

A Utopia in the Middle of Savo? - The Monastery of Valamo in the Eyes of its Visitors

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Tiivistelmä – Referat <p>Tämän pro gradun keskiössä on luostarilaitos ja sen merkitys nykypäivänä ihmisille. Luostarilaitos mielletään helposti keskiajalle kuuluvaksi ilmiöksi mutta sen juuret juontavat paljon kauemmaksi menneisyyteen ja sen merkitys yhteiskunnalle ja ihmisille ulottuu tähän päivään saakka. Tutkielma ottaa tarkasteltavakseen modernin maailmanajan tunnusmerkit länsimaissa ja analysoi esimerkiksi sekularisaation vaikutusta luostarilaitokseen ja miten se on joutunut mukautumaan muutoksiin vuosisatojen kuluessa. Tutkielman teoreettinen pohja perustuu kolmeen tutkijaan: Georg Simmelin sosiologiseen viitekehukseen, Charles Taylorin sekularisaation määritelmään ja Jean Séguyn teoriaan luostarilaitoksen roolista utopiana maan päällä. Tutkimuksen keskiössä on Heinävedellä sijaitseva Valamon luostari, joka toimii esimerkkitapauksena luostarista, joka on säilyttänyt asemansa vetovoimaisena kohteena vierailijoille sekä tärkeänä ortodoksisuuden keskuksena Suomessa.</p> <p>Tutkielma lähestyy Valamoa uskontososiologisesta näkökulmasta ja sen tutkimuskysymys tarkastelee mikä on Valamon luostarin funktio 2000-luvulla vierailijoiden silmissä. Tutkimuskysymys valikoitui aikaisemman luostarilaitosta käsittelevän kirjallisuuden perusteella, joissa kentältä mainittiin puuttuvan muun muassa nykyaikaan, historian sijasta, keskittyvää tutkimusta, muiden kuin luostarin asukkaiden tekemää tutkimusta, ja empiiristä tutkimusta. Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselykaavakkeiden avulla, jotka kartoittivat avoimien kysymyksien kautta vierailijoiden kokemuksia ja suhdetta Valamoon. Aineiston lopullinen koko oli 88 kyselyvastausta.</p> <p>Tutkielman analyysin perusteella Valamon funktion vierailijoille voi hahmottaa kolmen kategorian – hengellisen, sosiaalisen, ja kulttuurillisen – kautta. Hengellisen kategoriaan sisältyivät ajatukset Valamosta uskonnollisena keskuksena, paikkana, josta löytää tilaa omille ajatuksille ja spiritualiteetille yleisesti, ja paikkana levähtää kiireisen yhteiskunnan ulkopuolella. Sosiaalisessa kategoriassa korostuivat perheen, suvun ja ystävyysyhteisöiden merkitys Valamossa vierailtaessa. Erityisesti talkoolaiset pitivät tärkeänä talkoolaisyhteisön henkeä ja myös ystävyysyhteisöt munkkeihin ja muihin vierailijoihin korostuivat. Kulttuurillisessa kategoriassa taas mainittiin Valamon rooli sivistäjänä, näyttelyjen ja kurssien järjestäjänä ja historiallisesti merkittävänä paikkana. Kategorioiden lomassa myös hahmottui ajatus Valamosta vaihtoehtoisena elämäntapana ja yhteisönä, eräänlaisena utopiana, vaikka vierailijat eivät varsinaisesti koskaan liittyneet tähän utopistiseen yhteisöön täysin, vaan vain piipahtivat siellä säännöllisin väliajoin. Siitä huolimatta näille vierailijoille Valamo oli hyvin kiinteä osa elämää ja merkittävä monella eri tasolla, erityisesti kontrastina hektiselle, modernille ajalle.</p>			
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1 Is Monasticism a Relic of the Past?

At a brief glance, monasticism and the contemporary world may appear like two incompatible concepts, at least as far as countries broadly thought of as 'the West' - that is, large parts of USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe - are considered. If the West is seen as multicultural, secularized or undergoing secularization and characterized by constant stimulation, individualism and privatization of religions, monasticism is its polar opposite as the ultimate devotion to the transcendent; a life fully dedicated to religion which often requires adjustment to intense communal life, and renouncing personal freedom as a show of obedience. Traditional Christian monasticism requires commitment that does not appeal to the alleged standard of the modern citizen – those who wish to shop their worldview from the competing religions all around them, to keep their religious views private and is put off by more binding rules that endanger their individualism. If these things are taken largely as the trend today, how and why does monasticism survive?

This thesis will be delving into thoughts of modernity and secularization, almost as much as it will be delving into monasticism. These aforementioned elements of modernity are concepts that have been defined, theorized and analyzed by many scholars but so far, there has been no real consensus on the actual definitions. Theories have agreed something has been happening to the role of religions and attitudes towards them in the West, but whether societies are really undergoing a secularization, and what that actually means, has remained up to debate. In general speech, secularization usually refers to the weakening of religion, both as a political influence and as an internal conviction.¹ Further overviews into the matter, such as Rob Warner's *Secularization and Its Discontents*, have attempted to map the versatility of the outlooks. Warner concludes that religiosity today is less an immutable, lifelong conviction inherited from the family and the local church and more a shifting, temporary collection of ways and beliefs that are strongly affected by social circumstances. These 'social realities' include, for example, an internationally available selection of faiths, a culture of rationalization and the rise of autonomous religious adherence guided by the individual choice. Regardless of these changes, there seems to be no evidence that the religion was slowly declining towards its extinction.²

Scholars like Steve Bruce have defined secularization as the the increasing marginalization of religion. This definition is opposed, one example being Thomas Luckmann who has described this

1 Kääriäinen, Ketola, & Niemelä, 2003, 11

2 Warner, 2010, 181-182

process more like a transformation of religion.³ There are also views landing somewhere in-between; Warner notes the modes of religious adherence in Europe have been described through Grace Davie's "believing without belonging", indicating church attendance may have little to do with faith, and through Daniele Hervieu-Léger's "belonging without believing" which explores a traditional and societal connection to the church without belief in its teachings.⁴ Opinions and observations vary. This thesis will follow Charles Taylor's take on the secularization which acknowledges a certain decline of religion, but does not subscribe to any linear development nor to the idea that the religious thoughts will ultimately disappear altogether from the society.

Regardless of how secularization is theorized, the crisis of monasticism has been certainly felt in some Christian monasteries. The membership numbers of European and American monasteries have been collapsing through the 20th century and many are under the threat of closing down because of economic problems and the lack of novices to carry on the work of aging monastics.⁵ On the other hand, monasticism as a religious organization and way of life has proven incredibly enduring throughout history and across different religious traditions not limited to Christianity - it seems unlikely to go extinct any time soon.⁶ What is more, the general public is showing increasing interest towards monastic tourism and monastic products, but while this interest may support certain organizations economically, it does not guarantee a solution to recruitment issues and may in some cases even be considered disruptive to the monastic way of life.⁷

1.2 Earlier Research, Research Questions, and Rationale

Broadly speaking, the purpose of this thesis is to act as a sociological inquiry into monasticism and its role in the contemporary world, especially because monasticism appears to be somewhat a neglected topic in sociology of religion - whereas historical research has been plentiful.⁸ *The Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, published in 2000, is the largest show of collaborative effort in the field to date and while not specifically a sociological research, it certainly acts as a waypoint in investigating the contemporary state of monasticism. However, even this collection of articles reveals an imbalance in the amount of research between Western and Eastern Christian monasticism in favour of the first. Some attempts to patch this gap have been made, for example by the research

3 Kääriäinen, Ketola, & Niemelä, 2003, 11

4 Warner, R. 2010, 49-50

5 Weiss 2000, 873

6 Keenan, W. 2001

7 Hervieu-Léger, 2014, 29

8 Jonveaux, Pace, and Palmisano, 2014, xiii and Venarde, 2000, 596

collection *Orthodox Monasticism Past and Present*, published in 2015. Even if Western monasticism tends to overshadow it, investigations into Eastern Christian monasticism are not non-existent. For example, Mount Athos still draws plenty of interest, as is apparent from Rene Gothoni's extensive research, including *Det heliga berget Athos* and *Paradise Within Reach - Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mt Athos*. Whatever gaps remain may also be due to the geographical spheres of research being separated by language, especially when it comes to newer, empirical field reports.

Classical theorists in the sociology of religion like Weber and Durkheim have touched the subject of monasticism, but not delved in it extensively or systematically.⁹ In the field of contemporary sociology, researchers have been able to rely on Jean Séguy for a newer theoretical background but actual field research still appears relatively rare. For example the 5th Volume of the *Annual Review of Sociology of Religion*, published in 2014, evaluates the shortcomings of sociology and monasticism in four points: 1. Lack of empirical research into Christian monasticism, 2. active monastic orders are better represented than contemplative ones, 3. there is too much focus on organizational aspects and emphasis on the past at the expense of the present, and 4. the majority of recent studies have been carried out by the monastics themselves.¹⁰ This thesis will address at least the first, third and fourth points, but the monastery at the center of the research may not bend to clear-cut categorizations between active and contemplative orders mentioned in the second. The Valamo monastery has a long history of having close interaction with surrounding society, but it does not have similar far-reaching missionary activity like many Catholic orders.

In an attempt to respond to the shortcomings outlined in the Annual Review, and to support further research into the Orthodox monasteries, this thesis will set out to investigate the monastery of Valamo in Heinävesi, Finland. This monastery is sometimes called New Valamo, set apart from the Old Valamo that is located in the middle of Lake Ladoga in Russia. Both monasteries are active today, but their paths diverged during the second World War when Valamo's brotherhood fled from the Old Valamo due to Russian bombardment. The Old Valamo remained abandoned and repurposed for a long time, until in 1989 it was returned to the hands of the Orthodox church and began monastic activities again. Both Valamo monasteries have been a popular research topic amongst both Finnish and Russian researchers, as well as amongst the monks themselves, but the emphasis on historical perspective has clearly taken precedence also in this research. One of the most recent publications is Kilpeläinen's doctoral thesis, *Valamo – karjalaisten luostari?* published in 2000, which inspects Valamo's societal interactions between the World Wars. The research focuses on the earlier phase of Valamo monastery, but it can be seen as a part of the same cultural continuum. In many ways, this thesis builds on top of and continues Kilpeläinen's work, and reviews those societal interactions but

9 Jonveaux, Pace, and Palmisano, 2014, 261

10 Ibid. xiii

for the 21st century. Kilpeläinen's many categories of interaction allow a certain preliminary understanding of the relations the monastery has had with the surrounding society. Through comparisons between the past and present, it is possible to estimate how Valamo's societal function has or has not changed.

While acting as a center of Orthodox pilgrimage and carrying the image as a place of contemplation and silence, present-day Valamo also offers a range of services from accommodations and shops to cultural activities and courses in the the monastery's institute. The monastery's popularity as a tourist site harks back to 19th century and thus curious non-Orthodox visitor groups cannot be considered a new phenomenon. However, since giving up the last of its agriculture in 1970, Valamo has had to rely on tourism as a source of income more than ever before. Kilpeläinen formulates that this busy interaction was a part of Valamo's institutional character already in the early 20th century, and in a way the monastery's natural state, instead of the seclusion and silence.¹¹ However, Valamo's significance for today's society remains academically unmapped. Most recent, non-academic work exploring the views of Valamo's visitors is a collection of personal accounts about the monastery's importance, called *Minun Valamoni* 'My Valamo' published in 2017.

As already outlined above, this thesis will focus on the questions and challenges that modernity has cast on Valamo. The monastery has been through various trials through the centuries and weathered ruin, rebuilding and relocation. Through these centuries it has also fulfilled a variety of functions in relation to the surrounding world. This thesis asks what has become of Valamo's function in the 21st century, and analyses the views of its visitors for answers.

The material used for the analysis consist of online questionnaires which are answered by Valamo's visitors. This brief overview is set against the backdrop of secularization and of the modern culture of the West, as they are defined in the theories by Georg Simmel and Charles Taylor. The views on monastic way of life as a utopia, as it is presented by Jean Séguy and the scholars following his footsteps, will also be applied and the question raised if Valamo could offer a utopia not only for the brotherhood, but for its visitors as well. What Séguy's utopia covers will be explored further in chapter 2.3.

Referring to the fourth point of the critique by Annual Review, the research is carried out from an outsider perspective. As a Lutheran Christian and a Finnish student of comparative religions, I can be considered to belong to the same cultural circle as the monks of Valamo, but the perspectives are set apart by the branch of Christianity. This thesis is not a theological study, but a sociological analysis of monasticism as a religious organization that serves many – and not always religious - purposes for its members and visitors. While the researcher herself may be invested in the continued survival of

11 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 447

Valamo, given its status as an institution with extensive historical heritage, the research has approached the topic from a non-confessional standpoint which does not seek to promote the monastery in any particular way.

2 Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

The following chapters will examine the rationale for why particular materials for this study were chosen, as well as the methods of their acquisition and analysis. The research is built within a theoretical framework that relies on several thinkers, which also calls for careful definitions of the central terminology as perceived by the theorists, and some considerations for the compatibility and critique of the concepts.

2.1 Methods and Materials

The analysis is built on the data acquired from the online questionnaire that was designed for Valamo's visitors. The online questionnaire was chosen as the format for acquiring the data for its easy accessibility, fast distribution and reassurance of anonymity for the participants. Valamo is a familiar location for a large part of Finnish population, regardless of their church membership status. Visitors, both infrequent and regulars, live in a geographically wide area. This questionnaire format was also picked to reach a larger amount of respondents and to not limit the research regionally to Southern Finland.

The distribution of the questionnaire was done through a Facebook announcement that was posted on the wall of the Facebook group Valamon Ystävät ry 'Friends of Valamo' with permission from the group's administrators. Valamon Ystävät is an official organization founded by the lay supporters in 1973 to assist and promote Valamo monastery in various ways. The organization has a membership fee and they also publish a journal for the members four times a year. However, joining or viewing the Facebook group does not require membership and the group is generally used to distribute news and updates between the members and the monastery. Thus the questionnaire was available to any amongst a broad audience who had registered on Facebook and had an interest in

the events around Valamo. The post was also later shared by a few individuals and posted into a Facebook group of Valamo's volunteers.

The questionnaire itself was built with the Google Form online platform that was accessible to anyone with a link. The only limitation of the questionnaire was that it composed in Finnish. The final version of the questionnaire accepted only a single reply but the respondents had the chance to edit their answers afterwards. The replies were not viewable to other respondents. The questionnaire contained only open questions that the respondents could fill out without any character limit which sought to encourage freeform expression about the respondents' experiences with Valamo. These questions were, for example, what made them visit Valamo for the first time, what kind of activities they took part in, how they experienced interaction with fellow visitors and the brotherhood, what was the most important part of their visit, and how they perceived the monastery's role in the society now. Included were also questions about the respondents' age and religious community. The end of the questionnaire had an additional section for filling in any thoughts not covered by the questions. Generally, the majority of replies were brief but several also contained multiple paragraphs for each question. For the full questionnaire, see the appendix at the end of the thesis.

The amount of respondents totalled 88, so the questionnaire reached a fair amount of individuals. Inevitably in most replies the type of information was fairly superficial as opposed to what could have been gained through interviews, even if the material allows a good general overview of the experiences of the visitors. With the analysis in mind, one must also note that by choosing Valamon Ystävät Facebook group as the channel of distribution, the questionnaire also reached respondents who were most likely already more involved in Valamo's community rather than casual summer tourists. For example, the frequency of visits as reported by the respondents was relatively high; a mere two people had visited only once and those visits had been in 2016 and 2017. A concern that the online format might exclude older audiences turned out unnecessary, as over 50% of the respondents were over 60 years old.

For a qualitative research, the replies offer a relatively diverse view into a frequent visitor's thoughts, preferences and perceptions and also achieved sufficient saturation where the new answers no longer yielded much new information.¹² The analysis planned with the material in mind lands somewhere between inductive and deductive and can be considered a theory-based, instead of a theory-guided approach.¹³ I will draw on the ideas of three different theorists instead of relying on a single theoretical framework. The questionnaire questions were also designed to explore people's experiences relatively freely, instead of presenting set categories prepared for the analysis. The content analysis of the material itself led to the forming of categories, instead of them being entirely

12 Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 87

13 Eskola, 2001, 162

premeditated. Common aspects that were meaningful to the visitors of Valamo were the spiritual aspect, social aspect and the cultural aspect. These are not categories easily distinguished in practise, and their borders inevitably blur, but in the frame of this thesis they are most of all meant to demonstrate and clarify what visitors focus on in Valamo. An additional category also explored the visitors' ideas of Valamo's societal purpose in their view, which somewhat differed from their individual thoughts on its place in their life.

2.2 Theory of Complex Modernity and Ageless Monasticism

This thesis leans mainly on three thinkers: Georg Simmel, Charles Taylor and Sean Séguy. Simmel, sometimes heralded as the father of sociology, provides multiple interesting concepts about modernity, individualism and social differentiation which even over hundred years after writing, are hardly outdated – on the contrary, the society which Simmel analyzed in his time might have even intensified. His work, however, is not considered all-cohesive or a complete theory and his ideas mostly inform the outset of the research, and help clarify the cultural surroundings from which an individual may inspect monasticism. Taylor instead will offer more in-depth look at secularization and perhaps why monasticism is becoming a rarer choice in the West. Through him we also inspect what aspects of religiosity might attract people to monasticism as visitors and tourists. Séguy in turn will provide sociological considerations about the aims of monastic organization and its relations to the greater religious scape in Western culture. I will also inspect the views of the researchers who have utilized Séguy's thoughts and developed them further since, and contrast these with the ideas other scholars have provided about Valamo in particular.

2.2.1 Georg Simmel and Perceptions of Modernity

In Simmel's thoughts society arises from individuals and their agencies but his concept does not reduce society simply to the sum of individual humans. Instead, society to Simmel is more like an intricate network of interaction and reciprocity as a whole.¹⁴ In Simmel's theoretical and philosophical thinking, the individual is formed by their society but the society and the individual are also in

14 Frisby, 1990, 42-43 & 45-46

conflict: an individual always struggles to maintain their individuality and identity amidst increasingly complex and sizeable communities.¹⁵

Simmel's 'quantitative individuality' concept means that a person forms their individuality and in a way their identity, through sociation in different social circles. More crudely put, the amount of roles an individual takes in these circles constitutes their quantitative individuality. Jedlowski, in interpreting Simmel, finds similar considerations from the ideas of Maurice Halbwachs that may clarify things further: in modern times, thanks to the differentiation in society, these circles become ever more numerous and at some point this very amount of different roles starts to also embrittle identity. It could be inferred that the individual starts to suffer from the sheer complexity of different roles that may not form a coherent whole and the sense of identity becomes fragmented.¹⁶ Simmel also observes that in the modern society, the distance between an individual's efforts and their effects is often extensive and multi-staged, and makes it difficult for the individual to comprehend the surrounding world and its workings. This in turn prompts the question of the meaning of life – this is something Simmel explores through an individual's perceived values and their capability of exacting a palpable effect in their surroundings. The inhabitants of the large cities are especially susceptible to challenges of meaning and identity because their life is made chaotic by increasing amount of stimuli, large number of social circles, psychological distance from most of their neighbours and an ever increasing differentiation and specialization of work.¹⁷

Complex societies need not always be modern however, so what does Simmel say about modernity specifically? For Simmel, two central structures that have changed how people experience things in a society are 'the metropolis' and what he calls 'mature money economy'. Modernity for Simmel, it could be emphasised, is not what is new in the society but how our perception of things has changed. The constant flux of metropolis and the mature money economy have weakened the individual's sense of connection to the external world because everything is fleeting and the value of things is ultimately based on money and so, the individual experience has come to focus more on its inner world, for the sake of stability and for protection from the barrage of constant stimuli.¹⁸

Simmel's concepts of subjective and objective culture also tie to this sense of disassociation in the modern society. Objective culture can be loosely defined as all the cultural heritage which is capable of existing in the material realm autonomously, meaning books, archives and all kinds of records that are "collective memory objectified".¹⁹ Subjective culture can then approximately be treated as the individual experience of the world and the parts of the objective culture an individual

15 Dahme, 1990, 25

16 Dahme, 1990, 24-25; Jedlowski, 1990, 148

17 Dahme, 1990, 24-25; Mestrovic, 1990 192

18 Frisby, 1990, 60

19 Jedlowski, 1990, 132

has managed to integrate into their thinking. In a modern society, objective culture has expanded to such levels that it can no longer be internalized or memorized by the individual properly, which causes alienation.²⁰ Internalization is not made difficult only by the quantity of physical objects such as books, writings, artifacts or even architecture; Jedlowski and Scaff present their own interpretation of Simmel that objective culture has also been reduced to a stock of information that may no longer be linked to the individual's personal goals and growth, meaning difficulty of internalization on an emotional level.²¹

Not all individuals respond the same to modernity but two frequently mentioned cases in Simmel's work are the cynic and the blasé personalities. The cynic is a person who "does not see any difference in the value of things" and if they exist, he seeks to degrade them. This is largely a reaction to money economy - an ultimate reductionist attitude to 'higher things in life' because a price can be put on everything.²² The second, which is more intricately tied to the experience of individuality, is the blasé personality who has "lost the feeling for value difference". On one hand, money economy renders all pleasures level, making the individual yearn yet for more impressions and more exciting things to get rid of the monotony.²³ On the other, this experience of monotony can be seen as the very defense mechanism against stimulation overload. Then, the solution to maintaining individuality and sense of self is withdrawal from the barrage of experience.²⁴

So, in the metropolis Simmel is theorizing and observing, an individual has the hard task of keeping themselves protected from various dulling and confusing effects of the modernity: from the multitude of social roles must arise wholeness of identity²⁵; the value and difference of things that support individuality must be upheld, despite the psychological levelling effect of money; to avoid complete alienation from society, the surrounding culture must be internalized to an extent despite its sheer magnitude, and there is a very culture in place that emphasises individuality which puts pressure on a person to try and carve out an unique, meaningful life for themselves - despite the difficulty to perceive the means through which they could achieve the things they want.

