

## **Abstract**

The thesis presents the method of the Cognitive Science of Religion and critically evaluates its contribution to the academic study of religion. Advantages and drawbacks of this method are illustrated on the interpretation of the rituals of ancient mystery cults.

The thesis is divided into two parts. In the first part is initially presented the position of the Cognitive Science of Religion within the Religious Studies research and compared with other disciplines. Attention is paid to the sources and methodological paradigm of the Cognitive Science of Religion. The most extensive passages in the first part are chapters devoted to the method itself and its application in explaining of religious ideas and rituals.

The second part focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the mystery cults. Due to the limited space of the thesis and problematic sources are chosen as an example the Eleusinian mysteries. Firstly is presented the positions of mystery cults in the religious life of the Greek polis and then the course of the ritual and mythological background of the mysteries. Attention is paid to the changes of the Eleusinian mysteries in time, especially by using knowledge of stratigraphic survey of the site and archaeological finds. Part of the thesis is a separate chapter devoted to the use of the Cognitive Science of Religion in the interpretation of mystery cults.

In the thesis is taken notice of the different approaches to the phenomenon of religion between traditional disciplines of the Religious Studies and the Cognitive Science of Religion. It shows that an attempt at the theory describing the full range of religious phenomena from a position of the Cognitive Science of Religion is unrealistic, because it is caused by narrow methodological profiling of the discipline.