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New spirituality as a new social and cultural mega-tendency

Preliminary remarks

Contemporary sociology is becoming ever-more in favour of the thesis stating that “religions remain, but they change their appearance”¹ “The return of religion”, proclaimed by some sociologists, has its different forms and manifests itself in various areas of life more as an interest in religious topics (for example, in television, advertisement, music, or politics) than a spread of a lifestyle concerned with satisfying one’s existential and transcendental needs, and certainly not in the form of Church religion. Increasing awareness and experience of religious pluralism promotes the formation of new religious (spiritual) identities, which are peculiar “cross-breeds” of different ideas on religion and world-view. The development of new forms of religion and spirituality leads to a dissolving of the borders between the religious and the non-religious. The flexibility and disappearance of these borders leads others to search for certainty in fundamental movements, which offer a real or apparent sense of religious security. Sociologists today are more subtle in considering the relations between modernity (social modernization) and religiosity. There is no single type of social modernization (diversity), and there is no single scenario of changes in religiosity. Secularization is one of the ways, dominant, until recently, of transforming religiosity. Processes of desecularization are being discussed more often, even in reference to Western Europe. Apart from church religiosity (often selective, inconsistent, reduced), which is still dominant in many countries, other varieties of out-of-church religiosity and syncretic spirituality emerge.

¹ Cf. K. Gabriel, *Jenseits von Säkularisierung und Wiederkehr der Götter*, “Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte”, 2008, no. 52, p. 15.

Secularization, which tried to rid man of transcendental motivations, not has only weakened traditional religions and Churches, but has also developed new forms of spirituality which could assume various shapes and forms. As a consequence of the modernization processes in contemporary societies, the meaning and position of traditional and institutionalized forms of religion (the so-called church religiosity) changed, while, simultaneously, new forms of spirituality appeared, with a loose and some-what vague structure of beliefs and practices and without explicit organizational forms. An expression of this is the New Age, which signifies of the “shrinking of transcendence” and “expansion of religion” to other areas of culture². The new spirituality is connected with desecularization processes as a specific symptom of the sanctification of the individual³.

The term: new spirituality and new religiosity is appearing in contemporary sociology of sociology more often. Generally, it is treated as separate from religion, traditional religions in particular. The turn to spirituality is not treated as an evolution of existing forms of religiosity, but rather as their opposition. However, it can be treated as a transformation of religion, which, in its new shapes, is well adapted to contemporary, changing societies. Some sociologists, when discussing the 21st century, speak of a megatrend of religion, others speak of a megatrend of spirituality, and still others speak about a megatrend of non-religiosity. Some point to the fall of religious tradition and discuss secularization processes, “de-churching”, and secularism, and others recognize various signs of a return of religion, of respiritualization, of a new “enchantment”, of a post-secular society. For some sociologists, the development of new forms of religiosity and spirituality is a sign of a desecularization tendency in contemporary world and contradicts secularization processes. Others still adopt the thesis that secularization is separate from modernization⁴.

In the last decades, the leading debate in the field of the sociology of religion concerned the problem of secularization. Today we know that the theory of the dawn of religion and disappearance of the sacred, promoted for some time by sociologists, has not come true. The religious condition of contemporary man, as well as the factors that have been shaping it, were excellently described by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in his book titled *A Secular Age*. In this extensive, almost 900 page long book, Taylor scrutinizes our secular age, as well as the times preceding it. When discussing secularization, apart from the two well-known categories of secularization, i.e. the removal of religion from particular areas of public life and the decline of religious beliefs and practices, Taylor finds a third type of secularization, that is, the socio-cultural conditions and the “search for the spiritual”⁵.

By the end of the 20th century, another term that quite often appeared in scientific discourse, next to secularization and globalization, was spirituality. A spiritual revolution

² Cf. T. Doktor, *Pluralizm religijny: New Age i fundamentalizm*, „Nomos. Kwartalnik Religioznawczy”, 2007, no. 59/60, p. 37.

³ J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, Warszawa 2010.

⁴ G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, London 2007, p. 247.

⁵ C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge 2007, p. 3.

has been proclaimed, which consists in moving from religion to spirituality, and means a specific sacralisation of modernity or postmodernity. Philip Sheldrake, a researcher into the historical aspect of spirituality, claims that "spirituality is a word that defines our era"⁶. Also, many scientists write about the "turn towards spirituality," characteristic of the turn of the century⁷. It is said that a new discipline is emerging in sociology of religion called the sociology of spirituality; "spirituality, as an analytical category, has unexpectedly captured the soul of sociology"⁸, says British sociologist of religion Kieran Flanagan.

In the sociology of religion, an increased interest in spirituality occurred simultaneously with a rise in the popularity of this phenomenon in contemporary culture. Indeed, British sociologists of religion Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead write about a spiritual revolution, which is also the title of their book⁹. A book with a similar title was written by Australian philosopher and culture researcher David Tacey. He points out that the revolution taking place in the sphere of spirituality is popular mostly among young people who indulge in various forms of new spirituality¹⁰.

American sociologist of religion and researcher on spirituality Robert Wuthnow points to the fact that studies of spirituality and its corresponding practices are one of the most important areas of recent sociology of religion¹¹. Therefore, as previously mentioned, sociology of spirituality is also being discussed in the context of sociology of religion. One of the more prominent events outlining the path of development of this new sub-discipline was without a doubt the international conference on the sociology of spirituality which took place in 2004 at the University of Bristol. The conference was organized by the British Sociological Association – Sociology of Religion Study Group, and it resulted in the book titled *A Sociology of Spirituality*¹².

The subject of this paper is an in-depth reflection on the phenomenon of new spirituality as a contemporary social and cultural megatrend. Therefore, the first thing discussed is the concept of megatrends, followed by a detailed characteristic of spirituality and leading directions of studies on new spirituality in Europe and the United States, as well as the conditions for its development. In the concluding paragraphs we attempt to define new spirituality as a megatrend.