Before inspecting Simmel's modernity in relation to religion, a brief look into his thoughts on religiosity is warranted. In general, Simmel views religiosity as something innate to humans, an experience or sensitivity people have in variety of grades. Rather than inspecting the sociological function of religion through religious customs or dogmas, Simmel opts to view the religious experience and sensitivity as the origin of all religious ways. The more static forms of religion, such as the aforementioned dogmas or customs, only follow afterwards because of the demands of

20 Frisby, 1990, 70; Moore, 1990, 202; Simmel 1950, 421; Simmel, Featherstone & Frisby 1997, 73

21 Jedlowski, 1990, 146; Scaff, 1990, 290

22 Nedelmann, 1990, 228

23 Ibid. 229

24 Nedelmann, 1990, 231, 233, 235; Simmel, 1950, 413-414

25 Scaff, 1990, 289

continuity and organization, but do not actually reflect the religious orientation and life properly.²⁶ Here the innate sensitivity becomes relevant. For those with weaker sensitivity, the dogmas and practises may be the only way to connect to religion while those with stronger sensitivity may feel strangled by them. While Simmel approaches religion from the viewpoint of Christianity, he actually transcends any limited view on spirituality by noting that strong innate religiosity is actually indifferent to the external constructs or teachings because that religiosity will be sustained by one's inner life alone.²⁷ A modern interpretation of Simmel's religiosity thus does not need to be connected to transcendental world views at all, but can also include secular sense of spirituality. This will be further explored through Taylor's thoughts in the next chapter.

Simmel explores religion's effects specifically in the metropolis relatively little but there is a sense of counterweight it causes to the hectic city life. Where the metropolis is in many ways a force than splinters, fragments and alienates people's inner experience, religiosity unifies it. According to Simmel "one of the great intellectual achievements of religion is that it draws together the vast spectrum of human ideas and concentrates them into single, unified concepts"²⁸. Simmel contrasts it to philosophy, by stating that religion possesses concreteness and vitality, a certain connection to life that abstract, intellectual concepts often do not have. Especially in Christianity, religion's ultimate goal of afterlife and the convergence of everything within one omnipotent and omnipresent God are palpable thought constructions that bring cohesion to life.²⁹ From a psychological point of view, religion or religiosity can bring a sense of unification to different social roles, when all the activities, albeit fragmented, are approached from the religious mindframe and purpose. Similarly, Simmel finds strong sociological connotations from the idea that there is no competition for salvation. Unlike in survival, economy or prestige, everyone is capable of achieving the same goal independent of others. In Christianity, one has simultaneously an individual connection to God and yet they are encompassed in the total reality with others, without melding into it. This brings about social unity which is still in harmony with aspirations of individual identity.³⁰

Monasticism in Simmel's framework could be perhaps viewed as an attempt to buffer some effects of modernity; to reduce both the amount of stimulation and the number of social roles to attain greater sense of unity psychologically, and to surround oneself with circumstances where also objective culture and subjective culture are more closely interacting. For example, while exploring the challenges of objective culture and difficulties of integrating the vast amounts of information, Simmel refers to the Franciscans' attitude of *Nihil habentes, omnia possidentes*³¹ as a way to combat

26 Simmel, Helle, Nieder, & Hammond, 1997, 5, 12

27 Ibid. 15, 17

28 Ibid. 1997, 29

29 Simmel, Helle, Nieder, & Hammond, 1997, 29

30 Ibid. 178, 188

31 Which roughly translates to 'owning nothing, yet possessing everything'

the excess that derailed the soul from its path to salvation. The monks gave up possessions and the 'worldly' lifestyle in order to possess properly that which really mattered to them. Simmel twists this saying to 'omnia habentes, nihil possidentes' to crystalize the challenges of modernity - owning too much, and being unable to 'have' anything.³² While historically, for Franciscans this meant concrete poverty, the same idea could be applied to more moderate forms of monasticism in the contemporary age. This said, monasticism does not exclude scholarly pursuits or appreciation of art and literature, and so the problem of expansive objective culture is not entirely dodged. However, monasticism narrows down the focus of the monastics in such way that objective culture may become manageable.

This attempt to attain greater focus and unity is hardly new for monasticism, as will be seen from chapter 3. If most radical cases of reclusion and asceticism are excluded, monasticism has attempted to include and harmonize many aspects of normal life, such as work and social relations, with a monastic lifestyle for a long time. For example, a monk's individual work is still seen as part of their devotion and calling, and something contributing to the general well-being of the monastery. Thus their daily job supports the unified focus. Similarly the social community, even in cases where casual interaction is restricted, serves to encourage shared aspirations. Not only is a monastic community a smaller unit compared to the metropolis – making social relations closer and easier to maintain - , but also most of the social differentiation is toned down by the majority of the community being able to take part in similar duties, at least as an ideal.

How closed-off the monastery is from the rest of the world depends on their traditions and the individual communities. Monasteries, even in the contemporary age, might range from strongly enforced seclusion, for example some Carmelite convents³³ to new monastic communities that experiment with individual freedom and welcome families as much as celibates.³⁴ How much its openness affects the effects of inner cohesion is that interesting question also in relation to visitors of the monasteries. If such a similar, unified focus can be attained by the visitors as well, are the effects bound to be more disjointed because the immersion in the monastic community is broken up by returning 'to the world' regularly? This would perhaps be a question for a larger comparative study that is not realistic in the confines of this thesis.

In inspecting Simmel, one must note that while sometimes very perceptive, Simmel lacks research in the empirical department of social sciences.³⁵ However, like with many founding theories of sociology, it is perhaps the task of later scholars to investigate and prove the theory wrong or right through empirical research. Of course, Simmel also never had to tackle certain modern phenomena

32 Simmel, Featherstone, & Frisby, 1997, 73

33 Sbardella, 2014, 57

34 Palmisano, 2014, 88

35 Poujeau, 2014, 173

such as globalization that also affects religion in major ways. While in Simmel's thinking religion appears mainly like a positive concept that is capable of unifying the struggling individual's person, this turning to religion for a strong perspective, could also lead to unyielding black and white thinking. Religion is also challenged in the pressures of multiculturalism and sometimes unification of one's person through religion could manifest both in sociologically negative and positive extremes. On one hand, it could allow an individual to withstand conflicting elements in their life and surroundings without being overwhelmed, on the other, it could lead to attempts to neutralize those conflicting elements altogether. This multicultural pressure will be further explored through Taylor.

2.2.2 Taylor and the Secular Age

Because Simmel introduces many interesting ideas about modernity, but does not tackle secularity very specifically, another more focused view into matters is needed. After all, secularization is considered a part of the modern world's phenomena and no doubt one of the challenges Valamo is facing - one that affects its interaction and function with its surrounding society. Academic circles are largely unanimous that the phenomenon of secularization exists, but what it means exactly, is still a debated topic. I will utilize Taylor's ideas of secularization because he might offer a better view into secularization as a shift in perception and self-understanding of individuals and in culture, rather than secularization simply as a 'falling away' of religion.³⁶ It should be noted that Taylor's focus resides strongly in the United States and Western Europe, especially in the United Kingdom and France and he, like many other secularization theorists, have found it arguable if one can even talk about secularization in the rest of the world.³⁷ A critical reading of Taylor also requires acknowledgement of his Catholic background and albeit his writing rarely takes a theologically apologetic form, his personal views incline towards pro-religion.³⁸

Delineating Taylor's definitions and terminology is needed first. In his understanding, there are three aspects to secularization: First, the fading of religion from public places and official structures of government. Second, the decrease of religious belief and practises, and third, changes in the conditions of belief, which is the main argument of Taylor's work. How Taylor himself puts it is:

36 Taylor, 2007, 22

37 Ibid. 424

38 Ibid. 10

The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is un-challenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.³⁹

The shift Taylor refers to is a gradual historical change in the conditions of belief, and he argues that the religious West used to have three features before this shift began. First, the world as a structure and all within it were seen as manifestations of God's existence and will, and all the natural phenomena now understood through science, were explained as divine acts. Second, society was also seen as organized and only possible through the divine plan, and third, people lived in what Taylor calls 'an enchanted world', meaning a world where human beings populate the world alongside different metaphysical forces of good and evil, and remain constantly vulnerable and susceptible to them. All in all, there was a very holistic perception of the world.⁴⁰ From this point on changes, which Taylor delineates through his work, start to occur and slowly lead to a so-called "self-sufficient" or "exclusive" humanism - an outlook that ultimately challenged the need for religious commitment, and which acts as the main counterweight in Taylor's conditions of belief.⁴¹

Exclusive humanism in Taylor's work means a wholly "immanent" worldview: it is the belief that there exists no transcendent world order, aside from the one human beings set for themselves, and that the ultimate goal of life is thus human flourishing. Taylor doesn't view exclusive humanism simply as a rational construction that is revealed after religious views have faded, but instead as a newly emerging self-understanding among people, that may even be viewed as a moral preference over a religious outlook.⁴² However, exclusive humanism is not the only alternative to religious belief - options may include world views like anti-humanism or ecospirituality - and Taylor does not pose it as directly comparable to modernity, but he sees it as something leading to "a state, where natural materialism poses itself as the only option compatible with the most prestigious institution of today, the science".⁴³ Thus Taylor finds exclusive humanism very central in defining modern world views in the West - not only does it stand as a strong candidate for a modern mindset, but in a way it also imposes new questions on religious world views, should they wish to compete.

It could be argued its discreet influence is visible in how human flourishing is becoming more central also in transcendent world views. For example, the so called new religiosity that sometimes escapes the confines of institutionalized religion, often promotes this-worldly benefits like wellness and self-improvement as an end in itself. Health and focus on oneself has been put on the center

39 Taylor, 2007, 2-3

40 Ibid. 25-26

41 Ibid. 16, 19

42 Ibid. 560

43 Ibid. 19,28

stage, but this of course does not mean that new forms of religiosity could be reduced purely to self-development.⁴⁴

In addition to clarifying Taylor's definitions of the secularization and exclusive humanism, a brief look into his historical formulations is required. Taylor emphasises that the current state of culture cannot be viewed in a time vacuum and sketches a historical theory, what he calls a 'story' to explain how exclusive humanism came to be in the West, and why it is perhaps so deeply rooted in its culture today. One of Taylor's main arguments is that secularization cannot be treated as a kind of positivistic liberation of mankind from the illusions of religion: religiosity is not something extra, that the Enlightenment and the age of reason simply strips away from the essence of the human mind, once it becomes capable of explaining the world around it without magic and mysticism. He also rejects the idea that secularization has been a linear decline of religion⁴⁵, or that it correlates with any certain feature such as migration, differentiation, industrialization or urbanization in a straightforward manner, even if other theorists have referred to them as influential factors.⁴⁶

Reviewing Taylor's full historical theory for this thesis is not practical but certain major trajectory lines should be introduced to fully understand Taylor's depiction of the modern mindstate. Taylor outlines the path to exclusive humanism through many elements, but most prominent are the emphasizes on personal instead of mystical and practise-based devotion; autonomous natural order; positivistic belief in the human development as well as inherent human goodness and finally, the withdrawn, buffered personality that is free to choose which influences to be affected by. All these factors slowly make room for a thought that transcendental may not be necessary in the end. In Taylor's thinking, the Reformation is the catalyst that starts the move away from the earlier mentioned enchanted world: charms and folk religion are shunned and religiosity guided towards personal devotional life.⁴⁷ The religious conflicts that sprung from the chasm between the churches brought the question of societal order to the center stage. A neutral basis for societal relations and morality that could be agreed on, regardless of confession, was eventually found from the development of Natural Law by Locke and other political theorists.⁴⁸ In Modern history the idea of order started to take precedence over religious values. Excessive religious enthusiasm was already considered disruptive by the thinkers of the 18th century and while it is not strictly speaking a new occurrence historically, I find it an outlook strongly observable in current European societies as well.⁴⁹ For example, similar kinds of thoughts may be also seen in Finland, as will be explored in chapter 3.4.

44 Taylor, 2007, 507, 509

45 Ibid. 530-531

46 Ibid. 425-426

47 Ibid. 61-63; 154

48 Ibid. 128

49 Ibid. 139-140, 147, 522

Taylor sees this practical gap as one of the factors that slowly starts to separate theology from the world order. Combined with the theistic phase of the 16th century which limited God's regime to Creation and introduced more positive ideas of the inherent goodness of humans and their capability for creating a harmonious society, these shifts in self-understanding slowly paved way for exclusive humanism.⁵⁰ It could be noted that the religious West did not have an uniform view on human goodness but the societies influenced by Latin theology had a strong emphasis on original sin and the depravity of the world, derived from Augustinian tradition, whereas Orthodox spirituality has long subscribed to the idea of *theosis*, the capability for human transformation into something better.

In the background, Taylor also sees development of new kind of a human experience: distanced, disciplined attitude that he calls "a buffered self".⁵¹ Through changes in community, etiquette, education and religious practise, humans become more focused on their inner life, and also more selective of the influences they accept to their person. This view is partially comparable to Simmel's ideas of the self that can live arms distance away from the rest of the world, sometimes inadvertently.

The current contemporary era in the West is characterized by certain phenomena and certain problems that Taylor does not detect in his historical review. Generally he calls these problems 'malaises of immanence', problems specific to the contemporary world. Some prominent examples are diminished sense of meaning, buffered and disconnected identity, and the pressures of multiculturalism on psyche.⁵² The rise of exclusive humanism is central to Taylor's secularity, and it has a major effect on the conditions of belief, but it is not the only factor. The selection of world views within societies have multiplied and diversified exponentially and this very vicinity to others that believe and practise differently may embrittle religious conviction. Foreign world views are no longer so strange or distant for someone to never consider them as an option, and even people within the same family may hold different beliefs, which sometimes leaves people without the reinforcement of a community.⁵³ The difficulties of the contemporary era are not limited to religions either. Taylor sees that on the side of the immanent world views, self-sufficient humanism may empower people by granting them a feeling of control and in a way, mental untouchability, but it also comes with the frailty of meaning. Lack of transcendent means the world is 'all there is' in a way. This leaves people to rely on their own ability to formulate meaning, in good and bad. One way this could turn out is that the buffered identity does not find that relevance and significance in life, and consequently turns into Simmel's blase personality.⁵⁴

50 Taylor, 2007, 129, 221-223, 229-230

51 Ibid. 27

52 Ibid. 299, 301-302

53 Ibid. 304

54 Ibid. 303

Taylor argues that in many cases, science and materialism are not quite capable of answering life's questions the way religions historically have.⁵⁵ Yet humans still have an inherent yearning for a meaningful life, and sometimes immanent may somehow feel lacking, despite the wish to hold onto a secular world view. For example there is still often a wish to solemnize particular events in life, which manifests in the popularity of rites of passage and ceremonies of life and death, whether religious or not. This experience of being pulled between options, that Taylor calls a cross-pressure, naturally affects religious world views as well: religious faith may be staggered by arguments of exclusive humanism in rational grounds, despite perhaps some moral or emotional preference towards transcendent views.⁵⁶

Of course, secularity is not only about problems and negative comparisons with the past. Taylor also outlines the ways in which religiosity has changed, not only declined. He questions the prediction that modern developments are slowly headed for total indifference regarding religious questions, and attributes this view down to old Enlightenment roots which were as much hoping as academically speculating that the future would be devoid of religion. On the other hand, it would seem that very few secularization theorists today actually predict the downright disappearance of religion, so it is hard to say who Taylor is trying to blame for making secularization a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁵⁷

Following Luckmann, Taylor sees that while modern changes have taken their toll on the old and institutionalized forms of religion, at the same time, new alternatives have been born.⁵⁸ In the contemporary western culture, choice and individuality are emphasised. The increasing consumerism encourages people to distinguish and represent themselves through lifestyle, clothing, and entertainment and sometimes conformity with old or readily given framework is fiercely rejected.⁵⁹ When this framework equals the traditional Christianity, for example, the reaction has been to seek out new, more personal ways of religious practise. Church attendance has been swapped for meditation or retreats.⁶⁰ There is a call for inclusivity and an ecumenical spirit, as well as a yearning for more experiential aspects of religion that institutional religion does not necessarily offer.⁶¹ Mixing of influences has also seen attitudes become more flexible regarding the official dogmas and practises, so that sometimes people adhere to what is commonly termed the 'a la carte religiosity'. People absorb influences from different sources to their spirituality without necessarily belonging to any organization or alternatively, have a wish to uphold a connection to the religious institution and

55 Taylor, 2007, 725

56 Ibid. 360

57 Ibid 428

58 Ibid. 436

59 Ibid. 475, 486-487

60 Ibid. 515-516

61 Ibid. 517-518

observe certain traditions without actually subscribing to their beliefs, or believing at all. These ideas are connected to Hervieu-Léger's and Davie's concepts of believing without belonging and belonging without believing.⁶²

Taylor observes that in many cases even where people have become distanced from institutionalized religion, it is still something they cherish as a cultural value or simply as a point of reference. People may wish for religious organizations to be there, even if they themselves were not actively attending or believing. This undulating relation is shown also in how people tend to gather to church ceremonies in time of crisis, like a public accident or fatal conflict, and may still feel moved by the devotional commitment of others.⁶³

What has not changed is the human search for meaning and aspiration for a sense of fullness in life. People still seek answers to suffering, what is a good life, how to achieve a lasting happiness, and how to forge a meaningful legacy in the face of human mortality.⁶⁴ Only now are the conditions for strong conviction being challenged by the pluralistic society and this may make people wary of commitment. Like Simmel, Taylor perceives there is a shift from holistic view of the world towards an inner experience. This - conjoined with cultural support for forming one's own path and authenticity – sometimes leaves people without a strong external framework for their ideology, at least in such a compelling form it existed historically. Religiosity has become a personal, spiritual quest that does not adhere to any framework given by traditional religious institutions and more than ever, those institutions have had to consider adjusting to the new type of flexible spiritual self-understanding of the contemporary age. This is not to say traditional believers do not exist in the West, but they no longer are the majority in most cases.⁶⁵

How does Taylor's theory converse with the monasticism in Europe? Looking at the curiosity monasticism generates, it would be logical to suspect that there are elements to monasticism that speak to the sense of meaning, both within and without Christianity, and to people of both transcendent and immanent outlooks. On one hand, from the purely secular point of view, monasteries can perhaps serve visitors as a cultural attraction: they are historically valuable and offer an aesthetic experience in art, architecture, or music. Some of the monasteries have also begun to utilize branding to support their economy, and offering their products and services with the wellness-perspective, that reflects the new religiosity's emphasis. For seekers and believers alike, it can act as an experiential opportunity, a glimpse at a way of life that reflects devotion and commitment uncommon in contemporary life and may awaken a sense of admiration. Whether a retreat or

62 Taylor, 2007, 514

63 Ibid. 520-522

64 Ibid. 682

65 Ibid. 513

pilgrimage, the visit to a monastery can also contain a wish to leave one's ordinary circumstances and routines momentarily behind, to gain perspective or to become otherwise refocused or transformed.

