill Rögn. Rögn was just an idea of man. I free them from a wrong concept. I feel my body flying through the air. I can watch my body. It is a weapon, a tool, a sword that cuts through ignorance. That is my destiny. I am the end point that is now being set. I collide with Rögn's gaze. I pierce him. I don't dwell on his questions. I fix his neck, his veins. I free him and he knows it. He won't move. He knows I'm releasing him and yet he throws thoughts into my path. The word friendship means nothing to me. The word trust means nothing to me. Reason is unknown to me. It's those very concepts that are killing him now. If he now stops like this and does not bother me any longer, it will happen very quickly. The neck is soft, the aorta is not deep, and the blades of my teeth are knife-fine. A small resistance like when swallowing and then it gets warm immediately, he falls into a slight dusk and everything is gone. He will feel no grief. Even that only an empty phenomenon. I give him back his dignity as a god, because I finally free him from empty concepts.

I don't expect thanks. People resist flesh and blood, and that's where the truth lies. It makes them panic because it goes against their world of ideas, which they care so much about. I will now tear apart a body in front of them and who has got eyes will see that there is nothing there. Flesh. Bones, matter. They could all understand it at once in the hall and free themselves from their thinking, but I already know no one will learn anything from it. They will want to work with their fear and defend their world of theories with all their might. Then they will demand my death. They will need my death to keep their world going. I am a danger to their world.

His gaze surrenders and sinks to the bottom. He understands.

I see my foot. A shoe will crush his lower jaw.

He clenches his fist in fear.

I hurl my spear across the red of his eyes.

He turns his shoulder before his neck. He chooses cruelty.

It is I who will put an end to his evil ways.

He raises his arm. The fool.

His bite will go nowhere. He leaps to his doom.

I turn my mouth around the sleeve of his upper arm and snap.

The fabric of my shirt tears, I rush to his side while my fist slams into him and smashes him to the ground.

Bastet fell from above onto the wolf's back and drilled her claws into him so that he howled and threw his head backwards. An eagle flew with all its might on Rögn's side and threw him to the ground. The audience only saw the two of them fall apart at the last moment and in the background a female figure appeared, stretching her right index finger upwards and announcing:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, a new age is dawning! Look forward with us to further surprises after the break!" The curtain drew closed and she remained in the middle of the picture until the end, when it was completely closed. The audience was confused at first, muttering, until an occasional clapping began, which increased to a polite applause.

Behind the curtain Rögn was lying on the floor and bleeding from his arm. Beside him lay Fenrir, dazed. Above him the eagle hovered, flapping its wings and held him in check. The blue returned into the eyes of the wolf.

"Have you been abandoned by all the gods, you madmen... Were you trying to kill yourself or all of us? And that on stage?" said Hepate with suppressed volume.

The wolf whimpered. Rögn sat up, held his arm and looked defiantly. Bastet sat down on the floor with bent front paws between him and Fenrir.

Some stagehands came by and asked if everything was alright.

"Fine," Rögn and Hepate said in an involuntarily choir.

"The play End of the World is not suitable for a children's theatre like yours! A long time ago you had been put a bug in

your ears about how to behave and then you work your whole life towards it? You act like avengers of the world and are your own marionettes. You do not play with the end of the world for selfish reasons! You need to grow up! Development is not about believing your own fairy tales. You are messing up the whole past and thereby damaging the balance of today. The today of us all!"

Under the beat of the eagle's wings and the distant voices of the audience lay embarrassed silence until Fenrir broke into a long pitiful howl.

"I'm sorry!" he sobbed.

"Because you didn't manage to eat me or because of me?"

Rögn barked at him.

"My whole life is pointless..."

He actually made a pathetic impression. The show was supposed to go on in 20 minutes. Fenrir had some kind of nervous breakdown and didn't seem to be ready for action. Rögn's injury wasn't very deep, but he refused to go on stage with Fenrir. "If you break off now, people will talk. You are well-known. People will make fun of you or will start chasing you Fenrir because they assume you are a danger."

"With him, no way!" Rögn growled. Fenrir whimpered to himself.

"I can fill in," Bastet said. "I have never missed a performance and I know every word and movement."

The curtain opened. In the middle of the stage one saw a sofa being raised. On the left was a dog basket in which Fenrir was lying. Laughter from the audience. They put a hood on him under which his face gave a spacy impression. His tongue was hanging out. They had given him a sedative. Rögn was sitting on the sofa on the right. They had put a cape made of red velvet on him like a kind of boxer's coat. Between the two in the middle was a basket from which a bottle of wine and a cake peeked out. The spectators could not see that at the top of the stage between the lamps sat the eagle, ready to pounce on the brawlers at any time. Hepate appeared:

"Ladies and gentlemen, today for the first time live and exclusively with you the sensation and surprise of the year! Free yourselves from all imaginations of circus and manege as you knew them by now. Welcome to a new generation and dimension of entertainment. Ladies and gentlemen, the increeeeeedible Misses B!

From the left edge a black cat appeared in the headlight cone
with proud steps and raised tail.
The crowd cheered.
Mrs. B obviously had a taste for it.



- RÖGN -

A SELF HELP GROUP OF ANCIENT GODS IS TRYING TO MAKE A COMEBACK. THROUGH ESOTERICISM COURSES, ADVENTURE TRIPS OR FILM ADAPTATIONS OF THEIR DEEDS THEY TRY TO SAVE THEMSELVES FROM OBLIVION. THE NORDIC GOD RÖGN HAS A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT POSITION IN THIS, AS HARDLY ANYTHING HAS SURVIVED FROM HIS CULTURE, TO THE RIDICULE OF THE GREEK GODS. HIS COLLEAGUE PROF. SHAKTYRAN PROPOSES TO ESTABLISH RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES THROUGH THE SECRET MAGNETIC STIMULATION OF BRAIN AREAS IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMPUTER GAME.

A DIVINE COMEBACK