⁶ P. Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, Oxford 2007, p. xi.

⁷ D. Houtman, S. Aupers, *The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981-2000*, „Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion”, 2007, v. 46 (3), p. 305-320; C. Kourie, *The "Turn" to Spirituality*, „ActaTheologicaSupplementum”, 2006, vol. 8, p. 19-38.

⁸ K. Flanagan, *Introduction*, in: *Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), London 1996, p. 7.

⁹ P. Heelas, L. Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution. Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality?*, Oxford 2005¹⁰.

¹⁰ D. Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution. The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*, New York 2004.

¹¹ R. Wuthnow, *After Heaven. Spirituality in America since the 1950s*, Berkeley 1998. Idem., *Creative Spirituality. The Way of the Artist*, Berkeley 2001.

¹² *A Sociology of Spirituality*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), Aldershot 2007.

Megatrends as primary transformational processes of contemporary society

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the most characteristic directions of the development of society have been analysed using an adequate metaphor of megatrends, formulated by John Naisbitt in his widely popular book, *Megatrends. Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*¹³, which today belongs to the canon of contemporary sociological works (it was first published in 1982 and translated to Polish in 1997; Naisbitt's book was released in 57 countries and with more than 14 million copies printed). In the mid-1990s, Austrian social researcher Matthias Horx published a paper on the megatrend of "respiritualization". The social scene saw the comebacks of not religion but rather its close relative – spirituality (*Spiritualität*), and not religious practices – only meditation¹⁴.

Naisbitt defines megatrends as the most important transformational processes currently taking place in our society¹⁵. In the second out of ten megatrends discerned by the author, the transfer from forced technology to high tech / high touch, he writes about the necessary balance between the physical and spiritual realities: "We must learn to balance material wonders of technology with human spiritual needs"¹⁶.

Eight years later, in 1990, John Naisbitt and his then wife Patricia Aburdene took up the same subject in the book titled *Megatrends 2000. Ten New Directions For the 1990's*¹⁷. Although the book was at the top of the New York Times' best seller list for a long time, it was not as popular in Poland as its predecessor. The authors write about 10 most important megatrends for the 1990s and as the ninth they list "The religious revival of the third millennium"; the last megatrend they give is the "triumph of the individual", or rather, the triumph of individualism, which also characterises the new spirituality. In their analysis of megatrend 9, Naisbitt and Aburdene discuss the relationship between religion and science. In their work they emphasize that science and technology say what life means, but "we learn that through literature, the arts, and spirituality"¹⁸. Upon the book's publication in 1990, the authors predicted a decline in significance of mainstream religions and a departure from institutionalised religions, as well as a turn to spirituality. They say that "in turbulent times, in times of great change, people head for the two extremes: fundamentalism and personal, spiritual experience"¹⁹. It is worth noting that Naisbitt and Aburdene place Poles among the most religious peoples in the world, next to the inhabitants of India and the USA²⁰.

¹³ Cf. J. Naisbitt, *Megatrends. Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, New York 1982.

¹⁴ M. Horx, *Megatrends der spätenneunziger Jahre*, Düsseldorf 1995.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁷ J. Naisbitt, P. Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000. Ten New Directions For the 1990's*, New York 1990.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

In 2005, Patricia Aburdene published her own book titled *Megatrends 2010. The Rise of Conscious Capitalism*²¹. In which she distinguishes seven original megatrends analysing the direction of social, economic, and spiritual transformations of capitalism. In her opinion, the most important megatrend of our times, as well as the first one on her list, is “the power of spirituality.” The other trends Aburdene lists are also in a way connected with spirituality: “the dawn of conscious capitalism”; “leading from the middle”; “spirituality in business”; “the values-driven consumer”; “the wave of conscious solutions”; “the socially responsible investment boom”.

Patricia Aburdene claims that the force behind the economy is constant innovation, and its source lies in the genius inherent to the human consciousness, which she understands in a spiritual sense; it is “the gleam of Spirit that animates humanity”²². The author of *Megatrends 2010* goes as far as to state that “technological innovation, in fact, all business invention, grows out of consciousness”²³. Consciousness is the prime ingredient of creativity and represents a higher intelligence than the mind. When this consciousness guides our mental facilities, the result can be brilliant²⁴.

In her book, Aburdene frequently refers to the “Spirit” (spelled with a capital letter), which she defines accordingly: “Spirit, (...), is the attribute of God that dwells in humanity, the Great I AM, the Life Force, the aspect of us that most mirrors the divine. In a theological sense you might say that Spirit is analogous to the Holy Spirit, but in an ecumenical and nondenominational way”²⁵. The author also differentiates spirituality from religion. She understands spirituality as the experience of, or the desire to experience the divine, which is often, though not always, an individual matter. Religion is used to refer to the formal, and often public, structure through which people worship God. Religion is more about behaviour, and spirituality is more about the experience. She adds, however, that some people are, of course, both spiritual and religious²⁶.

Aburdene begins the description of the first megatrend – “the power of spirituality – from personal to organizational” – with the story of Greg Merten, Hewlett-Packard’s vice president and general manager, who managed over 10000 people and a multi-billion-dollar business. Merten claims that the success of his company is to a large extent the result of his personal transformation, which he experienced after the loss of his 16-year-old son Scott in a car accident. This great tragedy made Merten turn to spirituality, learning forgiveness and letting go of being bitter and judgemental to others. This creative transformation ceased his transmission of suffering, changing a personal tragedy into success.

By the end of the chapter on “the power of spirituality,” Aburdene refers to a social group called the “cultural creatives”; a group, which she believes, could, in the future, enter

²¹ P. Aburdene, *Megatrends 2010. The Rise of Conscious Capitalism*, Charlottesville 2005.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. xvi.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. xxii.