2.2.3 Aspirations of Utopia and Other Views on Monasticism by Contemporary Scholars

There does not exist a single prevalent theory about the sociology of monasticism, at least when it comes to the monasticism in the 21st century. Not only is monasticism - even when limited to a Christian context - still an internally versatile concept, but every monastery is also tied to its cultural surroundings and history, making generalisations difficult to present convincingly.⁶⁶ Kilpeläinen finds two coexisting branches from the research of monasticism's societal interaction: first the research of the origins and early stages of monasticism as a phenomenon, and second, the research of the monastic expansion and investigation into the circumstances of single monasteries.⁶⁷ Broadly speaking, the branches assumed two partially opposing outlooks on monasticism. Research on origin tended to emphasise the monastic withdrawal from the world, while research on expansion saw the active interaction as a part of monastic essence. Kilpeläinen recounts that Joachim Wach, Walter Bergman and Emile Durkheim represent the first view while for example George Weckman, Thomas Merton and Demosthenes Savramis promoted the second.⁶⁸

Especially when it comes to the monasticism in 21st century, one more distinction of perspectives might be useful: the sociological meaning of monasticism for monks and nuns, and the sociological meaning for the temporary visitors differs – although these perspectives are no doubt connected. Inevitably, there are bound to be elements in monasticism that have a distinctly different meaning for the inner life of the monks and visitors but on the other hand, some elements may almost fully overlap and simply differ in the intensity of practise or experience. The focus of this thesis is in the perspective of the visitors and in the sociological function that monasticism offers to them, but in order to understand that, a more extensive look into existing theories is necessary.

I will next inspect various perspectives about the functions of monasticism at the general and theoretical level and try to see potential connections, especially to contemporary monasticism and descriptions fitting Valamo's current character. Historically, Christian monasteries have played many roles in Europe and the Middle East. They have been centers of economy and education, as well as wielders of political influence, sometimes in support of local rulers and sometimes as a voice of

66 Jonveaux, Pace, and Palmisano, 2014, xvi

67 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 83

68 Ibid. 84, 86

opposition. Monasteries have acted as a spiritual sanctuary but also as a place of concrete refuge during hard times. Their societal work in many sectors of urban and country life made them an important actor for social security. This was common especially for the monasteries of Eastern Christianity. I will return to this in Chapter 3. However, many of these tasks have diminished notably when coming to the 21st century - a development that perhaps began originally with the Reformation. In many countries, social security is shouldered largely by the local government, or the monasteries may be too poor to provide aid and are struggling to provide for themselves as well. Certain monasteries still maintain schools where the monks and nuns provide teaching, but in the past decades, there has been a withdrawal from this sector as well.⁶⁹

In the case of contemporary monasticism, few of the historical functions apply anymore. One of the best known explanations for historical monasticism is Weber's theory of the exchange society. Weber's concept paints an idea of a society starkly divided into religious practitioners and the laity, where the first lead a fully committed spiritual life, and provide the laity with 'salvation goods' in the form of prayer and service. The laity, in turn, supports the religious practitioners economically. While monasteries may still well invoke ideas of inspiration and admiration, in the general environment of secularization, the exchange of salvation goods as a base of contemporary attraction appears unlikely.

One of the newer theories of monastic function comes from Jean Séguy although it should be noted his focus is strongly in Western Christianity. In Séguy's sociological considerations, monasticism can be seen as a so-called practised utopia. Merriam-Webster defines utopia as 1. an imaginary or indefinitely remote place 2. place of perfection especially in laws, government and social conditions or 3. an impractical scheme for social improvement. Séguy wishes to simplify things and approach them from a more practical point of view. He defines utopia as:

-every total ideological system aiming, implicitly or explicitly, through a call to the imagination alone (written Utopia) or through some transition of practice (practiced Utopia), to transform radically the existing global social systems.⁷⁰

What this means is that practised utopia not only envisions a new kind of society and order of things but also attempts to set it up in this day and age, instead of projecting it to some other place or time like written utopia. Monasticism thus seeks to picture and try to establish an alternative model to society, as Enzo puts it in interpreting Séguy.⁷¹ In Séguy's thinking, monasticism often begins from critique and discontent towards the prevalent status quo, for example the secularized and compromised Church. Monasticism as a practised utopia then becomes a "radical form of protest", a movement that tries to return to Christian ideals, and reform liturgical and theological life and

69 Wittberg, 2000

70 Séguy, 2014, 287

71 Ibid. 279

harmonize daily living with these values.⁷² Inevitably, utopian movements usually do not stay utopian for long after the initial fervour has toned down and charismatic leadership perhaps changed and any enduring movement eventually experiences institutionalization, which might cause the organization to lean away again from the initial utopian principles it was founded on. However, this very 'toning down' also makes way for renewed protest and perhaps another monastic movement seeking to reform the old one that has become compromised.⁷³

Séguy's theory contains two ideas of contemporary monasticism: utopia and protest. The first one Séguy already downplays himself in noting that monasticism usually cannot maintain its utopian mode of operation for long when organizational requirements give in to economic needs and so forth. If utopia is understood as an alternative, self-sufficient way of life that is separated from the world it does not wish to mimic, few monasteries satisfy this requirement of perfect transformation. This does not mean the utopian thinking and aspirations could not apply to monastics upholding their way of life, however.⁷⁴

Even if we assume that utopian thinking applies to the monastic actors, does it explain something about popular interest? Do visitors also come to look for their temporary utopian fix in the monastery? If Valamo is considered as an example, visitors generally have variety of different motivations. Some of them come as volunteer workers, others come for a spiritual retreat or cultural experience. These motivations do not entirely exclude the possibility of utopian thinking, but mainly contradicting evidence is the temporary nature of things. Are visitors really seeking an all-encompassing alternative way of life in brief bits? Do they seek to imitate the monastery's daily rhythm in its totality during their stay, or potentially consider the monastery life fully as an option?

What about protest? One of the oldest theories of this type of protest comes from Wach⁷⁵ but afterwards many other scholars have drawn from it as well, Séguy included. The tension between the Church and the monastic orders is a topic of great interest to Séguy, and although in his view monastic movements arise from protest against the Church and later against other forms of monasticism, not all of the movements seek a full separation from other institutions. It is also noted that historically monasticism was born long before the Constantine Turn and the perceived secularization of the Church. This would not prevent later movements from being motivated by protest though and no doubt, thoughts of reform often inspired the creation of new communities.

Even if historically monasticism has been a counter-movement to the Church in the contemporary West, the Church itself could now also be seen as a counter-movement to society.⁷⁶

72 Pace, 2014, 280

73 Séguy, 2014, 296

74 Ibid. 294

75 Wach, 1944, 156

76 Séguy, 2014, 294

Jonveaux in her article asks, does this mean monastics are still protesting? Her answer is, in a very general sense, yes. According to Jonveaux the very monastic lifestyle, occasional clashes with the dominant Church branches - at least in Catholicism – and amidst the scarceness of new vocations, it would seem every new novice likely has a strong internal dedication because they have to go against perhaps both modernity and the presiding church. This would indicate an attitude of protest: the monasteries struggle to find their place because they no longer fit.⁷⁷

However, Kilpeläinen is not quite convinced of at least of Valamo's mode of operations as protesting. During the period between the World Wars, Valamo's old monastery in Lake Ladoga was a center of constant interaction with the surrounding society. The monastery took an active part in the location's education, economic management, societal aid and spiritual needs and thus it is good to ask, what could have Valamo really have been protesting against?⁷⁸ It was "an institution in an institution and had the same goals as the Church", which at least contests the idea of a protest against the Church.⁷⁹ Kilpeläinen also argues the monastery's essence was intertwined with the society it was connected to. This did not mean everything about the secular way of life was always welcome, or that the monastery would not have sought to transform its surroundings more to its preferences. Sometimes the very conflicts with the Church and even the surrounding society were caused by Valamo's strong cultural identity that demanded its independence or assimilating other elements to its purposes.⁸⁰ However, the old Valamo monastery did not particularly appear as a practical protest against the surrounding society of the Church even if some ideological levels of protest manifested through old monastic traditions of being 'dead to the world'. This essentially meant feeling a distinct separation from the external world and was demonstrated, for example, through various customs like clothing and living arrangements.⁸¹

Gothoni presents that the monasteries of Eastern Christianity in general have always been more inclined towards societal interaction, as opposed to the 'closed off' monasteries of Western Christianity.⁸² However, Kilpeläinen contests this view also by pointing out that it may simply be a distortion caused by the prevalence of scholars who subscribed to the withdrawal view, having focused more on Western Christianity.⁸³ For example, if one observes the Catholic orders that are oriented towards strong apostolic life where asceticism and silent contemplation are pushed to the fringes, you can only wonder which part of this could be considered secluded?⁸⁴

77 Jonveaux, 2014, 83-84

78 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 188

79 Ibid. 447

80 Ibid. 451

81 Ibid. 179

82 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 17

83 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 88

84 Abbruzzese, 2014, 18

The Annual Review adds a few suggestions to the sociological functions of monasticism in 21st century. Séguy's ideas of protest and utopia affect the backdrop of several of the papers released in the Review but they also bring their own theoretical considerations into the subject. Hervieu-Léger sees monasteries as a certain kind of focal point in the encounter between Christianity and modernity.⁸⁵ She suggests each monastery has a very particular way in which it organizes the social space inside and around it⁸⁶, but monasteries rarely seek total seclusion from interaction and influence, unlike fundamental communities. Increased curiosity amongst tourists has not caused this interaction to diminish, although its nature has changed to an extent.

As a demonstration, Hervieu-Léger mentions a distinction, albeit gradual one, between the casual visitors from summer seasons, and more traditionally or spiritually oriented guests. The former usually represent vague or potentially flexible religious expectations, while still seeking the aesthetic experience and peace and quiet from the monastery. The latter group consists often of pilgrims, adherents of the tradition or regular patrons of the monastery.⁸⁷ Kilpeläinen notes similar distinction in his research, of casual visitors populating Valamo mainly in summer while the traditional visitors would be usually visiting all year around.

Hervieu-Léger sees that monasteries today have become a strong object of nostalgia. Casual visitors have a variety of motivations and preconceptions about the monastery, often guided by romantic curiosity for the institution from the medieval times and a desire to experience something different from the frenzy of a modern lifestyle. What is found attractive is the age old 'art of living', as Hervieu-Léger puts it, that so strongly contrasts the hectic pace of the usual metropolis. But simultaneously this attraction and admiration comes with the flipside. The popular perceptions of medieval monasteries puts pressure on the monastics themselves to uphold a certain kind of concept. Attracting tourists with a certain kind of image may guarantee economic survival but it may inevitably change the monastery both superficially and internally. The popular monastery faces challenges to stay true to themselves despite the demands of the customers, to retain room for renewal and invention and to uphold the traditions and spiritual aspects, so as not to become simply a "folkloric shop window".⁸⁸

85 Hervieu-Léger, 2014, 21

86 Ibid. 2014, 24

87 Ibid. 2014, 28-29

88 Hervieu-Léger, 2014, 29

3 Valamo, Past and Present

In this chapter I will sketch an overview of Eastern Christian monasticism as a phenomenon and shed light on the historical and academic formulations about how monastic actors are defined.

Monasteries are strongly tied to the history of Christianity and to the traditions of the churches, and adequate understanding cannot be acquired without a historical overview. Numerous monasteries look back on the legacy of the Desert Fathers and upholding of traditions has carried on all the way to the 21st century. In addition, I will take a closer look at the concrete circumstances and general activities of Valamo in order to examine them more closely in chapter 4.

3.1 Monastic Definitions and a Brief Overview of Eastern Christian Monasticism

There are several ways in Christianity to refer to those who have chosen the monastic way of life: monks, nuns, friars, ascetics, monastics. How is this vocation defined? The honest answer is there is no consensus. Even the monks themselves are sometimes reluctant to spell it out further and shy away from restricting themselves into a particular category. In fieldwork carried out by the authors of the Annual Review, the monks reported a variety of answers about their self-understanding, such as:

-“a monk is one seeking God” or, alluding to the Greek *monos*, “who is one in the sense of united or unified” or, again, “one who is removed from society with the aim not of serving others but seeking one’s own spiritual perfection,” or finally, “a simple Christian looking for daily conversion.”⁸⁹

Catholic Canon Law (573.1) distinguishes a ‘consecrated life’ as a specific kind of dedication to Christian life but this is not directly comparable with monasticism, although monasticism can be seen as included within the forms of consecrated life. The Canon Law defines consecrated life as a lifestyle completely dedicated to God, through following Christ’s example and adhering to the ‘evangelical counsels’ meaning poverty, chastity and obedience. However, this definition is aimed to cover a number of Catholic religious orders, some of which have notably different characteristics, comparing, for example, Trappist monks and Opus Dei. *The Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, while referring back to the Canon Law, includes certain forms of consecrated life in its definition of monasticism: lifestyles of

89 Jonveaux, Pace and Palmisano, 2014, xvi

consecrated virgins and hermits, as well as monastic community life with a stable adherence to liturgy and mendicant orders which observe strict poverty, but with emphasis on mobile lifestyle to serve where necessary.⁹⁰ Eastern Christianity does not run into similar problems since the Orthodox Church does not have the same kind of variety of religious orders, and monastic life is largely organized in the example of Basil the Great.

Valamo itself fits the category of monastic community life. Since Valamo only accepts male members, I will be referring to them as monks, or as "a brotherhood" collectively which are also the terms used on their official website. When speaking of monastics, I refer more widely to the people exercising monastic lifestyle as defined in the *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, whether male or female, although in the frame of this study, this will mean mainly the adherents of Christian traditions.

It is interesting to unravel the etymology of the word monk and its connotations, alongside a historical review of early Christian monasticism because they are intricately connected. The word monk is based on the Greek words *monachos* and *monachoi*, which have their earliest written appearance in the Gospel of Thomas, which is estimated to originate from the third century. *Monachos* and *monachoi* in turn are based on the word *monos*, meaning 'one' or 'one alone'. Originally the word did not refer to monastics, though - nor to hermits or ones living in communities - but to certain Christians who had pledged themselves to celibacy. Antoine Guillaumont estimates that *monachos* referred to movements known for example in the early Mesopotamian Church which had its members observe strict celibacy and sometimes solitary living.⁹¹ Hippolytos of Rome (170-235) also reports on a movement where celibate women refused marriage and family obligations in favour of following a higher Christian calling through living alone, or sometimes in a shared household with other celibate women. Another related term is *monotropos* that designates someone with a single aim. In a Christian concept this doubtlessly refers to a single-minded devotion to God, or single-minded aspiration to salvation. So, assumably Christian monasticism starts to sprout from the adherence to celibacy and solitary lifestyle which were seen as instrumental to maintaining a better focus on God. Samuel Rubenson also mentions wandering ascetic teachers following Jesus' example of renunciation, apocalyptic movements and monastic interpretation of Christianity found in philosophers like Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and Origen (184-253) as pieces influencing the monastic phenomenon that all but exploded in the third and fourth century. So, although various Saints are greatly heralded as founders and developers of the tradition, monasticism was already an amalgam amassing from various elements.

There are several important figures who contributed to the birth of monasticism, and are venerated and cherished throughout the Orthodox tradition. Most central especially to Eastern

90 Weiss, 2000, 871

91 Boisvert, 2000, 960-961

Christianity are Saint Antony (251-356), Saint Pachomius (292-348) and Saint Basil the Great (329-379). Saint Antony is commonly considered the founder of Christian monasticism as someone who first decided to take the Christian way of life to the desert - even if historically, similar figures had already migrated to the desert outside Egypt - and despite his aspirations to exercise devotion in solitude, ended up attracting a sizeable following.⁹² In *Life of Antony*, a hagiography written by Saint Athanasius (296-373), young Antony is described to have withdrawn to live as a hermit outside his home village as a result of being inspired by the reading of Matt. 19:21 in a church: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure into heaven: come and follow me." Antony's chosen form of monasticism is often described as eremitic or anchoritic, meaning devotion in seclusion from the society and even largely from the other monastics. However, even the eremitic form was not absolute and as the numbers of aspiring monastics grew, hermits living near to each other began to gather for frequent meetings. Initially these meetings were not meant to lead to the development of communal monasticism, though.

Saint Pachomius is credited to have founded the first communal, or cenobitic, monastery in Egypt. Solitary living in the desert was not always devoid of risk, physically or mentally, and Pachomius was especially interested in providing the monastics with better life structure and support of the community.⁹³ Basil the Great, who is considered to have an especially strong influence on Eastern Christian monasticism, developed something of a middleway between Antony's and Pachomius' monastic forms. Unlike the previous two, Basil was not mainly a monastic himself but served in variety of ecclesiastical roles through his life, eventually reaching the position as the archbishop of Cappadocia. While favouring cenobitic monasticism over eremitic, Basil reformed Pachomius' organizational rules to observe the eremitic ideal more closely and promoted the formation of small monastic communities, as opposed to Pachomius' group of hundreds. Basil is also known for his efforts to institutionalize philanthropy in the early church, and this is reflected in his monastic rules which emphasise on work and service alongside prayer and liturgical life.⁹⁴

Thus the cenobitic turn did not only pertain to the communal lifestyle, but also brought about the more socially oriented movement. Another intertwined change was the emphasis on the connection between the monastic communities and the Church, which brought the communities again physically closer to the settlement and also made them institutionally less independent.⁹⁵ These were not the only forms developing in the flourishing monastic trend of third and fourth century, however, and for example the traditions in Syria and Palestine followed their own lines, including more mobile form of asceticism. One such practise known to the Desert Fathers was

92 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 89

93 Boisvert, 2000, 962

94 Constantelos, 2000, 116

95 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 90-91

xênitêia, which cultivated a mindset of being a constant stranger on the road, and thus avoiding attachments to personal relations and one's home and surroundings. The practise was not unanimously accepted amongst early monastics, and, for example, Saint Antony spoke against it. Boisvert presents that while *xênitêia* was practised physically by being constantly on the move, a more common way might have been the practise of internal *xênitêia*, a mindset that one no longer belonged to this world.⁹⁶ This was connected to the idea of being already 'dead to the world' – symbolism that was still present in coats of the monks of old Valamo of Ladoga. Monk Jefrem was even known for his habit of sleeping in a coffin in the warmer summer nights.⁹⁷

Monasticism spread out across regions relatively quickly. As the monastic centers expanded, more rigorous practitioners sometimes departed to seek out new frontiers for Christianity or for further seclusion – sometimes those were even the leaders of monastic movements who set out to find solitude for their own pursuit of deeper devotion, away from the enthusiastic disciples. The monastic model that had been built from Saint Antony's, Pachomius' and Basil's efforts found its way through Syria into Byzantine with monk Isaac who founded the Dalmatia monastery in Constantinople in 380. From there monasticism started to assume an important role in Byzantine society, providing variety of philanthropic services such as care for the prisoners, criminals and the poor, and maintaining homes for the elderly, orphans and travellers.⁹⁸ Saint Theodore of Stoudious (759-826) revised the rules of Saint Basil and developed Byzantine monasticism in the midst of Iconoclastic controversy, developing it further towards its modern form. It is largely the Rule of Theodore that came to be established as the standard of Orthodox monasticism in the centuries to come: it was adopted by Athanasius, the founder of the first monastery of Mount Athos and through this influence, it also affected monasticism in Slavic and Russian regions.⁹⁹

The expansion of Christianity to the Slavic population began already in 9th century with Saint Cyril but it took another century before conversion was starting to take root, albeit progress was swift between 10th and 13th century. In 1204 Constantinople was sacked by the 4th crusade armies and in 1453 it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, marking a slow decline of the Byzantine capital as the nexus of Eastern Christianity. The new central position for monasticism was taken up by Mount Athos and while it remained an origin of missionary activity and a source for variety of revitalizing monastic movements, Slavic regions were slowly growing independent – for example 1589 an autocephalous patriarchate was formed in Moscow, marking a separation from Greek authority.¹⁰⁰

96 Boisvert, 2000, 962-963

97 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 180

98 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 91-92; Johnston, 2000, 1168

99 Jorgenson, 2000, 974, Prokurat, 2000, 978

100 Alexakis, 2000, 568; Jorgenson, 2000, 976; Prokurat, 2000, 980

Despite the relative success of monasticism in the Slavic regions, monasteries through 10th to 14th centuries also lived turbulent times: on one hand the Ottoman threat and local conflicts saw many monastic communities robbed and destroyed and on the other, rulers and nobility often involved themselves strongly in the communities, turning them more into political and secular actors.¹⁰¹ This development led into something of a counter-movement amongst monasticism: once more, rigorous ascetics departed to seek more eremitic lifestyle, causing the communities isolated from the settlements to grow in numbers. A monastic reform sparked by Sergey of Radonezh (1314-1392) that Kilpeläinen considers influential on Valamo took in 14th century. The movement wanted to return to strict asceticism and carefully organized communal life and the monasteries founded in the movement's wake were the ones which strongly also affected Christianity in Karelia and thus the monastery of Valamo.¹⁰²

All in all, Eastern Christian monasticism, while not spread across numerous religious orders like in Catholic Church, has historically been a versatile and diverse phenomenon. The differences in my view cannot be pinned down as 'contemplative' Orthodox monasticism and 'academic' Latin monasticism as suggested by Jorgenson¹⁰³, since both traditions have demonstrated both extreme seclusion and active inclusion with the society, in the form of social services and education as well as political and religious debates. Monasticism as a whole appears to be an adaptable and enduring phenomenon, one through which the winds of reform and innovation have frequently blown. Hugh Weiss notes that celibacy, lack of personal property and exercising a kind of counterculture remain strong characteristics of monasticism, but everything else about its forms has been subjected to trial and transformation.¹⁰⁴ However, Orthodox monasticism has long held a position as the guardian of the tradition, and also maintains certain idiosyncrasies like the system of *starets* meaning that an inspired elder advises and teaches younger monastics. Golitzin even finds it is perhaps one of the most defining features in Eastern Christian spirituality. He argues that in essence Orthodox monasticism demonstrates uniformity not present in the Western christianity, although he leaves it up to anyone's personal preference whether this is a good or bad thing.¹⁰⁵

101 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 100

102 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 102-103; Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 35

103 Jorgenson, 2000, 975

104 Weiss, 2000, 873

105 Golitzin, 2000, 1189

3.2 History of Valamo Through the Centuries

I will pick up the historical review from where I chronologically left off in 3.1, but now narrow my focus down on Valamo's phases from its founding to the contemporary state of the monastery in Heinävesi. Despite its sometimes disjointed eras, caused by material destruction and external disturbances, Valamo carries the weight and influence of its nigh millenium old existence. While today it reaches a notably more varied group of people than ever before, the past is venerated through the old spiritual tradition present in liturgy, writings and social connections, and Valamo still serves as an important caretaker of culture and faith for the Orthodox practitioners.

3.2.1 From Valamo's Beginnings Till 16th Century Exile

The original Valamo monastery was founded on the island of Valamo in the middle of Lake Ladoga but the founding date of the monastery has not been academically agreed on – albeit debate and research has continued in the past few decades on the matter. The earliest suggested founding date comes from Valamo's own tradition which places the monastery's origins to the 10th century, around the historically notable conversions of Kievan Russ' Prince Vladimir and his grandmother, Olga of Kiev. Kilpeläinen, however, notes that this date is not backed up by any historical sources, unlike the contended dates from the 12th and 14th centuries. Heikki Kirkkinen places the date of Valamo's founding in the 12th century, based on a variety of historical evidence and his interpretation of the era's political conditions. Natalia Ohotina-Lind and John Lind contest this date based on a document from the 16th century, recovered in 1992, that gives the monastery the founding date of 1389.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, this newer source called 'Short Tale' also questions the legend of the founders of Valamo, the saints Sergei and Herman, and brings alongside them a monk Jefrem who would have led the original group that settled in the island. Jefrem, however, is completely absent from Valamo's own traditions. 'Short Tale' also describes the monks' relations to the local population as stormy and that conflicts were frequent but Kirkkinen finds evidence lacking, especially for times as 'late' as the 14th century. He defends this argument by referring to the earlier Novgorodian sources which claim that the settlement around Ladoga was already Christian at the time.¹⁰⁷ What is known regardless of the founding date, is that Valamo was an important sacred location for the pagan population already

106 Kilpeläinen 2000, 113; Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 34, 53

107 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 43, 46

before the monastery and one of Ladoga island's landmarks, a glacial erratic called 'Horse Stone', is known as the site of ancient animal sacrifice rituals.¹⁰⁸

Following Kirkkinen's later ideas, Kilpeläinen theorizes that no date of founding need exactly be wrong, since the border regions were volatile and constantly a site for the clashes between Swedish, Finnish and Novgorodian forces. Because of this volatility, it is likely the monastery's position did not become established right away and it was destroyed and rebuilt many times, thus also being founded anew at several dates. Kilpeläinen also notes that the significance of the monastery for the surrounding society has not been grounded so much in the historical facts but its legendary origins. The cult of Saint Sergei and Saint Herman has supported Valamo's position as a sacred community, adding to its influence and prestige both amongst the monks and the surrounding population. Herman was an especially notable figure because the legend knows him as a native Karelian, thus giving the the monastery's origins local roots.¹⁰⁹

Documents from the 16th century know to tell us that the Valamo monastery has been relatively wealthy and owned large areas of the surrounding lands. These lands were attractive to farmers because the association with the monastery also probably brought tax reliefs. The monastery also owned an important Novgorodian trade center called Suvannon Taipale, which eventually changed ownership, first to Ivan III of Russia and then to the settlement of Käkisalmi but in exchange, Valamo monastery gained some exemptions of taxes.¹¹⁰ Valamo is also noted to have owned an embassy type of building in the settlement, used to house travellers, thus telling of its interaction with the locals. On the whole Novgorodian scale, Valamo's lands were a smaller variety compared to other monasteries, potentially because of the ascetic ideals of poverty.¹¹¹

Towards the end of 16th century region around Ladoga was facing increasingly turbulent times: numerous farms and houses were starting to depopulate because of the high Russian taxes resulting in food shortages. Various military forces raided the settlements – sometimes these were the enemy forces from the west, at other times they were the *Oprichnina*, Tsar's own ruthless police force doing tax collection. Around 1590 the whole region had become deserted and Valamo's monks had fled to another monastery after Valamo had been razed to the ground. Resettling and rebuilding was briefly attempted at the turn of the century but in 1610 Valamo was once more destroyed, which halted the monastery's activities on the island till 18th century.¹¹²

108 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 38-39

109 Ibid. 140

110 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 63-63

111 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 144

112 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 65-67

3.2.2 Valamo's Rebuilding and the Russian Era

In 1716 Peter the Great initiated the rebuilding of the Valamo monastery. Although the refugee monks in the monasteries of Dym and St. Nicholas had maintained some traditions and identity of the original monastery - a familiar rule amongst other things - Kilpeläinen notes the returning monks had little to do with their predecessors, and the rebuilding in 18th century marked the beginning of Russian era in Valamo's story.¹¹³

This did not mean an end to adverse circumstances, however. Most notable of these was the Spiritual Regulation, an initiative in Russia by Peter the Great which sought to bring the Church and the monasteries, which had previously enjoyed more freedom especially in internal affairs, under state control. Upon the death of the old Patriarch of Moscow, the tsar did not nominate his successor and practically disbanded the patriarchate. In its place he established The Most-Holy Ruling Synod, which fell under the tsar's authority. The patriarchate was not restored until 1918 after the Revolution.

Peter the Great's general dislike for monasteries was felt in his attempts to quell the creative and intellectual pursuits in monks' lives, and transform monasticism purely into an institution for education and social services. Later in 18th century monasteries also became heavily impoverished when Catherine II demanded the Church's and monasteries' lands for the state.¹¹⁴ This act also caused the establishment of the monastic ranking system, to distinguish the amount of compensation and funding the monasteries would get – a system where Valamo did not even get a placement, meaning minimal monetary support. Valamo, which was still recovering from its exile faced further difficulties when the fire destroyed the monastery in 1754 and reportedly, in 1762 the brotherhood's numbers had fallen to humble 18 monks.¹¹⁵

A slow change in the state of things began with Paisius Velichkovsky, an Ukrainian monk whose work of translating Philokalia, an old collection of the teachings from notable Orthodox thinkers and monastics, contributed to returning the Byzantine ascetic traditions to monasteries across the Orthodox regions. He is seen to have also renewed the focus on the starets system which was soon reintroduced widely amongst monasteries. Valamo also received its share of the winds of change when Paisius' students took interest in the monastery: in 1781, one of them called Nazary became the new hegumen, the leader of the monastery, and started renewing Valamo's spiritual life in the example of Philokalia and reforming its rule towards stricter asceticism. In 1811, another student Kleopa brought further new teachings from Athos in an attempt to strengthen Paisius' legacy.¹¹⁶

113 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 146

114 Prokurat, 2000, 981

115 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 78

116 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 79-80; Kilpeläinen, 2000, 148

Nazary's efforts in spiritual and economic rebuilding marked the beginning of Valamo's rise to prestige. In 1822 it earned a placement in the ranking system as a first-class monastery, promising more funding but also making it an attractive target for the aspiring monastics. While this development affected Valamo positively in many aspects, bringing in new pilgrims and novices, these were mainly streaming in from the East. Kilpeläinen suspects that this strong Russian influence might have indeed been a factor why many Karelians felt estranged from the previously familiar monastery and instead of Valamo, they were likelier to choose one of the smaller monasteries in the area for the place of spiritual pursuits. For example in 1892, Valamo had only two Finnish monks.¹¹⁷

Regardless, the monastery remained important for the surrounding community. In its flourishing state, Valamo was capable of taking more responsibility of the social services, for example providing care for orphans and the poor, and during the 19th century famines, Valamo acted as a refuge for thousands. However, the economic bloom came with an eventual backlash. 19th Century was characterized by increasingly numerous building projects, and multiple new installations arose all around Valamo. New projects under hegumen Gabriel accelerated so much that Kilpeläinen notes the monastery threatened to keel under its own weight: the starets had too many disciples and the focus was slipping too far from monastic life and asceticism. The development was halted by the initiative from within of the brotherhood, and resulted in the change of the hegumen.¹¹⁸

3.2.3 Valamo During Finland's Independence

The 20th century meant large chances for the monastery. When Finland achieved independence in 1917, Valamo's geographic location meant it also coming under the new state rule. This had varying effects on Valamo: while on one hand, Finnish government sought to intervene in the monastery's activities quite extensively, on the other hand the monastery was narrowly spared from anti-religious measures soon taking place in Russia. Finland's Orthodox church moved over from the Patriarchate of Moscow under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1923, further widening Valamo's gap to its recent roots. The political situation also meant that the funding from the east drained out and Valamo had to become economically independent.¹¹⁹ The first half of the century was characterized by the external attempts to make Valamo into a Finnish institution. Its importance as a social actor – as a source of philanthropy, education, culture and employment – grew, even if its

117 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 149, 155

118 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 152-153

119 Ibid. 156-160

image was overshadowed by suspicion towards Russian influence. Regardless, tourism and pilgrimage remained busy and sometimes Valamo's 'foreign' reputation was even used for attraction in itself.¹²⁰ Valamo's interaction networks to the surrounding society also grew through undertakings in the forestry, and with the establishment of a base for Finnish Defense Forces in Ladoga's islands.

The developments did not occur without their downsides. In 1924 Valamo was accused of greed and corruption. Sometimes the large amounts of workers and tourists disrupted monastery's order, exceeding its economic capacity and consuming focus from the spiritual pursuits. While the numbers had grown exponentially in 19th century, and in 1905 the monastery reportedly had housed almost 300 monks and novices in total, and over 500 other hobbyists¹²¹, numbers turned into decline again in 1930. As Kilpeläinen pinpoints, this was likely caused both by suspicious attitudes about connections to Russia and Valamo no longer receiving aspiring novices from the east.¹²²

Regardless, this period before the Winter War is characterized by increasingly diverse and busy interaction with the world outside the monastery's walls. There were numerous people who were not part of the brotherhood but in practise, were very tightly connected to its daily and yearly life. As Kilpeläinen sees it, this very activity and immediate interaction was institutionally part of Valamo's essence. By providing care for its surroundings, be it in the form of social services, employment or receiving pilgrims and other visitors, Valamo was staying true to its Byzantine urban predecessors.¹²³

In 1940, after the start of Winter War, the last of Valamo's brotherhood had to flee to the west from the bombings threatening the monastery. Despite the early hopes of swift return, the remaining monks were eventually forced to seek out a new location, when the Karelian regions – and with them Ladoga and its islands – were turned over to the Soviet Union. A suitable location was found through the government advice from Heinävesi, where the brotherhood bought an old manor which soon came to be called New Valamo. With its initial numbers of 150 members, the brotherhood started to repair and rebuild its new lands, fields and forests.¹²⁴ Despite the austere surroundings, the liturgical life continued uninterrupted and pilgrims started to arrive during the summers. The new monastery also underwent interesting political phases when in 1945, an initiative by the brotherhood resulted in the monastery's rejoining into Patriarchate of Moscow. The monks had also petitioned for a chance to return to Valamo of Ladoga but the request was denied. In 1957, Finland's and Russia's churches renegotiated their relations and jurisdiction over New Valamo was turned over the to Finland's Orthodox Church again.¹²⁵

120 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 164-165, 167

121 Hallamaa, Hirvonen, Kilpeläinen & Mäkelä, 1994, 82

122 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 166, 169, 193

123 Kilpeläinen, 2000, 447, 450

124 Panteleimon, 1990, 6-8, 28

125 Ibid. 40, 62-66

Through 1950 and 1960, the monastery's state was starting to look desperate: the brotherhood was aging, and decreasing in numbers, despite being replenished from other monasteries that had fled Karelia, and the monastery was no longer able to care for its fields or cattle with the resources it had. The monastery's nadir culminated during early the 1970s when hegumen Simphorian was left to tend to the liturgy and other spiritual matters nearly all by himself¹²⁶ but then the concern felt by the supporters and well as the Church for the monastery's future was transforming into action. With the funding gathered from variety of sources, work to build a new church for the monastery began in 1973, and finally in 1977 it officially opened its doors with a grand ceremony. The church was the start of a new phase of recovery for Valamo, and the monastery not only began to once more attract novices but also took up renovating and rebuilding its estates.¹²⁷ This meant better living arrangements for the monks; a culture center for the monastery's archives and library, as well as conference room and museum space; the restoration of the old cemetery; a new hotel for the visitors, and small apartments for permanent residence.¹²⁸ Valamo also received a motorboat that started to carry visitors between Valamo and the near-by Orthodox Convent of Lintula. In 1986, the lay academy of Valamo was founded to support the upkeep of Orthodox tradition for the interested, and its selection of courses has become steadily more diverse through the years.¹²⁹

3.3 Closer Inspection of Valamo Today

Valamo has grown arguably more versatile than ever in the late 20th and early 21st century. Even if the relocation of the monastery amidst the Second World War shook it in many ways and the monastery had to leave behind Lake Ladoga's lands and slowly give up forestry, agriculture and many of its regional relationships, it was especially during Valamo's recovery period in the 70s that many new cultural activities were introduced to the monastery's repertoire. What is generally referred to as Valamo is actually a complex of different activities. In addition to the monastery itself, Valamo has a cultural center, library and historical archives, sizable landowning, both permanent and hotel accommodations near-by, distillery, art-conservation studio and as a separate organization, the Valamo institute.

126 Panteleimon, 1990, 86-88, 94, 98

127 Ibid. 106,118

128 Ibid. 134, 140, 146

129 Ibid. 150, 162, 172

The brotherhood that maintains Valamo's daily liturgical life is currently thirteen members strong. Each of the monks also has their individual duties as assigned by the monastery's leaders and elders. The monastery's self-sufficiency relies mainly on tourism - which in itself is hardly a new phenomenon for Valamo - even if small parts of old agriculture still remain; for example, Valamo's currant bushes produce berries for the souvenir wines and liquors, made in the monastery's distillery. Despite its economic difficulties in the 21st century, financial difficulties have recently been alleviated through nearly paid debts. In addition, new improvements through increased garden and agricultural attempts are being considered.¹³⁰ New Valamo is not employing as many people as the original monastery used to, but volunteers are still an established part of its system and also its community. Anyone may apply as a volunteer, who are usually accepted for 1-2 weeks at a time and their contribution supports Valamo's upkeep the way the brotherhood's numbers would not otherwise allow.

Today Valamo has hotel accommodations for visitors who number over 100,000 a year. The monastery is open all year around even if Christmas and summer are the busiest seasons alongside the Easter time. The services include the monastery restaurant Trapesa, saunas and the souvenir shop Tuohus. For groups Valamo also offers seminar and meeting rooms and Trapesa takes bookings for private celebrations. Visitors may also participate freely in the liturgies, although only the Orthodox are viable for the Holy Communion. Visitors also have a chance to use the monastery's surrounding areas and nature for recreational activities, like hiking through the forest trails and taking a cruise through nearby waterways on monastery's vessel M/S Sergei. Valamo's cemetery is also a popular site of visits. Modern technology is utilized broadly from available wifi in the accommodations to mobile apps guiding visitors through the nature trails.