²⁶ Ibid., p. xxiii.

the cultural mainstream. The term “cultural creatives” is related to the book by the same titled by sociologist Paul Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson²⁷. Cultural creatives are people who find spirituality important in their everyday life but do not feel the need of belonging to a formal religious group. They do not constitute formal structures, nor do they accept materialism or hedonism.

The main idea and message behind the “power of spirituality” megatrend, as well as the other six megatrends, comes down to the statement saying that the spiritual transformation initiated at the level of an individual shifts to an institutional transformation, although this concerns, to a large extent, spirituality in business²⁸. Such context brings forth the sociological concept of capital; we often discuss, to name but a few, social, political, or cultural capital. When referring the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Laurence Iannaccone, Rodney Stark and R. Finke, who wrote about “religious capital,” the American sociologists B. Verter proposes a new model, mainly, “spiritual capital”, which can be understood as an important contribution to the economy of the so-called symbolic goods²⁹.

The concept of new spirituality

Although the concept of “spirituality” dates back two thousand years, to the times of the apostles, this idea entered into consideration in social sciences only in the last two decades. The term “spirituality” itself is ambiguous and open for numerous interpretations, though many people associate it with something otherworldly and immaterial, with religion. Etymologically, it comes from the Latin word “spiritualitas” and its adjectival form “spiritualis” (mental, spiritual). The word “spirituality” is related to “spirit”, which comes from the Latin “spiritus”. Its corresponding Greek word is “pneúma”, and in Hebrew it is „rûah”³⁰.

In the Polish language, “duchowość” (spirituality) comes from the word duch (spirit), which, in turn, comes from the pre-slavic **duxъ*, related to the verb **duxnati*, ‘oddychać’ (to breathe). Other related Polish words are: ‘tchnąć’ (to inspire), ‘odetchnąć’ (to sigh), ‘oddech’ (breath), ‘dech’ (breathing), ‘tchnienie’ (spiration). The words ‘duch’ (spirit) and ‘tchnąć’ (to inspire) are etymologically connected with ‘dąć’ (to blow), ‘dmę’ (I blow), ‘dym’ (smoke) and they all belong to word family of a proto-indo-european root **theu-* ‘to float in air’, ‘wiał’ (to blow), ‘wiatr’ (wind), ‘wicher’ (gale), ‘powiew’ (breeze)³¹. It is

²⁷ P. H. Ray, S. R. Anderson, *The Cultural Creatives*, New York 2000.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1-21.

²⁹ B. Verter, *Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu*, “Sociological Theory”, 2003, vol. 21 (2), p. 150-174. See also M. Guest, *In Search of Spiritual Capital. The Spiritual as a Culture Resource*, in: *A Sociology of Spirituality*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (red.), Aldershot 2007, p. 181-200.

³⁰ S. A. Wargacki, *Duchowość jako współczesny fenomen społeczny i kulturowy*, in: *Wprowadzenie do socjologii kultury*, M. Filipiak (ed.), Lublin 2009, p. 297.

³¹ R. Grzegorzczkowska, *Co o fenomenie duchowości mówi język?*, in: *Fenomen duchowości*, A. Grzegorzczk, J. Sójka, R. Koschany (ed.), Poznań 2006, p. 24.

worth noting here that this group of words is connected with life, since breathing is essential to sustaining man's vital functions. The first written records of the Latin noun form *spiritualitas* date back to the beginning of the fifth century, to a letter which was falsely believed to have been written by St. Jerome.

The letter was addressed to a newly baptised adult and contains this incentive: "So act that you may progress in spirituality" (*Age ut in spiritualitate proficias*)³². From the early middle ages on, spirituality came to be understood in a more philosophical way, opposing the spiritual with that which is carnal or material.

The word "spirituality" does not have a long history in the contemporary European lexicon, at least not in the meaning we ascribe to it today. As a term referring to the Christian experience of the *sacred*, it entered into everyday use at the beginning of the twentieth century with the translation of French Catholic writings, where it appeared in the form of "*spiritualité*" – spirituality³³. Today, this word functions both in general vocabulary and as a specific category in various religious traditions. Spirituality is commonly associated with a lack of physicality – with spirit³⁴. Sometimes it also is associated specific groups, such as the clergy. Normally, spirituality is treated as a form of personal religious (mystical) experience and covers the search for meaning and transcendence.

Similarly to other human experience, spirituality takes on many forms, therefore spiritualities should be discussed in the plural³⁵. There are numerous schools and spiritual systems, but when it is associated with religions, we mean the so-called classical spirituality – for example, the one in the framework of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam. In Christianity, we can distinguish Catholic (Marian, Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, etc.), Orthodox, and Protestant spirituality (e.g., Calvinistic, Anglican). Spirituality also appears outside of religious context, in which we can discuss secular spirituality or different means of spiritual exploration³⁶.

In this great mosaic of approaches to spirituality there is also room for atheistic spirituality. French philosopher André Comte-Sponville recently published a book titled *The Book of Atheist Spirituality. An Elegant Argument for Spirituality without God*. The author writes that although people can do without religion, they cannot manage without spirituality because it would lead to nihilism and savagery. He refers to theological virtues: faith, hope, love, by grounding the atheist spirituality on communion, fidelity, and love. Spirituality, according to Comte-Sponville, is about experiencing, exercising, and reliving. "Today (...) when people talk about spirituality, they are usually referring to a rather limited

³² D. Marmion, *A Spirituality of Everyday Faith: A Theological Investigation of the Notion of Spirituality in Karl Rahner*, Louvain 1998, p. 10; P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History. Questions of Interpretation and Method*, New York 1998, p. 43.

³³ A. Holder, *Introduction*, in: *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, A. Holder (ed.), Oxford 2005, p. 2.