Valamo is culturally very busy on many levels. The monastery in itself supports the presence of Orthodoxy in Finland and sees to the upkeep of old traditions. It also offers its visitors exhibitions and concerts, and maintains individual publications and a book club. Both the library and the archives are available for research, although the archives are only available through a personal request. Valamo institute, that is located beside the monastery itself, is a connected but individual organization that offers multitude of courses on theological and Orthodox subjects as well as on art, music, crafts and life skills and philosophy. One of the most prominent studies in Valamo Institute are the courses on icons and icon painting.¹³¹

130 Mansikkamäki, 2017

131 Valamon luostari 2017. <<https://valamo.fi/>>

3.4 Valamo and Finnish Religiosity of 21st Century

To be able to place Valamo's function in the framework of Finnish society, it is useful to take a look at the general religious atmosphere of Finland and how secularization has affected things in the recent decades. In the nordic countries, Lutheranism has had a strong presence for centuries and Finland is no exception. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the larger of Finland's two state churches, and in the European scale it has a relatively strong and well-established support: 71,9 percent of Finns are members.¹³² Regardless, numbers have been steadily declining. In 1980 the percentage was 90,3 and in 2004, 83,7.¹³³ Finland's second state Church, the Orthodox Church of Finland, has enjoyed steadier numbers, remaining at 1,1 percent since 1990.¹³⁴ In addition 1,6% belong to other religious communities and 24,3% do not belong to any religious communities according to Tilastokeskus reports from 2015. However, it has been noted that it does not mean these people are irreligious, and they may often belong to Muslim or Christian communities unofficially. In 2015 a Gallup Ecclesiastica survey 2 showed that 24% of the participants reported themselves to be a person without a religion and 16% identified themselves as atheists.¹³⁵

Generally, official Church ceremonies like baptism, wedding and burial have retained an important status in Finnish religious practise and in Gallup Ecclesiastica 45% of the respondents reported participation in these ceremonies at least once a year. In 2015, closer to 50% of all marriages received a Church wedding, almost all members of the Lutheran church were baptised and over 90% of all Finnish received a Christian funeral but statistically these numbers have been slow decline.¹³⁶ The general church attendance in Finland is considerably low, however, while private practising of religion has remained relatively stable according to the surveys, even if its forms have become more varying over time.¹³⁷ Salminen observes that the Finnish treat religiosity very much like a private matter, as is clear from the Kansan arvot survey from 2014, where 75% of the respondents attested to this thought.¹³⁸

Religiosity was found varying between different population groups, however. In Gallup Ecclesiastica of 2015, the likelihood of believing in at least some kind of god increased steadily with age, with the exception of ages 15-24 believing in god more often than ages 24-35. Even if the rate of

132 "Kirkon jäsenmäärän kehitys edellisvuoden kaltaista"

<<http://evl.fi/uutishuone/tiedotteet/-/items/item/10402/Kirkon+jasenmaaran+kehitys+edellisvuoden+kaltaista>> 22.3.2017

133 Kääriäinen, Ketola, & Niemelä, 2005, 82

134 "Ortodoksinen kirkko Suomessa" <<http://www.ort.fi/kirkkotutuksi/ortodoksinen-kirkko-suomessa>> 22.3.2017

135 Ketola, 2016, 26, 84

136 Ibid. 31, 75

137 Ibid. 37

138 Salminen, 2016, 72

belief in the youngest age group was much lower than in the oldest, both pensioners and youth around 15 were the groups with who most often belonged to church. Youth membership can likely be explained partially through the popularity of confirmation camps and youth being able to independently decide their membership only at the age of 18, albeit resigning at the age of 15 is permitted with the consent of the parents.¹³⁹ In a 2004 overview of Finnish religiosity, Ketola & al. found the youth to have the least interest in religion, but similar results have not been observed in newer reports. Geographically, metropolitan areas are more defined by their loose affiliation with religion. Larger cities had the smallest rate of church membership and people with non-religious identity resided more often in urban areas.¹⁴⁰ The older reports also found that the search for new experiences and openness to other traditions was more prevalent in cities, while other areas appeared more traditional or conservative¹⁴¹.

Following Peter Beyer's categorization of function and performance - where religion's function would encompass devotional aspects and performance its application to worldly problems like poverty and other services – the majority of Finnish people perceived the Church's social work as important, but its doctrines or evangelical message received less attention. Kääriäinen & al. have presented that individualistic religiosity relies on the extent on post-modern prosperity. For example, during the 90s depression, community values strengthened and the social work of the Church became more highly regarded, but at the turn of the millenium, individual values were once more starting to take precedence. However, the 2012 report found that amidst the economical crisis the trust in the Church instead declined.¹⁴²

The religiosity of 21st century Finland has been characterized by alienation from institutionalized religion, and the emphasis on individual quests for meaning. Finnish surveys have revealed for example that an individual quest for truth was highly regarded, even at the expense of public opinion, and that the personal sense of god was more important than what the religious authorities were teaching.¹⁴³ Thus it has been also suggested that the 21st century is not actually characterized by secularization, but pluralism. This claim would be supported by the ever more versatile selection of religious groups and initiatives, literature and grassroot undertakings.¹⁴⁴

Part of this trend is observable in so called new religiosity: Kääriäinen & al. trace it back to the counterculture that arrived in Finland in the 70s and peaked during the 90s when many new religious groups, especially with old oriental influences, started to attract interest. The new religious groups

139 Ketola, 2016, 29, 63

140 Ibid. 29, 84

141 Kääriäinen, Ketola, & Niemelä, 2005, 145

142 Ketola, 2012, 54

143 Ketola, 2012, 40; Ketola, 2016, 70

144 Ketola, 2012, 37; Hietamäki, & Salminen, 2016, 11, 62

tend to be ideologically and by tradition very diverse, covering all kinds of movements from esoteric to neopagan and from Christian-diverged sects to westernized Buddhism.¹⁴⁵ An accompanying phenomenon is also an increase in different spiritual services and products, such as fortune-telling, healing and self-help books. In the year 2000, a large majority of citizens reported not to believe in the products and services of alternative religiosity, but the survey measuring interest in them received higher percentages.¹⁴⁶

The belief in miracles and supernatural phenomena was found rare amongst Finnish people, but many also thought that alternative, spiritual methods could be helpful for individual wellbeing.¹⁴⁷ These developments reflect and support people's curiosity to familiarize themselves with new traditions, while not necessarily signing up to them. Sometimes initially religious activities, like yoga and meditation, can be also used without any religious context and simply for the sake of improving wellbeing and health. For example, 9% of Gallup Ecclesiastica were found to be practising meditation or yoga, but not all of them considered themselves religious.¹⁴⁸ The decrease of strictly institutionalized belief is speculated to lead more strongly towards individualistic a la carte religiosity, that seeks to combine preferred elements from a large selection of different traditions into a personal worldview. A la carte religiosity has not been specifically mentioned in later researches, although one example can be linked to Juha Pihkala who has inspected the tension between church's wish to accommodate its believers without succumbing to deconstruction of its old creeds.¹⁴⁹

A 2005 report noted there also appears to be an increasing demand for the experiential aspects of religion and inclusivity. For example, initiatives like the Movement of Silence, St. Thomas' Mass and a growing interest for pilgrimages reflect this. The Movement of Silence started the promotion of a temporary escape from the busy bombardment of stimuli through arranged retreats, St. Thomas' Mass started promoting volunteer-powered service for ecumenical encounter for believers and unbelievers alike, and since the early 80s societies organizing pilgrimages around Finland have sprung up, offering a revitalization of the timeless tradition.¹⁵⁰ The aims of inclusivity are also visible in the ecumenical activities of the congregations and relatively moderate views most Finns have on religious communities. Most positively viewed were the Lutheran and Orthodox churches and the Salvation Army, and also Judaism and Buddhism were perceived favourably more often than not. A distinctive group which faced more suspicion included communities with stricter rules and closed circles like Jehova's Witnesses. Despite protestant countries having adjusted quite

145 Kääriäinen, Ketola, & Niemelä, 2005, 63, 67

146 Ibid. 110-111

147 Ketola, 2016, 70

148 Ketola, 2016, 79-80

149 Pihkala, 2016, 23

150 Kääriäinen, Ketola, & Niemelä, 2005, 71-73

well to pluralism, Finnish surveys revealed almost two thirds still thought religion often caused more conflict than advancing the peace.¹⁵¹

The Church Research Center's reports have not researched the experiential or emotional aspects of religiosity specifically since 2005, aside from a brief foray into the spiritual music and exploring the meaning of the mass to its attendants in 2015. However, interest towards alternative and complementary spirituality has been noted to manifest for example in the angel trend booming in several European countries. Similarly, in Finland the new religiosity characterised by loose spiritual orientation, pluralistic theology and preference for individual experience has been found to be broader in scope than for example New Age movements.¹⁵²

Valamo's popularity could be seen to connect to three current trends in Finnish religiosity. Finnish people appear to largely favour religiosity that can be performed on their own terms, preferably privately more often than not. There is also an appreciation for inclusivity and a search for individual expressions and new sides of religious experience. Whether a visitor comes for a day-trip or a longer retreat, Valamo offers an exotic experience removed from the hectic modern lifestyle but generally imposes very little expectations and is open to everyone regardless of worldview.

Finnish people felt suspicion towards religious groups that required strict discipline, which makes Valamo perhaps an interesting contradiction. However, that discipline is naturally not extended to visitors and Valamo's spirituality is part of the revered and familiar Orthodox church, which surely mitigates some concerns. Valamo's visitors can enjoy the monastery's established spiritual atmosphere without the need for actual commitment and simply adhere to their own chosen activities during their stay, whether religious or not. Valamo's foundation obviously lies in Orthodoxy and its signs and customs are present throughout the monastery but as long as the baseline expectation of respect is met, Valamo acts as an ecumenical meeting point for both social and private expressions of religiosity. However, the drawback of this very appeal of inclusivity and aversion to commitment manifests in the lack of novices prepared to dedicate themselves to continue Valamo's traditions. The count of Valamo's brotherhood has always undulated and similar risks were felt keenly previously in the 70s. What will remain to be seen is if Valamo's popularity will also attract male devotees prepared for the committed lifestyle, or if the pluralistic tendencies are slowly leading away from the traditional forms.

151 Ketola, 2016, 84, 87

152 Ketola, 2012, 40; Ketola, 2016, 72

4 Analysis

I will next inspect the picture that the online questionnaires offer us of Valamo's significance to its visitors. The aims of this analysis are to examine Valamo's societal function, that is, what kind of things attract visitors to the centuries old community, what kind of things do they gain from their visit and if any general idea of the monastery's societal function can be concluded from this.

Sociologically, I have focused on the micro-level effects; mainly the social and psychological influence on the individuals. Despite this, reflecting on Valamo's place in the modernity on a more general level is also possible through Simmel and Taylor. In the end, I will also examine Séguy's theory of monasticism as an utopia and the possibility of monasticism to be considered an utopia for the visitors and not only for the brotherhood.

The questionnaires indicate that Valamo's services are utilized very broadly and that for many, the visits are an experience in their entirety, more than the sum of their parts. However, the visitors often emphasised different things. In this analysis, I will bring under spotlight especially three broad aspects of this 'Valamo experience' - the spiritual, the social and the cultural. It should be noted that these kinds of attempts to make clear-cut categories are always at least in part artificial and here they are meant to only to elucidate some particular elements that have been important to the visitors of Valamo, not divide visitors into different customer categories.

Before taking a closer look at the categories and what they entail, a general overview of the questionnaires and their statistics is useful to understand the material as a whole. The number of replies amounted 88 forms in total. Of these, 51 were members of the Orthodox church, 29 were members of the Lutheran church and 11 did not belong to any religious organizations. Those over 60 years old covered about 50% of the respondents, with people in their 60s being most numerous. 23 of 88 were in their 50s, 11 in their 40s, 9 were under 40. There were no respondents younger than 20 years old. Although the number of replies can hardly be representative of any larger statistic, one can note even here the general tendency of older people's interest in religious matters.¹⁵³ The gender of the respondents was not included in the questions.

Only a few had actually been employed by Valamo but, 29 of the respondents had been volunteering at some point in their life. Although Valamo takes volunteers only for relatively brief periods of 1-2 weeks, it was considered an important avenue of being part of Valamo's life and giving their own contribution to the monastery's wellbeing. It was also be considered to give the visitors

153 See reference 73

more of an inside view into the workings of the monastery. The rest had only ever been paying visitors or did not mention being employed or a volunteer.

4.1 The Religious, the Spiritual and the Weary

Spirituality is a difficult term to pin down, not least because it is used somewhat loosely and varyingly in the field of comparative religions. For this research, I will utilize term spiritual very similarly to Taylor's idea of religiosity; as a belief in something transcendental, a goal or sense of something beyond the human flourishing.¹⁵⁴ I wish to separate 'spiritual' from 'religious' so that by 'spiritual' I refer to a more general sense of this transcendental, in contrast to 'religious', by which I mean spiritual thinking that is specifically tied - in this research - to Christian teaching. Experiences referenced in this category need not be mystical, but they are put forth by the visitors as something slightly different from their everyday experience.

It was possible to detect a certain gradual difference between the more or less religiously oriented. In her research, Jonveaux finds three kinds of categories amongst Catholic 'monastic consumers': those most religiously oriented who come for the services and other religious participation; the more loosely religiously oriented who come to enjoy a breadth of monastic experience even if their visit would not be initially religious, and finally the visitors who are not really religiously motivated at all but come to enjoy the cultural and aesthetic sights.¹⁵⁵ According to Jonveaux, the first category actually rarely consumes other services like the shop or restaurant but this did not correspond the questionnaire replies in my research. Regardless, types of visitors covered in this chapter otherwise resemble the first two Jonveaux found. I will respectively call the first 'religious' and second 'spiritual', for the sake for distinguishing them. This is done while keeping in mind that separating religious from spiritual and spiritual from non-spiritual experience based on the questionnaires is bound to be a rough interpretation. The analysis is also not meant to indicate that the spiritual feeling of the second category is necessarily weaker, only that it may be more loose or flexible in its focus. My third category does not fully correspond to Jonveaux's categorization; the visitors of this type were not casual summer tourists who visited once only for the sights and attractions. There was a noticeable emphasis on cultural and aesthetic experiences and a lack of

154 Taylor, 2007, 20

155 Jonveaux, 2014, 79

wording that would have indicated religious orientation, but people included in the this category were mostly just as established a part of Valamo's community as the other two categories.

Both spiritual and religious thinking were quite visible in the questionnaire replies. What I interpreted as a strong religious orientation was demonstrated with replies that emphasised Valamo as a place that strengthened the spiritual growth as an Orthodox or helped maintain the Orthodox identity. One respondent described what was most important in their visit as follows:

Sustaining my own Orthodoxy. Church services, singing courses and simply Valamo's atmosphere. Knowledge that old and new Valamo are parts of the same continuum and Valamo continues the work of Saints Sergei and Herman in educating Karelia.¹⁵⁶

Many described Valamo as an important part of their religion and that their visits were specifically pilgrimages. In addition, strongly religiously oriented described Valamo as a place to find or encounter the presence of God, and that they came to Valamo to pray, to venerate icons or ask for a blessing from the brotherhood. A respondent defined their relation to the monastery by saying:

Valamo is very important to me. There I can experience the power of prayer, the presence of God and the care of the Mother of God. When I need charging, I go to Valamo. When I've had to think of the direction of my life, I have gone to Valamo to reflect and pray.¹⁵⁷

Another visitor explained the most important aspect of the visit as: "Pilgrimage – participating in the church services, the peace created by the holy place, praying in front of the miracle-working icons, meeting acquaintances, good food."¹⁵⁸ I included in this category also the respondents who described the liturgy and services as the most important parts of their visits. Slightly under 50% of the respondents belonged to this category. 6 of these respondents were Lutheran, 2 did not mention their membership and the rest were Orthodox.

The spiritual type of visitors described their visit with slightly less religious terminology. This category formed around 20% of the respondents. 10 of whom were Lutheran, 3 who did not belong to any religious community and 9 members of Orthodox church. It was interesting, even if not

156 Original Finnish quotations are found from footnotes from here on: "Oman ortodoksisuuden ylläpito, Jumalanpalvelukset, laulukurssit sekä ihan vaan Valamon tunnelma. Tietoisuus siitä, että uusi ja vanha Valamo ovat samaa jatkumoa ja valamo jatkaa Pyhien Sergein ja Hermanin aloittamaa Karjalan valistamisen perinnettä."

157 "Valamo on minulle erittäin tärkeä paikka. Pystyn siellä kokemaan rukouksen voiman, Jumalan läsnäolon ja Jumalansyntyttäjän hoivan. Kun tarvitsen latautumista, menen Valamoon. Kun olen tarvinnut miettiä elämäni suuntaa, olen mennyt Valamoon asiaa pohtimaan ja rukoilemaan."

158 "Pyhiinvaellus – osallistuminen jumalanpalveluksiin, pyhän paikan antama rauha, ihmeitätekevän ikonin edessä rukoilu, tuttujen tapaaminen, hyvä ruoka."

unexpected, to notice that Lutherans were less likely to emphasise strong religious orientation. The borders between churches and traditions were still felt to some extent.

These visitors still often found some kind of special atmosphere from Valamo but their experiences and expectations were described in more general terms. Many announced interest and curiosity towards religions or Orthodoxy, and also described interest in Valamo's courses. Some found attending services during their visit important and enjoyed the atmosphere of Christianity's great celebrations like Easter and Christmas in Valamo, even if they noted culture as the main reason for their visit. Many described Valamo as an important place for their own spiritual introspection, even if no mentions of Orthodoxy were specifically made. For example, one respondent defined their relationship to Valamo as follows: "I have found a great place to calm down, focus on small things. I can get away from the capital's hustle. But it's always lovely to return with my batteries recharged."¹⁵⁹ Another described the most important thing in their visit was: "The experience and the amazing place with its treasures. Art. Icons. Religious mood. Relaxed atmosphere. Like abroad but in the middle of Savo."¹⁶⁰ Many felt that Valamo was a place of rest for those in search of peace and quiet. It held a certain 'spiritual' atmosphere that the visitors could not quite describe. One visitor noted on their perceptions of Valamo before visit and if they had changed:

It was much more! I cannot describe the impression it made. I am not really a religious person, someone could say quite the contrary but upon arrival to Valamo, I instantly felt some inexplicable peace.¹⁶¹

Another visitor made similar remarks:

A spiritual adventurer like me who does not belong to any religious organizations easily tends to steer away from spiritual communities and highly disciplined environments like Valamo but to me the place has always been a wonderful experience that purifies and speaks to you.¹⁶²

Valamo was often described as holy or sacred in the replies belonging to the two first categories. Some of these replies were clearly more religious in their other terminology and mentions while others were closer to the spiritual category, but regardless indicated a sense of transcendental.

159 "Olen löytänyt oivan paikan rauhoittua, keskittyä pieniin asioihin. Pääsen pois Helsingin tohinasta. Mutta aina ilo palata takaisin akut ladattuna."

160 "Kokemus ja upea paikka aarteineen. Taide. Ikonit. Uskonnollinen fillis. Rento tunnelma. Kuin ulkomailla mutta keskellä Savoä"

161 "Se oli paljon enemmän! En osaa kuvailla millaisen vaikutuksen se minuun teki. En ole mitenkään 'uskonnollinen ihminen', joku voisi sanoa jopa päinvastoin, mutta Valamossa koin jotain käsittämätöntä rauhaa heti aluelle tullessani."

162 "Kirkkoon kuulumattomana ja hengellisenä seikkailijana helposti kavahtaa hengen yhteisöjä ja noin kurinalaista ympäristöä mikä Valamo on, mutta itselle se on aina ollut ihana kokemus ja aina vain se puhuttelee ja puhdistaa."

The final category consists of people who did not really use religious terminology, did not describe their experiences as particularly spiritual and instead often emphasised cultural and other activities and opportunities Valamo has to offer. The third category covered around 25% of the respondents. Of this category, six were members of Orthodox church, ten were Lutheran and six did not belong officially to any religious organizations. Their reason for a visit was often described as a general curiosity for the place, and some considered it an 'attraction' rather than a community, for example.

A notion this category shared with the visitors of other types was the sense of peace and quiet in Valamo. They often emphasised the opportunity to pause and rest from the busy world around them; this included freeing time and space for their own thoughts, a sense of being away from the world and a chance to recuperate. One respondent described the most important thing in their visit as:

First and foremost, rewarding/useful course, learning new things, exchanging thoughts. Meeting friends. I am also enjoying the silence, or peace more so, so busy tourist season does not really appeal to me.¹⁶³

Another respondent told: "Valamo is a place where I feel I am safe from all the racket of the world. I experience its atmosphere as calming but still as something conversational and with gentle sense of humour."¹⁶⁴ Even the replies that noted that Valamo felt more active and busy than they had imagined, thought that there was still a sense of peacefulness to it. Elements contributing to this peacefulness were both the general environment and the surrounding nature. For example, around 11% of all the respondents reported that moving in the nature was an important part of their visit, either wandering in the nearby areas, visiting the cemetery or hiking to the Traveller's Cross – a monument traditionally meant for travellers' resting spot and a place to pray.

Another thing appreciated especially by the few representatives of the third category was a peaceful studying environment in the writer's residence that Valamo rents out for creative pursuits and access to Valamo's extensive library. A respondent replied to the inquiry about the most important thing in their visit as: "Opportunity at writing in peace that Valamo really offers. My text gained new depth and I returned home as a slightly more serene human being."¹⁶⁵ When describing their views of the monastery's role, another respondent also wrote:

163 "Ennen kaikkea antoisa/hyödyllinen kurssijakso, uuden oppiminen, ajatusten vaihto. Ystäviksi tulleiden tapaaminen. Hiljaisuudesta, tai pikemminkin rauhasta nautin myös, joten vilkkain turisticaika ei houkuttele."

164 "Valamo on paikka, jossa tunnen olevani turvassa maailman melskeeltä. Koen sen ilmapiirin rauhoittavaksi mutta silti keskustelevalaksi ja lempeän huumorintajuiseksi."

165 "Kirjoitusrauha jota Valamo tarjoaa. Tekstini sai uutta syvyyttä ja kotiin palasi hieman seesteisempi ihminen."

The monastery is an important part of the Orthodoxy in Finland and it also offers a chance to study or find quiet in the midst of a fine cultural milieu, regardless of their church membership.¹⁶⁶

Valamo advertises itself as a place to calm down and rest from the taxing everyday life. These responses indicate Valamo indeed fulfills this central part of its image, by offering a place to be away from the noise and hassle of the modern world. Some also found relief and help for challenging and painful times in their life. This function was not weakened by its open door policy nor by its busy interaction with visitors throughout the year. For the third category the experiential part of the visit was thus formed from the atmosphere that supported the chance for introspection. Many also described Valamo as very open and welcoming place, where it was possible to learn many new things, to meet people and to exchange thoughts. Even when the replies assumed no transcendental dimension, respondents in the category often perceived Valamo as a personally significant location that they returned again and again. This could indicate that Valamo as a whole is not simply a religious organization but has also found a function amidst non-spiritually oriented people. With its openness and tolerance, it seems to attract visitors who simply want to rest and enjoy the environment and community without any requirements to adhere to the Orthodox or even Christian faith.

Sociologically the categories shared some functions, and differed in others. All three categories contained examples that Valamo was used as a respite from the hectic world. This is in line with Simmel's thinking that the constant stimuli and the wealth of objective culture overwhelm and tire people. While there were no specific cases in which visitors expressed confusion of identity because of this hectic lifestyle or feelings of being disconnected, there were some mentions that Valamo was a place where one could ponder life's purpose and direction, which would suggest it was at times otherwise lacking or difficult to consider outside the monastery.

For the category of strong religious orientation, Valamo was a support structure for their faith and one where devotion converged and intensified. Taylor's model of secularization contains ideas that the religion is fading from the public, religious beliefs are decreasing and that the conditions of belief have changed. Visiting Valamo would challenge at least the first and the third idea, because Orthodoxy is fully and visibly present in the monastery and its renown as a center of Orthodox faith also brings some relief from the pressures of multiculturalism. This forms an interesting balance with the idea of Valamo as a tolerant and inclusive establishment - that it could at the same time serve as

166 "Luostari on tärkeä osa ortodoksisuutta Suomenna ja se tarjoaa myös kirkkokuntaan katsomatta mahdollisuuden opiskella tai hiljentyä hienossa kulttuurimiljöössä."

a representative of the Orthodox faith, but without excluding practitioners of other faiths or worldviews from enjoying its atmosphere.

Taylor also suggests that individualization in the West has caused rejection of institutionalized religion and set personalized practise on the rise, alongside the yearning for the experiential aspects and a call for ecumenism and and inclusivity.¹⁶⁷ In Valamo's case, the rejection of institutionalized religion could not be seen in the first category, perhaps even the on the contrary, but the atmosphere of inclusivity was well received by the second and third category.¹⁶⁸ For some, Valamo also had a stronger sense of experiential dimension compared to usual religious practise or normal life; it was a place where one could feel the presence of God or experience the 'Spirit of Valamo' that was not available elsewhere. In the majority of cases, this experience was in a way a non-experience, peace and quiet, instead of some new and exciting stimulation.

4.2 Social Ties in Valamo

The visitors had variety of social relations connected to Valamo – directly or indirectly - and these often contributed positively to the overall experience. I included in this social aspect not only the direct encounters and interaction during the visits, but also family background that sometimes led to the visits in the first place. It was typical to visit with family or friends the first time, but apparent that in consecutive visits, friends and acquaintances could also be found on location. The social emphasis was also visible in the the visitors' close relations to certain monks, albeit in many cases it also meshed with a spiritual meaning. Finally, I included volunteers as group of their own that had a certain social emphasis in addition to other motivations, like contributing to Valamo's yearly life.

Those with family background totalled around 24% of visitors and could be found amongst Orthodox, Lutheran and non-members, although most numerous amongst the Orthodox. Sometimes visitors' both parents were Orthodox, or one of the parents was Orthodox and another Lutheran and they had potentially sparked the visitor's interest towards Valamo. One respondent described their perceptions of Valamo before the visit:

167 Taylor, 2007, 508

168 See ref. 91 & 95

I was quite young but through my mother and my grandparents I formed a very sacred and positive picture of Valamo. My father, who was Lutheran, was also very understanding and supportive of this.¹⁶⁹

Many visitors had relatives living near Valamo or their grandparents were Orthodox and somehow associated with the monastery, sometimes as volunteers themselves. Another visitor recounted:

My great-aunt and uncle and my grandparents have been working together with monks since the Konevsky monastery moved from Keitele to Heinävesi. Their collaboration continued in the New Valamo and of course the family's kids were taken along there as well.¹⁷⁰

Also the Karelian heritage, which has significance to a social identity, was mentioned a couple of times, showing how the historical connection still lingered in Valamo's legacy.

Many of the people had often visited Valamo already as a child and described that it had definitely left them with an impression. One visitor described how "To a child, as a place it was very mystical and church in summer had a sweet scent of incense to it".¹⁷¹ They also recalled the monks visited their home while travelling through the city, and brought rye bread and many stories from Valamo with them. The monastery's importance stemmed thus from the family background and the childhood memories but also from a sense of continuity and belonging. For example another visitor wrote how "To me Valamo has been a location and an atmosphere that connects me to my family and to the chain of generations."¹⁷²

18 of the visitors emphasised the importance of visitor-to-visitor encounters in their visits. These people often found familiar faces greeting them in Valamo, had befriended people while eating and going to tours with them and this in turn had led to many interesting and thought-provoking discussions with them. With some this led to staying in contact with them outside of Valamo as well. Several visitors noted in general on Valamo's warm and welcoming atmosphere - how they felt appreciated and were always welcomed to return soon. Overall many mused on a certain team spirit and solidarity that surrounded Valamo. One visitor described how they felt: "Valamo has a 'spirit of Valamo'. A very heartfelt group gathers there and you can make new friends especially during

169 "Olin melko nuori mutta äitini ja isovanhempieni kautta minulle oli muodostunut hyvin pyhä ja positiivinen kuva Valamosta. Isäni ev. Lut. oli myös hyvin ymmärtäväinen ja tukeva asialle."

170 "Isotätini- ja setäni, sekä isovanhempani olivat Keiteleeltä Heinävedelle siirtyneen Konevitsan luostarin ajoilta tehneet yhtiestyötä luostarin munkkien kanssa. Heidän yhteistyö jatkui Uuden Valamon aikoihin asti ja totta kai suvun penskat otettiin mukaan Uuteen Valamoon."

171 "-kyllähän se paikkana oli lapsen mielestä kovin mystinen ja kesäkirkossa tuoksui ihanalle suitsukkeelle"

172 "Valamo on ollut minulle paikka ja ilmapiiri, joka liittää minut sukuuni ja sukupolvien ketjuun."

courses.”¹⁷³ This statement about courses was repeated across different replies and it seems that the courses were also socially quite an intense experience, and considering the topics also cover life skills and spiritual themes, it is no surprise discussions would affect individuals in variety of meaningful ways.

A bit over 50% generally described the interaction with other visitors as positive but did not emphasise or elaborate on this social aspect particularly. The liveliness of the place sometimes even surprised the respondents. One Orthodox respondent explained:

In Valamo I can be freely an Orthodox. In that context, interaction with visitors feels natural. The Orthodox are by default quite social and it is relayed to other visitors regardless of the church they belong to.¹⁷⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapter, several respondents felt Valamo’s visitors were also often broadly thinking individuals, which made interactions easy and friendly, while others emphasised that it was comfortable to be able to ‘act Orthodox’ in Valamo which no doubt contributed to the relaxed atmosphere. On the other hand, occasionally the non-Orthodox respondents mentioned feeling uncertain of the right manners, or simply feeling slightly distanced by some elements of the Orthodoxy.

A bit over 30% had in some way worked for Valamo; majority as volunteers but alongside them were also a few actual employees and those who helped make small handicrafts for the shop. I distinguished these replies as a section of their own, because they often provided a certain insider view visitors did not have. Even if the volunteers also found peace and quiet important, the social aspects of the work came up often in replies. There was a certain interest in other people and like one volunteer noted it was actually required:

You can meet many friendly and interesting people in Valamo. You can have quite a lot of interaction if you want to (and as a volunteer you have to want to), but you can also stay on your own.¹⁷⁵

173 ”Valamossa on ’valamon henki’. Siellä kokoontuu todella sydämellinen porukka, varsinkin kursseilta saa usein uusia ystäviä”

174 ”Valamossa voin olla ihan vapaasti ortodoksi. Kanssakäyminen vierailijoiden kanssa on luontevaa siinä kontekstissa. Ortodoksit ovat lähtökohtaisesti aika sosiaalisia ja se välittyy myös paikalla käyville vierailijoille kirkkokunnasta riippumatta.”

175 ”Valamossa tapaa mukavia ja mielenkiintoisia ihmisiä. Ihmisten kanssa voi olla tekemisissä hyvinkin paljon jos haluaa (tietysti myös talkootehtävissä pitää haluta) mutta voi olla myös omissa rauhassaan”

The motivation for becoming a volunteer often stemmed from a wish to somehow contribute to the monastery's wellbeing and activities, to help the monks and the visitors, and from simply being able to participate more closely in Valamo's everyday life. Sometimes the volunteers did not have an Orthodox church in their home area, and thus being frequently a volunteer also helped them maintain their own Orthodox lifestyle. One visitor wrote about their relation to Valamo:

After retiring, we moved to my wife's home region which does not have an Orthodox church. That is why volunteering in Valamo has become important for us and a cherished obedience¹⁷⁶ for spiritual life, with which I want to also support this beloved monastery's operation.¹⁷⁷

Echoing the sentiments from chapter 4.1 sometimes being a volunteer was also seen as a way to remove oneself from the usual busy life for a time and as a way to counterbalance the hectic modernity.

All in all, people usually had a good experience of volunteering. It was mentioned frequently that as a volunteer people connected more easily with other volunteers, staff and the monks, as well as with the visitors. Many felt that being a monastery tour guide was especially rewarding; it allowed meeting many interesting people and discussing with them frequently. There was also a sense of a bond between the volunteers that you grew into, especially if you volunteered often. One volunteer noted that:

Conversations happen easily in the monastery, as do friendships. Especially the volunteers are like a one big family. As a guide, the interaction with visitors is very interesting. People come to the monastery with different expectations and ask a lot about the monastery's life.¹⁷⁸

People had roughly three kinds of relations with the monks – gradual as these scales are. Around 40% admitted that they had very little contact with the monks during their visit, or that the relation was distant or they wanted to give the brotherhood their own space. Some felt it was difficult to establish a contact with them, others that it was not even the monks' task to be so available to everyone. Considering the amount of monks in comparison to all the visitors, it is not surprising that encounters with every guest are not possible. Around 35% described their experience

176 "Obedience" here refers to a duty or a task which is usually something assigned to an Orthodox monastic in the monastery to demonstrate their obedience to the monastery's leaders.

177 "Eläkkeelle päästyämme muutimme vaimon kotiseudulle, jossa ei ole ort. Kirkkoa. Siksi talkootyöstä on tullut meille tärkeä ja rakas hengellisen elämän kuuliaisuustehtävä – sillä haluan siten tukea minulle rakkaan luostarin toimintaa."

178 "Luostarissa syntyy helposti keskusteluja ja myös ystävyysuhteita. Varsinkin talkoolaiset ovat ikään kuin suurta perhettä. Oppaan roolissa vuorovaikutus vieraiden kanssa on hyvin kiintoisaa. Ihmiset tulevat luostariin eri odotuksin ja kyselevät paljon luostarin elämästä."

with the monks as positive, even if fleeting and not particularly deep. Regardless, it was felt that the brotherhood was friendly, and you could have interesting and thought-provoking discussions with them. Many considered relations warm, and especially the monks' sense of humour was well regarded. Many also mentioned feeling much respect for their commitment and way of life.

The final group, approximately 26% of the replies, described their relation with monks as close, knowing their different personalities and having personal contacts or friendships with them. These people had befriended the monks over the years and were often in contact with them outside Valamo too, for example through Facebook. A few had a confessor amongst the monks as well. To these people, meeting the monks was an important part of the visit and they felt that the discussions and receiving a blessing contributed in an essential way to their spiritual growth and maintenance. One visitor wrote of their relationship to the monks:

The brotherhood has remained tirelessly beside us laypeople in everything. I greatly respect their work contribution amongst visitors and volunteers. The monastery is brotherhood's home and maintaining monasticism amidst all the work is challenging. Through them my own spiritual life has strengthened. Without the brotherhood's availability and example I wouldn't have received support for my own spiritual growth, for which I mainly visit Valamo."¹⁷⁹

For some, being social in Valamo was downright beside the point. Around 13% noted they had very little interaction with other visitors and rarely sought it out either. These respondents appreciated the chance to have their own peace, even if there was a chance to be with other people if they wanted to. One visitor described their relations to fellow visitors as: "Straightforward and good-spirited although I do not really seek contact with other people. If I long for social life, I look for it elsewhere."¹⁸⁰ There was some variation even in the preferences of the visitors who clearly had a social focus. How much they wanted social interaction sometimes depended on the type of their visit; as volunteers, they were ready to meet with people but when coming as visitors, they may have wished to have some quiet time on their own instead. One volunteer wrote about their experience with other visitors:

Sometimes more active, especially as a volunteer, you naturally needed to do (work) with care and politely, and respecting the visitors, staff and brotherhood and monastery's ways but

179 "Veljestö on ollut mukana väsymättä meidän maallikkojen kanssa kaikessa. Kunnioitan suuresti heidän työpanostaan vieraiden ja talkoolaisten parissa. Luostari on veljestön koti ja kilvoittelu kaikkien työtehtävien keskellä on vaativaa. Heidän kautta oma hengellinen elämä on vahvistunut. Ilman veljestön saavutettavuutta ja esimerkkiä en olisi saanut tukea omalle hengelliselle kasvulle, jonka takia pääasiassa käyn Valamossa."

180 "Mutkatonta ja hyvähenkistä, joskin en erityisemmin hakeudu kontaktiin muiden kanssa. Jos kaipaen sosiaalista elämää, haen sitä muualta."

sometimes my time has also been spent in silence, without contacting others, especially if I have just taken time off from my job in crisis intervention. ¹⁸¹

Very few had negative experiences in Valamo regarding social interactions, although sometimes it was felt that tourists did not show enough respect for the location or that the volunteers were being somehow impolite with visitors. Also some critical views were expressed about Valamo's organization as a workplace. However, these were an exception rather than a rule. A special mention of important interactions belongs to the monastery's cat Niksu, who was often mentioned as a highlight in the visitors' replies.

According to Simmel the increasingly numerous and differentiated social circles embrittle the cohesive sense of identity.¹⁸² One could think that Valamo would be simply another social circle to add to this selection, but on the other hand family unit and roots are often one of the most ingrained and central parts of identity. If the idea of Valamo has been a point of reference since childhood, like it was for several respondents, and it is a continuation of family's traditions or even almost an 'ethnic' identity, like in the case of Karelians, it could aid a sense of cohesion and continuum instead.

For the Orthodox, being surrounded by the members of their church gave them also a sense of relief, being able to be themselves. Here the borders of social and religious blur. Taylor has noted how the increasing individualism and personalized, private religiosity may leave people without the support structures of the community, which in turn may weaken religiosity in general.¹⁸³ In Valamo's case, the community contributed to the upkeep of the faith and some who did not have an Orthodox church in their home area, found their religious community from Valamo.

In Valamo it was even possible to combine personalised religion with community because of its perceived openness and tolerance. However, visitors did not refer to Valamo as a community in their replies, and as observed from the replies, the social circles could be very different for different people; some were familiar with monks, others had friends amongst the fellow course-goers and volunteers formed a group of their own. Some preferred their own peace and quiet and kept polite distance to fellow visitors and mostly associated with their own travelling companions. Despite this, Valamo was regarded with very similar notions of its atmosphere and visitors at the very least shared respect for the monastery. Social aspects of the monastery's function were thus detectable but not obvious. Valamo community could mean different things to different people, somehow unified by the

181 "Joskus aktiivisempi ja varsinkin kun oli vapaaehtoistyössä, tuli tehdä lunnollisesti huolella ja kohteliaasti ja ystävällisesti vierailijoita ja talon väkeä ja tapoja kunnioittaen, mutta myös yksin ollen hiljaisuudessa ja juurikaan kontaktia muihin ottamatta ja varsinkin jos olen ollut akuutin kriisityön vuorotyöstäni lomalle tullut."

182 Dahme, 1990, 24-25; Jedlowski, 1990, 148

183 Taylor, 2007, 304

location and atmosphere but internally diverse. What went almost unmentioned in the replies was the lay organization Valamon Ystävät ry which also has a Facebook extension. Although the questionnaire notice was shared through this Facebook page that in itself is active and the responses also numbered almost one hundred, very few brought it up as a channel of social connections and so its contribution to the overall community can only be speculated.

4.3 Culture and Sights In Valamo

Valamo offers a variety of cultural services that are not directly connected to the monastery's daily, religious activities. The cultural opportunities and events themselves were not a point of focus for too many of the visitors, but majority of the visitors utilized them widely. These cultural services included the monastery tours, lake cruises, museum and its exhibitions, concerts, library and the courses in Valamo's institute. Commercial services like the monastery's restaurant, wine store and shop were also visited frequently and several respondents purchased literature in addition to the other souvenirs. Valamo's food was appreciated by many.

One visitor wrote about their activities in Valamo:

We tend to visit the shop every time and usually buy Valamo's tea and something small for my child, often also literature. We have participated in the family courses. Of the exhibitions, we have seen almost everything.¹⁸⁴

Unlike in Jonveaux's categorization introduced in chapter 4.1, there was no sign of the cultural or commercial services being of interest mainly to the non-spiritual visitors. In many cases, the cultural services seemed to offer as much to a casual visitor as to a religiously oriented one, and very few of the activities could be categorized as simply 'for tourists'.