³⁴ See U. King, *Introduction: Spirituality, Society and the Millennium – Wasteland, Wilderness or New Vision?*, in: *Spirituality and Society in the New Millennium*, U. King, T. Beattie (ed.), Brighton 2001, p. 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁶ M. A. Martin, *Secular Spirituality and Implicit Religion: the Realisation of Human Potential*, „Implicit Religion“, 2000, vol. 3 (1), p. 31-49.

part of our inner life (though it may contemplate limitlessness) – the part that involves the absolute, the infinite and the eternal. It is, in a sense, the spirit's farthest point and its greatest amplitude"³⁷. The author fits into the discussion about religion and spirituality, stating that every religion, at least to some extent, grows from spirituality, but spirituality, on the other hand, does not have to be religious³⁸.

American philosopher and bioinformatics pioneer Stuart Kauffman, who wrote *Reinventing the Sacred*, proposes a new scientific outlook which reaches further than science by itself and introduces a new vision of man that encompasses art, ethics, politics, and spirituality, based on the model of the Greek of a good and fulfilled life³⁹. The reinvented sacred would facilitate, according to Kauffman, the healing process of past injuries occurring from the separation of faith and reason, of science and humanities; this reinvention would heal the wound of false reductionism, or the conviction that there is life in a world without values or spirituality⁴⁰.

Spirituality, in the modern sense, is often preceded with an adjective and called "new spirituality". It envelops all aspects of life and is described as a new style for the post-modern spiritual culture; its democratic, easily accessible, individualistic, and it exceeds the boundaries of institutionalised religions; therefore, it often is out-of-church. This spirituality respects nature and is characterised by a deep sense of connection with the world; it constitutes an inexhaustible source of faith and willpower.

This new paradigm is popular mainly among a certain part of young people and is governed by rules according to which everyone is kin to each other; they are equal in the face of sanctity. Spiritual life is no longer governed by bishops and clergy, but rather by the conscience of the individual and the insight from self-reflection, literature, meditation, discussions with friends and spiritual guides. The interest in new spirituality did not come from out of nowhere, but was mainly brought forth by the popularity of New Age movements⁴¹, which appeared in Western culture at the end of the 1960s, reached its climax in the 1980s, and declined at the threshold of the new millennium. This movement influenced new perceptions of the world and increased the interest in the phenomenon of religion and, particularly, spirituality.

The new spirituality is associated with emotionality and man's inner power, the deepest sphere of consciousness, and our sacred element. This view of spirituality empha-

³⁷ A. Comte-Sponville, *The Book of Atheist Spirituality. An Elegant Argument for Spirituality without God*, London 2009.

³⁸ Ibid. See also J.-G. Saint-Arnaud, "I'm an Atheist, Thank God!". *On the Spiritual Life of Atheists*, "The Way", 2010, vol. 49 (2), p. 97-109.

³⁹ S. Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred. The Science of Complexity and the Emergence of a Natural Divinity*, New York 2008, p. ix.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴¹ S. A. Wargacki, *New Age*, in: *Religia w świecie współczesnym. Zarys problematyki religijologicznej*, H. Zimorń (ed.), Lublin 2000, p. 451-486. See also S. A. Wargacki, *New Age*, in: *Słownik wiedzy o religiach*, K. Banek (ed.), Warszawa – Bielsko – Biała 2010, p. 569-581; S. A. Wargacki, *Ruch New Age a innowacje religijne i społeczno-kulturowe*, in: *Oblicza religii i religijności*, I. Borowik, J. Doktor, M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 290-304.

sises the immanent God, highlights the importance of experience and religious exercise; it is included into everyday matters and worries, respects the body, it is sensitive of gender differences, appreciates individual exploration, allows for certain doubts, and finds new discoveries to be a part of the journey of life. Spirituality is also an attempt of fathoming the surrounding mysteries, and asks how this mystery influences our life. New spirituality is a great turn to life and is oriented on its quality and meaning. This fact is emphasised by the British sociologist of religion, Paul Heelas, who claims that life is not perceived as formed and regulated by social roles, duties and obligations towards institutions, whether they are “given” or “established”; rather, it is perceived as “life itself”, the source of meaning, self-discovery, and personal development⁴². Heelas connects the essence of life with spirituality; the latter originates from the former and manifests itself as love, inner peace, wisdom of the “inner voice,” well-being, creativity, sense of fulfilment and being a part of the whole⁴³.

“New Spirituality” is the subject, as well as the title of the book by American sociologist, Gordon Lynch, who describes spirituality also as “progressive”, one which is respectful of nature and connects religious faith with new scientific theories and has a long-term programme for transforming religion and society. Progressive spirituality has the characteristics of post-modernity, embracing various religious styles and traditions rather than following one uniform style featured in modernity⁴⁴.

Spirituality is a multifaceted phenomenon and can be subjected to interdisciplinary examination. K. Waaijman presents an outline study of this phenomenon based on twelve scientific disciplines: theology, religious studies, philosophy, theory of literature, history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, pedagogics, management, medicine, and nature sciences⁴⁵. The term “spirituality” is absent from the indices of sociological works published before the 1980s, including those devoted to the study of religion. Spirituality could have been a rather attractive subject for sociology. The science, however, was concerned with “higher” theoretical analyses, and to a large extent it omitted topics surrounding the spiritual world, animism, ecstasy, or mysticism. These issues were for sociology, as the British sociologist of religion Kieran Flanagan puts it, “will-o’-the-wisp” or illusions, which the enlightened forces of modernity have long got rid of⁴⁶.