Generally, Valamo's cultural services were considered to be of high quality. Icons and art especially received a lot of reverence, and one of the visitors noted to have received inspiration for their own exhibition from the monastery. The museum and exhibitions were visited by approximately 40% of the respondents, the tours by 34% and concerts by 10%. Several also expressed their interest towards the monastery's art conservation work and the extensive library. Like many of the monastery's opportunities, the library services were appreciated as much for their educational and

184 "Kaupassa tulee poikettua joka käyntikerralla, mukaan lähtee aina Valamon teetä ja jotain pientä lapselle, usein myös kirjallisuutta. Olemme osallistuneet myös perhekursseille. Näyttelyt olemme katsoneet lähes kaikki."

cultural value, as for offering a calm environment that was ideal for focused work and introspection. The shop and restaurant were visited by a little under 60% of the respondents. 12% reported to have participated in 'everything' Valamo had to offer, which can be factored into the numbers. Those living in the area also emphasised Valamo's value as a center of rich and diverse activities near-by. Even if people often came to seek peace and quiet, it did not mean total inactivity; these alternative opportunities and chances at something meaningful to do were well embraced by the majority. One visitor described:

Courses and lectures have been very interesting – a bit different than elsewhere. Exhibitions have been of high quality. I like the fact that there are different activities but you can participate depending on your own situation.¹⁸⁵

The courses of Valamo's institute could be distinguished as a specific point of interest. A little under 40% reported to have participated in the courses, and if respondents who reported to have participated in 'everything' are factored in, the number becomes slightly over 50%. Categorizing the courses as strictly cultural or educational services would be misleading, because the types of courses the institute offers contain courses on life skills, Orthodox faith and way of life, icon painting, handicrafts and history. Especially the icon painting and life skills could be considered to have strong experiential or spiritual value. The importance of the courses manifested in some visitors' very frequent attendance, sometimes as much as 7-13 times a year. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the courses were also considered an intense experience and part of the meaningful activities one could partake in during their visit. One of the visitors even reported that the monastery itself was almost a secondary interest and they were much more familiar with the institute and its activities:

It's pleasant to go there (Valamo) and be there. In regards to the institute's course selection, it is a good milieu for studying requiring focus, and why not for quiet introspection too. I feel I'm more connected to the institute than the monastery, though.¹⁸⁶

The numerous cultural services and other opportunities make Valamo a complex of things that not many other monasteries may have. Numerically, the brotherhood is just a small part amongst all the staff, volunteers and visitors but essentially still the heart of the monastery. Similarly, replies gave an impression that even if all the activities are frequently enjoyed by the users, many came for the

185 ”Kurssit ja luennot ovat olleet todellä mielenkiintoisia – vähän erilaisia kuin muualla. Näyttelyt ovat olleet korkeatasoisia. Pidän siitä, että ohjelmaa on mutta siihen voi osallistua oman tilanteensa mukaan.”

186 ”Sinne on miellyttävä mennä sekä siellä olla. Opiston kurssitarjonnan kannalta se on oiva miljöö keskittymistäkin vaativaan opiskeluun, miksei myös hiljaiseen pohdintaan. Enemmän koen kuitenkin olevani suhteessa opistoon kuin luostariin.”

atmosphere and the environment rather than for the activities primarily. The liturgy remained the most popular activity with 76% respondents reporting attendance.

One could of course ask if the monastery would receive as many visitors as it does, if it had not developed into a center of Orthodoxy and cultural opportunities, and had remained solely a monastery with available accommodations? Valamo was struggling during the 70s with its fading brotherhood, that arguably was the biggest problem. Building the cultural center and the activities of Valamo's institute appear to have breathed new life into the interest towards the monastery, especially among the casual visitors. Valamo of Lake Ladoga of course had none of these things and still received streams of visitors, but it also could offer a breadth of employment through agriculture and forestry - something that Valamo of Heinävesi can not currently sustain.

When asked about the monastery's societal purpose, the replies also inclined towards not only the upkeep of tradition but also introducing people into and educating them about it, which makes Valamo institute's activities very important in this regard. Taylor has suggested art and culture may be replacing religiosity as a source of emotional and aesthetic experiences for some¹⁸⁷, but these aspects were not present in the replies. The authenticity of monasteries that strongly supply for tourism has also been questioned. Hervieu-Léger's concern that monasteries may be struggling under the tourism's weight and risk becoming simply folkloric shop windows was shared by some visitors.¹⁸⁸ This was demonstrated in worries of Valamo turning purely into a tourist attraction or its comparison to Lintula which was notably more quiet. However, overall this sample of replies indicated cultural services did not distract from the religious or spiritual motivations which were still the focus of the visit for majority. How affected the brotherhood is in general by the complex of activities operating all around them is of course another question to be explored in some future research.

4.4 Valamo's Role and Status

A question directly presented in the form inquired about the societal purpose of Valamo in the visitors' eyes. The replies revealed many things that had been brought up already in questions about Valamo's personal meaning but also new aspects were presented, when the respondents pondered about Valamo from a broader perspective. Generally, the views were spread over four overlapping aspects. Unsurprisingly, there was a presence of strong religious meaning; importance of the cultural

187 Taylor, 2007, 360

188 Hervieu-Léger, 2014, 29

maintenance and visibility of Orthodoxy in Valamo's work; its enjoyment value as a tourist site, and finally the certain countercultural atmosphere that was contrasted with the busy contemporary age. Sometimes the respondents clearly emphasised one meaning and downright disagreed with another but all the categories were mentioned in a single reply quite often as well.

Approximately 50% of the respondents brought up Valamo's importance as a religious actor and not only in an educational capacity. The monastery was viewed as a part of long historical continuum that still continued to have a relevance. Even more than that, the long history had made Valamo into a sacred place, only increasing its effect and value. Like one respondent noted "When a tradition of uninterrupted prayer is brought on a location, and is maintained for decades, that location and its spirit change".¹⁸⁹ The monastery's role as the site of uninterrupted prayer was often mentioned in other replies as well and in a way reflected the very old notion of the monks being constantly in an intercession, not praying necessarily for their own salvation but for the world. Even if there was hardly a talk of the monks as the distributors of salvation goods, this idea that Weber and Taylor interpreted as the exchange society, could still be faintly detected in the background. One visitor wrote:

I had heard of monasteries since young age. I had a childish impression of monasteries overall: I had been told that they pray for everyone constantly so you don't have to worry if you forget your evening prayer because monks and nuns pray for us as well.¹⁹⁰

This was connected to their answer of Valamo's societal purpose as well: "I think intercessions are the monastery's most important duty."¹⁹¹

As seen from the chapter 4.2, social interaction with the monks was appreciated but not always seen as a necessary part of their position. Instead, sometimes maintaining presence and carrying out the liturgical rhythm and ecclesiastical duties was seen as more important. For a few, Valamo also still stood as the unchanging fortress of faith amidst the hectic currents of time; in its core, it continued to be a Kingdom of God on earth, despite its many ordinary and everyday interactions with the surrounding world. For example one respondent wrote about the monastery's role:

189 "Kun paikalle tuodaan ikaikainen ympärivuorokautisen rukoilun perinne ja sitä ylläpidetään vuosikymmeniä, paikka ja sen henki muuttuvat."

190 "Olin kuullut luostareista ihan pienestä pitäen. Minulla oli luostareista lapsenomainen käsitys ylipäätään: minulle oli kerrottu että niissä rukoillaan kaikkien puolesta lakkaamatta joten ei tarvitse huolehtia jos unohtaa iltarukouksen, koska munkit ja nunnat rukoilevat meidänkin puolesta."

191 "Esirukoukset ovat mielestäni luostarin tärkein tehtävä."

The monastery's role is to make Orthodoxy accessible and familiar by educating those who visit. It is the monks calling to apply Orthodox teachings authentically to their own lives. Trying to be the Kingdom of god on earth."¹⁹²

On a less symbolic level, Valamo was felt to be an important site of immersing oneself in the matters of one's faith, especially for the Orthodox. Spiritually it appeared more central than local churches for example. It was considered a destination for pilgrimage and a place where you could also be freely Christian. One respondent described it as follows: "Spirituality, sacred and Jesus are present in Valamo clearly enough that Christianity is obvious and you don't have to hide it or pretend it's something else."¹⁹³ This would indicate a certain pressure in the respondents' lives, being unable to either live fully as Christian or show themselves as such in the world outside the monastery. Several of the respondents also mentioned Valamo had been an essential part of their conversion to Orthodoxy: "Valamo monastery has notably influenced my decision to join the Orthodox church, and that I started studying Orthodox theology and chose teaching it as my vocation."¹⁹⁴ For regular, religiously oriented visitors it was a place to seek support for one's tradition and spirituality which was strengthened through associating with people of same faith, meeting friends and attending liturgy. Sometimes the courses could also play an important part in this. Valamo was also viewed as a place where the estranged or secularized Orthodox could find a way back to their faith and become closer to God, generally having an effect that few other places could. One respondent for example wrote that Valamo's role is to offer: "An alternative perspective on religion. To bring the secularized Orthodox closer to to faith."¹⁹⁵

Culturally Valamo was deemed incredibly important for Orthodoxy. A majority of the respondents viewed it as a 'door' or a 'window to Orthodoxy' and described it as a flagship and lighthouse of Orthodox presence and visibility in Finland. This was often contrasted with strong Lutheran traditions in Finland, and sometimes even described as a counterweight to Catholic influences. A respondent described: "I think its role is very important. Its is a valuable thing in our stiff Lutheran-dominant country."¹⁹⁶ This kind of versatility of Christianity within one country was often viewed in a good light, regardless. Societal views associated Valamo also with Karelian culture alongside Orthodoxy. No exact elements in the monastery's activities were pointed out in this regard, but in some capacity, it still remained an anchor for those Karelian family roots and culture.

192 "Tuoda ortodoksisuutta tutuksi ja elää sitä todeksi joka päivä. Yrittää olla jumalan valtakunta maan päällä."

193 "Hengellisyys, pyhyys ja Jeesus ova Valamossa läsnä riittävän selkeästi niin että kristillisyyden on itseäänselvyys eikä sitä tarvitse muuksi selitellä tai piilotella."

194 "Valamon luostari on merkittävästi vaikuttanut siihen että liityin aikanaan ortodoksisen kirkkoon, ryhdyin opiskelemaan ortodoksista teologiaa ja valitsin ortodoksian opetuksesta elämäntehtäväni."

195 "Vaihtoehtoinen näkökulma uskontoon nähden. Lähentää toiminnallaan maallistuneita ortodokseja uskoon"

196 "Pidän sen tehtävää ja roolia tärkeänä. Se on rikkaus meidän jähmeässä luterilaisvoittoisessa maassamme."

Valamo was also viewed to have an important role in education; it could offer people, Orthodox and otherwise, information on various traditions and thus contribute to their maintenance and preservation. A respondent listed some of Valamo's tasks in their opinion:

The brotherhood's prayers, church services, supporting of Orthodoxy, ecclesiastical support services, for example education and conservation. Valamo spreads knowledge of Orthodox monastery life and through that increases the main population's knowledge of the activities of the Orthodox church.¹⁹⁷

This included teaching about the history of Valamo, and through it about the history of Orthodox faith in Finland. General courses about culture and philosophy were considered important as well. Alongside education, Valamo's conservation facilities and continuing the authentic icon painting were often mentioned as notable societal merits. Being a center for art and music was also reflected in the visitors' opinions. Monastery appeared as a good place to nurture these 'treasures' and it was a site that also brought together a wide variety of artists and other professionals that worked on Valamo's numerous events. For example it was described that:

The institute has courses of high quality and cultural center has fine exhibitions. The conservatory is also remarkable -- so, the monastery is a real center for multitalented people and it also gathers top artists as its visitors.¹⁹⁸

Perceptions of Valamo as a tourist site were naturally quite connected to Valamo's value as a cultural center but in addition to that, it was viewed as a unique resort for Finland that pulled travellers all the way from abroad. Having an exotic site, surrounded by the beauty of nature and lot of history was a point of pride. Valamo's exports such as whiskey were speculated to have great commercial potential as well. However, many visitors admitted commercialism was the source of biggest controversy. One respondent wrote:

Valamo faces great challenges. Today it is more than simply a monastery but also the center of Orthodox culture in our country. Not all its activities are characteristic to a monastery and this aspect often causes tension and brings external critique. Regardless, the monastery's specific

197 "Veljestön rukoukset, jumalanpalvelukset, ortodoksisuuden tukeminen, kirkolliset tukipalvelut esim koulutus, konservointi. Valamo levittää tietoa ortodoksisesta luostarielämästä ja sitä kautta kasvattaa valtaväestön tietoa ortodoksisen kirkon toiminnasta."

198 "-opistossa on erittäin tasokkaita kursseja ja kulttuurikeskuksessa hienoja näyttelyjä. Konservatorio on myös merkittävä. -- eli luostari on varsinainen moniosaajien keskus ja se kerää myös huipputaiteilijoita vierailijoikseen."

task is to convey Orthodox culture in our Finnish society and in that it has very much also succeeded.¹⁹⁹

Even though people were aware of the necessity of the commercialism, some still thought that it detracted too much from the real essence of the monastery. As one visitor noted, albeit fondly "They should focus on what is essential. Walls and gates aren't the reason people visit for. What Valamo gives at its best can't be acquired from elsewhere."²⁰⁰ A point of critique was sometimes the whiskey that was seen as unsuitable for the monastery's image, and sometimes the high prices of the accommodation. Occasionally Valamo was contrasted with a near-by Orthodox convent of Lintula, that somehow felt more authentic because of the lack of traffic. The critique perhaps reflects the same ideas that also Jonveaux had expressed in her research. Monasteries are forced to tiptoe the line between being accessible to visitors, with comfortable accommodation and online presence but at the same time appearing authentic and adhering to the perceived monastic ideal in silence and solitude.²⁰¹

Finally, there was a strong idea that Valamo's role was to keep up certain countercultural opportunities. I use the word countercultural here to describe the visitors' ideas of the monastery that somehow stands in opposition to the hectic, secularized contemporary age. One visitor wrote that:

The monastery is an important place where you can rest from the ordinary life even if you were a nonreligious person. Valamo is also an exotic experience for the non-Orthodox in our quickly secularizing society. Valamo adheres to a communal monastery life you do not really see in Finland. It creates a contrast to the world where money, accomplishments and satisfying individual needs are mainstream.²⁰²

The strongest sentiment was that the monastery should be a safe haven for peace and quiet, a place to calm down and turn the attention inwards, described as a place for the weary, those seeking something or hoping for answers. It allowed for certain kind of alternative experience and activities

199 "Valamolla on suuria haasteita. Se on nykyisin muutakin kuin vain luostari vaan myös ortodoksisen kulttuurin keskus maassamme. Kaikki toiminnot eivät ole ominaisia luostarille ja tämä seikka luo toisinaan jännitteitä ja ulkopuolista kritiikkiä. Silti luostarin erityistehtävä on viestittää ortodoksista kulttuuria suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa ja se on siinä hyvkn paljon onnistunutkin."

200 "Keskittyisivät nyt oleelliseen. Muurit ja portit eivät ole se minkä takia tullaan. Sitä, mitä Valamo parhaillaan antaa, ei see muualta."

201 Jonveaux, 2014, 83

202 "Se on tärkeä paikka jossa voi levähtää tavallisesta elämästä vaikka ei olisi uskovainenkaan. Valamo on eksoottinen kokemus ei-ortodokseille nopeasti maallistuvassa yhteiskunnassamme. Valamossa vietetään yhteisöllistä luostarielämäntapaa jota ei juuri suomessa kohtaa. Luo kontrastin yhteiskunnalle, jossa raha, suorittaminen ja yksilön tarpeiden tyydyttäminen ovat mainstreamia."

that one would struggle to find from normal hobbies or ordinary pastime. One visitor described Valamo's role:

The monastery acts as a source of peace and as an important reminder that also silence brings meaningful content to our lives. Turning attention inwards, and pondering one's life, its direction and ultimate meanings benefits many of us.²⁰³

This would support Simmel's ideas that the citizens of western societies, whether living in a metropolis or not, are affected by the busy schedules and dizzy amount of stimuli, and a place offering a way out was seen as important, almost necessary. Jonveaux has indeed suggested that monasteries' societal purpose these days is in offering some traditional wisdom of living to visitors:

As society is looking for a "wellness salvation" for body and soul, for responses to insecurity of life especially through foods or a badly balanced life, monks can bring to society what it needs. In this sense monks can be active in the context of a traditional religious institution but also as in proposing of an alternative way of life.²⁰⁴

This countercultural role needed not to be spiritual, but it was mentioned that it acted as a counterweight to certain materialist values. It was in fact emphasised that Valamo had a notable role in being a spiritual center for everyone, regardless of the membership in a certain religion or community or even if there was none. Thus it acted as a place to also encourage encounters of different religious commitments under a shared respect for the monastery. According to a monk from the brotherhood, Valamo had no exchange programs with non-Christian religious communities but occasionally it had not only Christian visitors but Buddhist as well. This would support the ideas in the field of comparative religions since 19th century that contemplation is an universally understood spiritual practice that could bring together a variety of religious traditions, and act as a common ground despite dogmatic differences.²⁰⁵ One of Valamo's merits in this case was contributing to the ecumenical efforts, in a broad sense. The countercultural opportunities manifest most concretely in offering the brotherhood and novices a chance to live their chosen way of life within an established organization. Even if the monastery's upkeep sometimes requires the monks to spend most of their time working or interacting with visitors, and even if the organization as a whole has to 'do business' with the brand, it was still seen as a valuable opportunity both as personal choice and as a way to

203 "Luostari toimii rauhan lähteenä ja tärkeänä muistutuksena siitä että hiljaisuuskin tuottaa elämään sisältöä. Sisäänpäin kääntyminen ja oman elämän, suunnan ja perimmäisten merkitysten pohtiminen on hyväksi monelle meistä."

204 Jonveaux, 2014, 83

205 Reichl, 2014, 185

keep up centuries old traditions. Many of the visitors noted that that they would have welcomed more monasteries in Finland but in a way Valamo's importance was emphasised because it remained one of the few places to actually become a monk in Finland.

4.5 Valamo as Utopia?

Séguy's thoughts of monasticism as a so called 'practised utopia' were introduced in chapter 2.2.3; to summarise, this meant establishing an alternative model of society in the monastics' own day and age. For Valamo's brotherhood, the choice of lifestyle and organization around it is clearly a full-time commitment that covers work, social relations and world views and it thus corresponds to Séguy's ideas – albeit Valamo's core society, the brotherhood itself, is quite small. This posed an interesting question about the visitors too. Could Valamo act as a similar practised utopia for the visitors or would the function be lost for people not living permanently in the monastery? My initial speculation was that it was unlikely people were seeking an alternative way of life during their visits, considering the relatively short time one could stay, but the replies and the analysis have challenged this view.

As already noted before, a large majority of the respondents were frequent visitors to the monastery. Out of 88, only 2 had visited Valamo just once and not only that, but the most active visitors described as many as ten visits a year, and others contemplated they had likely visited Valamo hundreds of times. The frequency, at least for this group, indicates Valamo was not just a sight-seeing resort one could admire once and then be done with it. Instead, there was something that clearly kept pulling people back, an experience that was not worn out with one visit. The contents of this experience were diverse and different people emphasised different aspects that they came back for, as already described through chapters 4.1 to 4.3. Looking at the categories like spirituality and sense of peace, social relations and education, they lend themselves well to the idea of frequent visits. For people visiting for religious reasons, Valamo was no one-time pilgrimage destination but a way to be more immersed in their own tradition in a place that had such a clear status amongst the Finnish Orthodox. Similarly for spiritual seekers and people yearning for some peace and quiet, returning frequently for a certain type of 'vacation' makes sense. Returning to be a part of the community, and enjoying changing cultural and educational opportunities, served similarly to attract people to come back again.