As British sociologist Grace Davie emphasises: “spirituality has become a pervasive feature of modern European societies; it is a word with strongly positive connotation,

⁴² P. Heelas, *The Spiritual Revolution: From “Religion” to “Spirituality”*, *Religions in the Modern World. Traditions and Transformations*, in: L. Woodhead, P. Fletcher, H. Kawanami, D. Smith (ed.), London 2002, p. 371-372; see L. Woodhead, *The Turn to Life in Contemporary Religion and Spirituality*, in: *Spirituality and Society in the New Millennium*, U. King, T. Beattie (ed.), Brighton 2001, p. 110-123. See also U. Agnew, *What is Social Spirituality*, in: *“With Wisdom Seeking God”*. *The Academic Study of Spirituality*, U. Agnew, B. Flanagan, G. Heylin (ed.), Leuven 2008, p. 240.

⁴³ P. Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life. New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, Oxford 2008, p. 33.

⁴⁴ G. Lynch, *The New Spirituality. An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-first Century*, New York 2007, p. 68.

⁴⁵ K. Waaijman, *Spirituality – a Multifaceted Phenomenon*, “Studies in Spirituality”, 2007, no. 17, p. 1-113.

⁴⁶ K. Flanagan, *Introduction*, in: *Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), op. cit., p. 1.

but multiple and notoriously imprecise meanings⁴⁷. Contemporary spirituality, in its independence from religious structures, is difficult to grasp and has multiple, imprecise meanings. It is also a reaction to sudden social and cultural changes. To sociologists, as their British representatives – Kieran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp – state, the study of spirituality can resemble a dense fog off Dover beach. Nevertheless, spirituality can be an attractive and challenging field of study for sociology⁴⁸.

When discussing the functioning of the vocabulary related to spirituality in scientific discourse, American sociologist of Religion Wade Clark Roof states that during periods in which religious institutions enjoyed social prestige and possessed extensive cultural capital, that is, had large monopoly power, the term “spirituality” was practically fading. He adds that in fact until recently, because still at the beginning of the 1960s, the word was absolutely absent from public discourse. Roof refers to the ideas of Protestant theologian Paul Tillich who spoke of the almost forbidden word, ‘spirit’, as well as a lost hope for a spiritual dimension of life⁴⁹.

Considering the multiplicity of meanings, the “elusiveness”, and broad scope of the concept of spirituality, it is difficult to discern one definition that express the depth cover all the meanings of the phenomenon; even when it is limited to the concept of “new spirituality”. Defining spirituality is like trying to lasso wind. We know that definitions are usually tools of rationality and that they try to grasp a concept in a specified framework of a given discipline. The problem with spirituality is that the term is vague, and will rather remain that way if it wants to remain faithful to its elusive nature. Despite these difficulties it is worth taking a closer look at the attempts made by researchers of the matter, as well as to try to formulate a definition of spirituality on one’s own.

Every religious tradition and each epoch had its own understanding of spirituality, concentrating usually on personal and private “spiritual life”. For the contemporary man looking for more holistic, liberating forms of spirituality, “traditional” spirituality could seem mute and sterile, as well as narrow and limiting⁵⁰. The following definitions are only some of the ways in which spirituality manifests itself in society and culture. R. Wuthnow understands spirituality as: “all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conceptions of a transcendent reality”. He adds that spirituality is not “just the creation of individuals; it is shaped by larger social circumstances and by the beliefs and values present in wider culture”⁵¹.

American sociologist of religion Wade Clark Roof, aware of the difficulties with properly defining spirituality, emphasizes the fact that an accurate definition should refer

⁴⁷ G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., p. 155.

⁴⁸ Cf. K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp, *Conclusion*, in: *A Sociology of Spirituality*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), op. cit., p. 251.

⁴⁹ W. C. Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace. Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, Princeton 1999, p. 89.

⁵⁰ P. R. Holmes, *Spirituality: Some Disciplinary Perspectives*, in: *A Sociology of Spirituality*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), Aldershot 2007, p. 36.

⁵¹ R. Wuthnow, *After Heaven...*, op. cit., p. viii.

to transcendental power which is immaterial, but at the same real and true – known as the Creator or God. Such definition contains four basic elements: a) spirituality is the source of values and meaning exceeding the individual; b) it is a way and ability of perceiving the world; c) encompasses the awareness of the “inner self”; d) possesses the capacity to merge various aspects of a person into a unity, a whole. Roof adds that the contemporary search for spirituality is an expression of “yearnings for a reconstructed interior life”⁵².

A broader definition of spirituality is provided by Ursula King – professor of religious studies at the University of Bristol, researcher of mysticism and spirituality. She writes that: “Spirituality can be linked to all human experiences, but it has a particularly close connection with the imagination, with human creativity and resourcefulness, with relationships – whether with ourselves, with others, or with a transcendent reality, named or unnamed, but often called the Divine, God, or Spirit. Spirituality can also be connected with a sense of celebration and joy, with adoration and surrender, with struggle and suffering”⁵³.

The trajectory of the word “spirituality” entering the discourse of social sciences, described above, shows that we are still too far from a satisfactory integration of experiences to develop a new specialist field of science dealing with spirituality. People discussing the new spirituality are, to some extent, walking on ice. It is also because a methodology of research on spirituality has not been developed, and most definitions of the concept seem to be a work-in-progress. Many researchers of spirituality do not care to define their environment or consciously avoid doing so; many do not connect spirituality with religion but rather with various forms of transcendence. New spirituality is diversified, difficult to clearly describe. Today it is one of the symptoms of a broader sociocultural trend or megatrend, in which spirituality replaces religiosity, permeates the lives of individuals and the functioning of institutions. Increasing number of people do not want to define themselves as religious but rather as searching for spirituality, trying to satisfy their higher level needs in a new way. The word “spirituality” becomes a specific fashion, having positive connotations but multiple imprecise meanings⁵⁴.

In the context of the quoted definitions, we propose the following description of the discussed the “new spirituality”. The new spirituality is one of the megatrends of the beginning of the 21st century, it is the experience of the sacred, which sometimes remains unnamed, understood in categories of something personal, intimate, referring to man’s inner power. This spirituality emphasizes the role of religious experience and exercise, treats the human body as filled with inner, spiritual meaning and as a manifestation of the creative power of the Spirit; it is respectful of nature and promotes healthy diet; it pays special attention to interpersonal contacts based on fidelity and love; to ethics, expressed as respect for individual moral values; it is sensitive of art, and emphasizes gender equality. This spirituality is holistic, democratic, accessible and non-hierarchized; it is opposed

⁵² W. C. Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace...*, op. cit., p. 35.

⁵³ U. King, *The Search for Spirituality. Our Global Quest for a Spiritual Life*, New York 2008, p. 3.

⁵⁴ G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., p. 155.

to institutional religions, that is, out-of-church. New exploration of spirituality, the specific return of the sacred, discussed by sociologists, means, on the one hand, a departure from the traditional, religious understanding of meaning, with its references to the great Transcendence (vertical experiences), and, on the other hand, it accentuates life as value in itself, the source of self-discovery and personal development (horizontal experience).

Different signs of new spirituality are accentuated mainly by individual religious experiences, autonomy of the subject and its competence, subjectivity of belief, anti-dogmatism, and, at times, anti-church (as aversion to institutions, authority). Sometimes, subjectivity of belief takes on the characteristics of aestheticization, and involves man totally, with all his senses. Spiritual experience involves the whole man, together with his body, his soul, and his spirit⁵⁵. Traditional, church religiosity becomes outdated. An exhaustive review of the concept of new spirituality would require a separate study.

Because spirituality has almost always been presented in relation to religion, regardless of whether the terms were treated in opposition or if spirituality was regarded as an element of religiosity, investigating their mutual relationships seems justified and is the subject of the part that follows.

Religion and spirituality – mutual relation

The spiritual and the sacred takes on numerous shapes and forms and the market of spiritual offers is thriving. Book stores, especially on-line, are the places to go for information on numerous works ranging from Christian traditions, through non-Christian religions from all over the world, magical practices, to still sought-for works on the New Age. As the interest in institutionalized religions withers, the demand grows for other spiritual and worldview offers. The spiritual and the sacred undergoes pluralisation and multiplication, the borders between religious cultures in a globalized environment become “permeable” and the religious contents of various provenance infiltrate each other and blend (syncretism). The borders between the sacred and the profane also fade (sacred secularism, secular sacrum). These new forms of mass experiences (religious events) pull into its orbit even those who describe themselves as “religiously tone-deaf”.

By the end of the 20th century, spirituality, which was until then perceived as an integral part of religion, gradually started to be considered as a separate path not only for personal exploration but also scientific research. Some of its supporters differentiate between religion and spirituality, preferring the latter due to religion’s negative connotations with, for example, persecution and religious wars of the past. This issue is touched upon in by the Catholic Church in the document titled *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life*. “Many have rejected organised religion, because in their judgement it has failed

⁵⁵ Cf., “Die eigene spirituelle Erfahrung zählt”. Ein Gespräch mit dem Religionssoziologen Winfried Gebhardt 2010, “Herder Korrespondenz”, no. 6, p. 286-288.

to answer their needs, and for precisely this reason they have looked elsewhere to find 'spirituality'⁵⁶. As mentioned above, spirituality has been treated for some time now as a separate subject of studies of numerous disciplines, including sociology of religion⁵⁷. Today, in the so-called post-modern culture, due to individualization and privatization of religion, there have appeared numerous alternative forms of spirituality and religious forms, which are independent, and often completely detached from religious institutions. In sociology, such terms as "patchwork" or "bricolage", meaning *à la carte* religion, are used to describe this new phenomenon. Theoretically, the relationship between religion and spirituality can be presented as follows: a) religiosity and spirituality are equivalent; b) spirituality is a component of religiosity; c) religiosity is a component of spirituality; d) religiosity and spirituality are different from each other, but to some extent overlap; e) religiosity and spirituality are completely different⁵⁸.

British sociologist of religion Eileen Barker proposes five forms of relationships that can occur between religion and spirituality, where by religion she means religiosity.

1. Religion and spirituality can be treated interchangeably.

2. Spirituality can be treated as one or more subcategory of religiosity. Examples of these include Spiritual Baptists (Shouters), religions connected with spiritual possession and Spiritualism. We can speak of a certain variety of these form when spirituality is perceived as the essential core of religiosity, as expressed by the mystical experiences of "truly religious" individuals, such as: Meister Eckhart, Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Saint Julian of Norwich, or more recently: Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths, Mother Theresa, the Dalai Lama.

3. Religiosity is a sub-discipline of spirituality. According to this approach, followed by some New Age supporters, spirituality is understood as encompassing all aspects of life.

4. Religiosity and spirituality are two separate phenomena.

5. Religiosity and spirituality are two overlapping conceptions which have some common features⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life. A Christian reflection on the 'New Age'*.

⁵⁷ K. Waaijman, *Spirituality – a Multifaceted Phenomenon...*, op. cit.; H. Knoblauch, *Soziologie der Spiritualität*, in: *Handbuch Spiritualität. Zugänge, Traditionen, interreligiöse Prozesse*, K. Baier (ed.), Darmstadt 2006, p. 91-111; M. B. McGuire, *Toward a Sociology of Spirituality: Individual Religion in Social/Historical Context*, in: *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life. Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford*, E. Barker (ed.), Burlington 2008, p. 215-231. See also J. Mariański, *Nowe formy religijności i duchowości – od socjologii religii do socjologii duchowości?*, in: *O wielowymiarowości badań religioznawczych*, Z. Drozdowicz (ed.), Poznań 2009, p. 149-179. Georg Simmel is considered to be a pioneer in the study of the relationship between religion and spirituality. Simmel distinguished the differences between religion and religiosity. Cf. I. Varga, *Georg Simmel: Religion and Spirituality*, in: *A Sociology of Spirituality*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), Aldershot 2007, p. 145-160.