Would this kind of visiting fulfill the concept of alternative model of society? In a way, Valamo is a society of its own that earns its keep through tourism, and if this alternative does not have to

mean total seclusion and separation from the external world, people can shift in and out of this society. During their visit they may or may not reject their 'normal' lifestyle, such as constant availability through technology, but Valamo offers at least an opportunity for a different framework: to immerse oneself in a small piece of utopia during every visit, even if the visitors may not be ready or capable of leaving their normal life behind for good. Especially true the utopia argument may be for volunteers, for whom many aspects of alternative society are realized through the inclusion of work. That way for the duration of a week, their whole life can happen within the confines of Valamo. One respondent described how Valamo belonged to their life:

Finding the atmosphere of holidays, Easter and Christmas are important waypoints in the ordinary life cycle. This happens through volunteer work, though. In the spirit of the monastery 'praying is working and working is praying'.²⁰⁶

A certain shift of mindset was detectable in the replies of the respondents. One visitor described how the most important thing for them was 'the quiet and prayer, clear daily rhythm and fulfilling their own place'. This was expanded in describing how being a volunteer gave them a clear, comfortable role:

The fact you could write only your first name in the name tag gave a lot of room to shield yourself and share with others only the things you chose to give. That was luxury. Your attention was focused on others.²⁰⁷

Another respondent also noted how:

-it is safe to think that you can go there (to Valamo) and you don't have to think how to act, like you have to at work or during spare time, (where) you have to constantly struggle to keep up with the progress.²⁰⁸

These mentions reflected a type of life and interaction that was different from their normal circumstances and positively so – a kind of simpler life that Valamo's utopia is aspiring to. They were also comparable to Simmel's ideas of a metropolis citizen who yearns to be sheltered from the

206 "Juhlapyhien, pääsiäisen ja joulun tunnelman hakeminen on tärkeitä vuosittaisia etappeja arkisen elämän kierrossa. Tämä tapahtuu kylläkin vapaaehtoistyötä tehden. Luostarin hengessä "rukous on työtä ja työ rukousta."

207 "- se, että rintalappuun sai kirjoittaa vain etunimensä antoi valtavasti tilaa suojata itseään ja jakaa toisten kanssa itsestään vain itse antamansa asiat. Sellainen oli ylellisyyttä. Huomio kiinnittyi toisiin."

208 "- on turvallista ajatella että sinne voi mennä eikä tarvitse miettiä miten siellä nykyisin pitää toimia töissä kuten vapaa-ajallakin joutuu koko ajan pinnistelemään pysyäkseen kehityksen mukana."

chaotic outside world and struggles to maintain a clear sense of identity.²⁰⁹ One way to maintain that cohesive identity was through religion which also featured in the replies. One respondent noted how the most important thing was: "Peace, quiet and focusing on as small amount of things as possible."²¹⁰ which also indicates the type of focus Simmel speculates people to be missing. Some also expressed the idea of utopia more clearly in their thinking; like already mentioned in chapter 4.4, Valamo was occasionally seen as bringing the sacred into the daily life and being the Kingdom of God on earth. That did not mean it was without its faults on the level of reality, but in the end, it was somehow separated or elevated from the everyday circumstances.

One aspect indicating Valamo's utopist nature was the strong emotional connection people felt about it. For many, it was not simply a vacation retreat but a place and community they were emotionally connected to and yearned to return to. The mentions of Valamo as something personally 'very important' numbered approximately 44% of the respondents. These people described their connection to Valamo close and established, a couple even emphasising that it was something irreplaceable in their lives, that life without Valamo was incomplete or that to them it was currently the most important place in the whole world. One visitor expressed things as follows:

Although I don't visit that often now, even just the knowledge of the monastery's existence carries its way here across hundreds of kilometers. If it somehow happened that we needed to give up Valamo, it would be like losing all my limbs.²¹¹

Other respondents found themselves emotional simply reminiscing about Valamo while answering to the questionnaire. It was described as a place that offered sanctuary from the world and a kind of charging station, with therapeutic effects.

A particular group of nine went as far as to describe Valamo as a kind of home. One respondent wrote that: "The monastery is a kind of second home, that is good to return to time after time, to work as well as pray or to consider the big questions of one's life."²¹² Another noted that: "When I arrive to Valamo, I feel like I am coming home. Leaving is mentally always as hard."²¹³ Everyone except one respondent of the nine were Orthodox, and the one Lutheran respondent admitted that albeit they felt Valamo was their second home, Orthodoxy was an aspect that

209 Dahme, 1990, 25; Frisby, 1990, 60

210 "Tärkeintä on rauha, hiljaisuus ja keskittyminen mahdollisimman pieneen määrään asioita."

211 "Vaikka nykyisin ei tule Valamossa usein käytyä, niin pelkkä tietoisuus luostarin olemassaolosta kantaa tänne satojen kilometrien päähän. Jos tulisi tilanne, että joutuisimme jostain syystä luopumaan valamosta, on sama kuin menettäisin kaikki jäseneni... "

212 "Luostari on eräänlainen toinen koti, jonne on hyvä palata ajoittain, niin tekemään työtä kuin rukoilemaan tai miettimään oman elämän suuria kysymyksiä."

213 "Kun saavun Valamoon, tunnen tulevani kotiin. Sieltä pois lähteminen on aina yhtä hankalaa."

sometimes also created a feeling of distance. It was also interesting to notice there were people from all three categories that were outlined in chapter 4.1. The majority were religiously oriented, but two appeared more loosely spiritually oriented by their vocabulary and one with next to no spiritual phrasing in their response. Valamo's homeliness did not seem to be tied to the respondents' spiritual motivations or feelings, although many religiously motivated did mention to them Valamo was indeed a 'spiritual home'. For example one visitor wrote: "My Karelian soul has found mental and spiritual home through Orthodoxy and Valamo."²¹⁴

In general, only one visitor mentioned to have been contemplating an actual vocation, which could indicate at least the rest of the male respondents likely were relatively happy with keeping Valamo simply as an occasional visit into utopia. Female visitors obviously cannot join the brotherhood so in their case bits and pieces of utopia is the only option, when it comes to Valamo specifically. Lintula's convent would be an open possibility for them, but as communities Valamo and Lintula are separate, and so the emotional connection may be fully different as well. However, two visitors mentioned that they actually considered the volunteer work as their own obediences.²¹⁵ This indicated that even though they were not members of the brotherhood, they aspired to almost live by the same rules and ideas even as laity.

Séguy originally defined practised utopia as a 'total ideological system that through practise aimed to transform global social systems'.²¹⁶ He saw this as the background idea of monasticism even though few monasteries really aimed to transform any 'global' systems. According to Séguy, any practised utopia stopped really being utopia at all after the charismatic phase was over, at any rate.²¹⁷ What would remain in the case of most monasteries was a society with alternative model of living, compared to the local standard. A society with an intended focus on religiosity, simplistic life and obedience to the tradition and to the community elders. In Valamo's case these mostly apply to the brotherhood but also many of the respondents seemed to come to Valamo with similar aspirations, at least to an extent. It would thus seem Valamo serves a certain core group of visitors as a type of a utopia. In most cases, the stay in this alternative society is broken by mandatory visits back into the everyday world but Valamo seems to have noted the hopes of more permanent stay and for that offers residence near-by in the Ksenia houses. A couple of respondents reported to have utilized these as well. For example one of the respondents described their relations to Valamo:

214 "-karjalainen sieluni on löytänyt henkisen ja hengellisen kodin ortodoksisuuden ja Valamon kautta"

215 See ref. 154

216 Séguy, 2014, 287

217 Ibid. 296

I was born Lutheran and I joined the Orthodox church six years after my first visit in Valamo – I realised during my first icon painting course this is the world I belong in. -- These days I often work in the souvenir shop, if need be as a guide on tours and help around elsewhere. My years as a tenant of the monastery in the Ksenia houses were important and helped me in a difficult life situation. The monastery is an established part of my life.²¹⁸

There were clear perceptions of Valamo being something that was separated from the ordinary world, but if the respondents or the monks actually perceive Valamo as a type of utopia was left relatively undiscovered, aside from couple of mentions of Valamo as the Kingdom of God on earth. A point of curiosity is also how more casual one-time visitors would perceive things in this regard because their input was nearly totally missing in this selection of responses.

5 Conclusions

The original question that prompted the research was how monasticism fits, survives or even in some cases thrives in the contemporary world. I supposed that the idea of monastic life and the western lifestyle had grown apart in some key points like individualism, decline of institutional religion and the rarity of withdrawn community life. I speculated secularization would play a part as well and settled for Taylor's definition for the uses of this thesis. In Valamo's case, the questionnaires found such a group of respondents that did not appear overly affected by the secularization. Over 50% professed religious motivations of committedly Orthodox kind as the center of their visit. To them, the existence of the monastery was nearly a uniformly positive thing. Another fourth of respondents had at least vaguely religious sentiments about their visits and the last fourth with less prominent religious motivations did not perceive monasticism as outdated or Valamo as particularly strict either. Instead it was held as a rare, valuable organization in Finland and one of inclusive and ecumenical spirit.

On the other hand, the effects of secularization, at least as Taylor defines it, were difficult to analyse directly from the questionnaires. His first aspect, religion's fading from the public places hardly applied to Valamo. The second, fading of religious beliefs and practises, was not clear either, with three fourths describing some kind of religious experience or adherence. The third aspect, the

218 "Olen syntynyt luterilainen, liityin ort. Kirkkoon kuusi vuotta ensimmäisen valamossa käynnin jälkeen – tajusin ensimmäiselle ikonimaalauskurssille osallistuessani, tähän maailmaan kuulun - - - olen useimmiten matkamuistomyymälässä töissä, tarvittaessa opastan ja avustan muuallakin. Vuodet luostarin vuokralaisena ksenia-taloissa olivat tärkeitä, auttoivat vaikeassa elämänvaiheessa. Luostari kuuluu kiinteästi elämäni."

change in conditions of belief, was perhaps most obvious²¹⁹; the external world did not often offer much support for religiosity like Valamo did. However, these 88 respondents cannot be held as a descriptive take of the whole population visiting Valamo, and in general, the monastery is perhaps a niche of its own in how it allows and encourages public religiosity, like attending the mass. Looking through these visitors' eyes, secularization did not weaken Valamo's status or make the monastery less relevant – on the contrary, secularization and modernity were making the monastery only more essential.

After affirming the popularity of Valamo and the public interest towards it, the main research question formed into an inquiry into about what made Valamo an attractive and meaningful destination for its visitors. The major categories through which Valamo's societal function was explored were spiritual and mental aspects, social aspects and cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects. Many of these were strongly intertwined and generally link back to Valamo's experiential yield. Perhaps the strongest sentiment arising from the replies - one which was already known and part of the monastery's image - was the opportunity at peace and quiet. This sentiment confirms that the respondents' lives were often perceived as something else, thus relating back to the theoretical considerations.

The questionnaire did not specifically explore the visitors' perceptions of the modernity and so contrasting their views directly to Taylor's and Simmel's formulations is only possible through some speculation and generalisations. Certain intersections, like the sense of being overwhelmed and the need for the social support in faith, were observed in the replies. These ideas correspond to Simmel's theories of excessive stimulation and overpowering objective culture²²⁰ and to Taylor's ideas of the problems of multiculturalism and individualism that make maintaining unquestioned faith more challenging²²¹. Point of interest about multiculturalism in Valamo was that it was not solely visited by the Orthodox and was also described as a place for the open-minded. This does not mean Valamo is hugely versatile when it comes to different world views, however. Although it was visited by other than Christians, the majority of the visitors are likely from western cultural backgrounds and authority of Orthodoxy in Valamo is prominent enough to support at least general Christian views, even if it does not enforce their exclusivity on location.

The questionnaire replies also aligned with thoughts expressed by Séguy, Hervieu-Léger and Jonveaux, to a point. Séguy suggests that monasticism stems from the idea of utopia on earth and even if the idea often bows to the practical demands over time, some spark of the original inspiration

219 Taylor, 2007, 2-3

220 Dahme, 1990, 24-25; Jedlowski, 1990, 132; Mestrovic, 1990, 192

221 Taylor, 2007, 299, 301-302

of an alternative society may remain.²²² In Valamo's case, certain countercultural perceptions speak for its status as this alternative society. Through offering accommodation, social relations and work, it can fulfill some very basic requirements of life. Ultimately, Valamo could likely not sustain itself as a closed system, however. Its current function includes teaching, accommodating and serving visitors whose presence funds the monastery but also consumes the funds. Although Valamo is not self-sufficient and not very separated from the world, it manages to sustain certain countercultural atmosphere and promote an alternative way of life, both for the brotherhood and the visitors.

This idea of utopia meant it was not simply a holiday resort. It was a center of religion and tradition, a place supporting one's identity and offering a collection of meaningful social interactions. There was a clear emotional connection that kept calling people back for more, but it was not anchored to a single shared aspect of the monastery. What people were seeking from Valamo and what they thought most important differed slightly from person to person but some gradually shifting categories, like more and less spiritually oriented groups, were detectable. In this sense Jonveaux and Hervieu-Léger's observations also applied to Valamo even if resemblance to their Catholic visitor categories were not identical.²²³

Hervieu-Léger also presented that tourism increased the risk of monasteries turning into folkloric props. A few visitors shared this worry that Valamo was being overrun by its tourism and that some of its commercial operations did not correspond to the monastic essence. However, the monastery's authenticity as a center of faith was palpable in the replies. Hervieu-Léger speculated visits to monasteries were often prompted by the romanticism and nostalgia it induced, and these could derail the monastery from its true function but in Valamo's case it seemed romanticism and nostalgia were not too obviously present.²²⁴ Visitor motivations were more geared towards religious reasons, social reasons and culture. The historical milieu and the location were as much part of the atmosphere as the brotherhood but the visitors treated it as a living community, instead of a glimpse into the better past. However, how much the state of tourism for example affects the brotherhood's own disposition and outlooks are another question.

222 Pace, 2014, 280

223 Jonveaux, 2014, 79; Hervieu-Léger, 2014, 28-29

224 Hervieu-Léger, 2014, 29

5.1 Evaluation and Considerations for the Future

The questions this thesis set out to explore were mostly answered during the course of the research. However, the type of the material unavoidably meant some of the replies yielded very superficial and brief information and there was no chance to ask for clarifications or further information like interviews would have perhaps allowed. It left much on the shoulders of the researcher in deciding on a particular interpretation based on wording and the general picture offered by each of the responses. This introduced a certain margin of error, and a danger of reading too much between the lines. Despite these concerns, I feel that the results are able to offer a certain overview into the group that visits Valamo regularly. This group was relatively versatile in backgrounds, ages and preferred activities, even if the Orthodox visitors, pensioners and those with religious or spiritual motivations were the majority. For a more accurate look into the views of the visitors, research including direct interviews would be recommended. If possible, this should also contain visitors from the casual end to explore the differences between brief impressions and the perceptions left by regular visits. Visitors who adhere to some other religion than Christianity could have particularly interesting viewpoints to offer.

To really analyse the state of the monastery in the modernity and big picture of the societal interactions, a research on the views of the monks should be conducted. Valamo's brotherhood is small but if one inspects the monastery's historical stages, there has always been undulation and it has endured very drastic situations as well. Whether Valamo will ever see its membership number in the hundreds again is uncertain, perhaps unlikely even, but there always seem to be those who are attracted to the monastic lifestyle and feel the pull of Valamo's spirit. Monasticism has not become irrelevant in the contemporary age, even if there is a visible imbalance between those willing and capable of truly committing and those who support the monastery but find themselves drifting in and out of the utopia's borders. If this imbalance disturbs the brotherhood, and how they are perhaps dealing with it, as individuals and as an organization, remains a potential avenue for future research that could be contrasted with the views of the visitors.

Valamo is in many ways an unique monastery, not least for the fact it is one to shoulder the task of representing the monastic life to the Finnish. Valamo is not the only monastery in Finland, but they are not numerous either and none other enjoy as much renown and popularity amongst visitors as Valamo. This research should hopefully serve as an insight, allowing future research to compare Valamo's situation and societal function to other monasteries internationally. The big picture of how monasticism is adjusting to the contemporary Europe will only be revealed through the breadth of

information on as many monasteries as possible but the internal versatility of monasticism cannot be forgotten. I believe the contribution of this thesis has been to place Valamo on the map of sociology of monasticism. Perhaps its place as a monastery within an acclaimed secularized society, and as a Northern herald of Orthodox faith amidst a prominently Lutheran society, will prove an interesting specimen to analyse in the international framework of the field.

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Research Data

Type: Questionnaire

Title: Valamon merkitys yhteiskunnassa

Language: Finnish

Number of Questions: 13

Number of Replies: 88

Data Collection Start: 10.4.2017

Data Collection End: 12.6.2017

Anonymous: Yes

Editing of Replies: Permitted

Replies Viewable Publically: No

Distribution: Digital Only

Platform: Google Form

Appendix A

Invitation to participate in the questionnaire, posted to Valamon Ystävät Facebook:

Hyvät Valamon Ystävät,

Olen maisterivaiheen opiskelija Helsingin yliopistosta, teologisesta tiedekunnasta. Tutkielmaseminaarissamme Uskonto ja ajankohtaiset kysymykset, olen valinnut pro graduni aiheeksi tutkia Heinäveden Valamon merkitystä kävijöilleen nykypäivän Suomessa. Tutkimukselle olisi hyvin arvokasta saada uutta tietoa kävijöiden kokemuksista ja täten pyytäisinkin halukkaita täyttämään sähköisen kyselylomakkeen, joka löytyy tämän viestin lopusta.

Kyselyn voi täyttää nimettömästi ja tutkimuksessani poistan kaikki tiedot, joilla voitaisiin tunnistaa yksityishenkilö vastaajana. Kyselyn tiedot säilytetään suojattuna, sähköisesti ja vain tutkielman tarkoituksiin.

Halutessani voitte ottaa yhteyttä minuun osoitteessa: anna.e.penttinen@helsinki.fi tai seminaarin vetäjään, yliopistonlehtori Heikki Pesoseen, heikki.pesonen@helsinki.fi mikäli kaipaatte lisätietoja. Tutkielman valmistumisajankohdaksi on arvioitu syksy 2017 ja tutkielma tulee sähköisesti luettavaksi Helsingin yliopiston arkistoihin osoitteessa: <https://ethesis.helsinki.fi>.

Kiitos kaikille osallistujille panoksestanne ja Valamon Ystäville kun saan hyödyntää facebook-ryhmääänne!

Terveisin,
Anna Penttinen

Linkki kyselyyn (sininen painike "lataa" kyselyn lopussa lähettää vastauksenne)
<https://goo.gl/forms/MQMVXWic0JiQY2QF2>

10.4.2017

Appendix B

Questionnaire questions:²²⁵

Ikä - Age

Kirkkokunta/uskonnollinen yhteisö (jos on) – Church/Religious community (if applicable)

Milloin kävit ensikertaa Valamossa? Kävitkö yksin vai yhdessä jonkun kanssa? -
When did you visit Valamo for the first time? Did you visit alone or with someone?

Mikä sai sinut käymään Valamossa ensikertaa? - What inspired you to visit Valamo for the first time?

Mikä oli vierailusi luonne? Esim. matkailu/vapaaehtoistyö yms. - What was the nature of your visit?
For example, tourism/volunteering etc.

Millainen käsitys sinulla oli Valamosta ennen käyntiä? Vastasiko se odotuksia? - What impression did you have of Valamo before your visit? Did it correspond to your expectations?

Oletko käynyt Heinäveden Valamossa useasti? Jos olet, kuinka usein ja milloin viimeksi? - Have you been to Valamo of Heinävesi often? If so, how often and when was the last time?

Millaisiin aktiviteetteihin osallistuit/olet osallistunut käyntikerroilla? Esim. Valamon opiston kurssi, liturgia, laivaristeily, museo, kauppa... Kerro kokemuksistasi. - What kind of activities did you/have you participated in? For example, a course, liturgy, cruise, museum, shop... Describe your experiences.

Millainen oli kokemuksesi kanssakäymisestä muiden vierailijoiden kanssa? - What was your experience of the interaction with the other visitors?

Entä Valamon veljestön kanssa? - What about the interaction with the brotherhood?

Mikä oli sinulle tärkein asia vierailussa/vierailuissa? - What was most important to you about the visit/visits?

Miten näet luostarin tehtävän tai roolin Suomessa nykyään? - How do you perceive the role of the monastery in Finland today?

²²⁵ English translations have been included here for the ease of reading, and were not part of the original questionnaire.

Kerro halutessasi vapaasti suhteestasi Valamon luostariin. - Please, describe your relationship with the monastery in freeform, if you wish.