⁵⁸ H. Knoblauch, *Populäre Religion. Auf dem Weg in eine spirituelle Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 2009, p. 122; E. Barker, "Yet More Varieties of Religious Experiences: Diversity and Pluralism in Contemporary Europe", in: *Religia i religijność w warunkach globalizacji*, M. Libiszowska-Żótkowska (ed.), Kraków 2007, p. 127-143.

⁵⁹ E. Barker, *The Church Without and God Within: Religiosity and/or Spirituality?*, in: *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life. Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford*, E. Barker (ed.), Burlington 2008, p. 190-191.

One current of research presents organized religion as an old-fashioned, ossified structure, being somewhere “over there” and related to history and culture. Therefore, some propose a complete separation of spirituality and institutionalized religion. This attitude is epitomised perfectly in the phrase: “I am spiritual but not religious”, which basically means: “I develop my spirituality but am not a religious person”⁶⁰. Among some of the supporters of the new spirituality there is a saying: “religion is for those who fear hell, spirituality is for those who have been there”.

Therefore, spirituality can be perceived as a form of protest against traditional religions. Some authors oppose spirituality to religion so strongly that they treat the former as something strictly connected with various spiritual currents and practices “beyond” religious institutions (sacral buildings). Religion is viewed as something happening “inside” churches, synagogues, mosques, or other religious institutions and is associated with words like: organization, institution, structure, dogmas. Spirituality, on the other hand, is associated with such concepts as: belief in God, spontaneity and acting in accordance to one’s principles, dedication, consequence in behaviour, endurance in inner exploration⁶¹. In this context, the words of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, are especially illustrious: “When I talk about spirituality I do not mean religion or religious belief”⁶².

David Tacey, in his analysis of the phenomenon of contemporary spirituality, writes about a “radical split” between spirituality and religion. The nature of this split lies in the separation of religious practices and religious experience; “spirit” no longer feels at home in traditional religions and tries to depart from these “forms”. “Spirit without form is free and spontaneous, but is also invisible (...). We live in a time in which form is discounted and spirit is highly valued”⁶³. Tacey claims that today we are dealing with a new paradigm which he describes as “all-inclusive spirituality”⁶⁴. Spiritual life is no longer governed by bishops and clergy, but rather by the conscience of the individual and the insight from self-reflection, literature, meditation, discussions with friends and spiritual guides⁶⁵.

According to Tacey, this new cultural paradigm leads to a blending of religion and spirituality. Moreover, religion can no longer be discussed in the singular; “religions”, in the plural, have become a subset of a broader category, namely – spirituality. Religions are not assumed *a priori* but are options to choose from, selected by individuals along their spiritual explorations. People do no longer feel obliged to remain loyal to one religious tradition, Church or faith, but they rather cruise through their surrounding spectrum⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ R. C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious*, Oxford 2001, p. 1-12; R. Wuthnow, *After Heaven...*, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶¹ U. King, *The Search for Spirituality...*, op. cit., p. 14-15; R. Wuthnow, *All in Sync. How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion*, Berkeley 2003, p. 33. See also: D. Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 30-46; B. J. Zinnbauer, K. I. Pargament et al., *Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy*, „Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion”, 2001, no. 36 (4), p. 549-564.

⁶² Quoted from: U. King, *The Search for Spirituality...*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶³ D. Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 30-31.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

This new spirituality – according to Tacey – is a form of personal religion, which has been constantly going through various social – democratic, governmental, political, racial, sexual and intellectual – changes⁶⁷.

New spirituality in light of sociological research

British sociologist of religion Matthew Wood, discussing the methodological aspects of investigating spirituality, notes that when we differentiate “religion” from “spirituality” on the conceptual level, we in a way “extract” the subjects from their socio-cultural environment, and consequently are unable to fully scrutinize their biography, social interaction, and broader context. By leaving out these significant aspects of mutual relations, as well as formal and informal relations in the framework of institutions, the researcher focuses mainly on discourses and surveys, which treat those surveyed merely as “individuals”, rather than as social actors. Wood claims that spirituality, as an analytical concept separated from or opposed to religion, does not serve anything good, but rather enforces analytical dichotomies, which have long since been barriers to understanding sociological issues⁶⁸.

Another important methodological problem is the operationalization of the research problem, which is spirituality. Numerous sociologists of religion, including E. Barker, point to difficulties connected with the operationalization of the concept of spirituality, which consequently leads to the emergence of various problems, and the researcher does not know what the respondents mean by spirituality⁶⁹. Despite these and many other doubts and reservations, there are empirical studies making use of the concept of spirituality.

Studies on spirituality were conducted in 1990s in the USA and Europe. Brian J. Zinnbauer, Kenneth I. Pargament and others, in their article, *Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy*, provide the following empirical results of a survey conducted in the USA at the end of the 1990s, which investigated the relationship between relationship and spirituality: I am a religious and spiritual person – 74%; I am spiritual but not religious 19%; I am religious but not spiritual – 4%; I am neither religious nor spiritual – 3%. In total, 93% of the subject describe themselves as “spiritual”, and 78% identified themselves as religious⁷⁰. R. Stark, E. Hamberg and A. S. Miller state that the majority of Americans who identify themselves with a Church or denomination claim to be spiritual at the same time. Based on a nation-wide survey from 2000, 61% Americans say that they are both religious, spiritual; 20% choose spirituality, but only 8% declared themselves to be only religious⁷¹.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

⁶⁸ M. Wood, *The Sociology of Spirituality. Reflections on a Problematic Endeavor*, in: *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, B. S. Turner (red.), Oxford 2010, p. 267-285.

⁶⁹ E. Barker, *The Church Without and God Within: Religiosity and/or Spirituality?...*, op. cit., p. 193.

⁷⁰ B. J. Zinnbauer, K. I. Pargament et al., *Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy*, „Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion”, 2001, vol. 36 (4), p. 555.

⁷¹ R. Stark, E. Hamberg and A. S. Miller, *Exploring Spirituality and Unchurched Religions in America, Sweden, and Japan*, „Journal of Contemporary Religion”, 2005, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 13.

The most recent studies on the relationship between spirituality, religion conducted in 2007 by American sociologist of religion Rodney Stark and his associates show that spirituality and religion are not separate and exclusive categories for most Americans. They view spirituality as an integral part of being religious. More than half of today's US population (57%) identify themselves as spiritual, as well as religious. A lot less, because only 17% say they are religious but not spiritual; 10% as spiritual but not religious; 16% do not fit into any said categories. Those who describe themselves as "spiritual and not religious" reject major religious traditions, but assume the existence of supernatural forces. Because their convictions do not originate from religious structures they can acknowledge various kinds of paranormal beliefs. Identifying themselves, in this context, as spiritual practitioners allows them to distance themselves from the unacceptable organised religion, without the risk of being stigmatised by non-believers⁷².

Sociological studies on the new religiosity and spirituality in Europe are not as advanced as in the USA; the phenomenon is far more widespread in America than among European societies. For example, in 2002 from 14.5% to 22.6% of surveyed Americans of particular age groups described themselves as "only spiritual"⁷³. Below are some data from public opinion polls and sociological studies conducted in selected European states.

According to a survey performed in 11 European countries, 35% of subjects found themselves neither religious nor spiritual; 37% – both religious and spiritual; 15% – religious but not spiritual; 12% – spiritual but not religious (the results for Poland are, respectively: 13%, 51%, 34%, 2%). The percentage of the "spiritual but not religious" varied from 2% to 22% in particular countries, with the highest count in Norway.

From all countries surveyed, non-religious spirituality is rarest in Poland, as well as is lacking both religiosity and spirituality; both forms, that is "religious and spiritual" was particularly prevalent. Unfortunately we do not know what the respondents understood by the word "spirituality" but surely some of them saw it as a departure from traditional, institutionalized religion⁷⁴.

Based on studies of European systems of values conducted in 1982, 1991, and 1999, Paul M. Zulehner estimates that 20% of Europeans can be described as non-believers, and 34% as Christians identifying themselves with their Church. These two categories of Europeans are two extremes of a wide spectrum of attitudes toward and stances on religions and Churches. Between these two extremes there are those who are neither non-religious, nor church religious (46%). Wanting to be modern, they take over the "direction" in shaping and interpreting their life and the surrounding world. In terms of religiosity and spirituality, they, in a way, build their own home, which is often changed and restructures. Sociologists describe them as religiously selective, "handymen", "composers",

⁷² K. Dougherty, S. J. Jang, *Spirituality. Religion and Spirituality are not Mutually Exclusive*, in: R. Stark, *What Americans Really Believe*, Waco 2008, p. 87-94. See also R. C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious...*, op. cit.

⁷³ H. Knoblauch, *Populäre Religion. Auf dem Weg in eine spirituelle Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 2009, p. 123.

⁷⁴ E. Barker, "Yet More Varieties of Religious Experiences: Diversity and Pluralism in Contemporary Europe", in: *Religia i religijność w warunkach globalizacji*, M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska (ed.), Kraków 2007, p. 139-140.

“architects”, “creatives”, “homeless”, “journeymen”, “religious post-modernists”. This category also has room for those who identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious”. The scope of this category among the European population is difficult to estimate. It also includes those special pragmatics of every day life who lack the religious “antenna” and concentrate on the values from the sphere of the profane (the Weberian category of the “religiously tone-deaf”)⁷⁵.

The development of sociological studies on spirituality in Italy is rather interesting. In 2010, Italian sociologist of religion Stefania Palmisano published the results of her research on spirituality, in which she attempted to measure the extent to which alternative or new spiritualities (she uses the plural), which are, Palmisano states, “more readily associated with Protestant forms (...), [are] significant within Italian Catholicism”⁷⁶. The study was conducted in Italy in 2006 on a sample of 3160 men and women between 16 and 74 years of age. This study, compared to previous studies, such as RAMP (Moral and Religious Pluralism) from 1998, focused more on the distinction of religion and spirituality, both in the theoretical and empirical aspect, and asked the subjects about what significance the term “spirituality” has to them.

The surveyed, based on their own evaluation, were divided into four groups: 1. neither religious nor spiritual; 2. religious but not spiritual; 3. spiritual but not religious; 4. both religious and spiritual. More than two thirds of respondents (69%) described themselves as religious, approximately three fourths (72%) as having some form of spirituality, one fourth (26%) consider themselves to be non-religious, and 93% of religious people find themselves spiritual.

Regarding the said four categories: 23% of the surveyed defined themselves as neither religious nor spiritual, 5% as religious but not spiritual, 8% as spiritual but not religious, and 64% as religious and spiritual⁷⁷. The survey showed that in the last decade, even in Italy, “the language of spirituality” made itself at home, and the vocabulary associated with the blending of mind, body and spirit function in social consciousness.

In a survey conducted in 2007 for Bertelsmann Stiftung, respondents were asked about the extent to which they considered themselves spiritual (*spirituell*) – irrespective of their religiosity. In France, 21% of respondents identified themselves as very or quite spiritual, in Great Britain – 23%, in Italy – 56%, in Austria – 14%, in Switzerland – 22%, in Poland 58%, in Russia – 25%, in the western lands of Germany – 13%, and 3% in the eastern lands (the answers “not very spiritual” and “absolutely not spiritual” were chosen by respectively: 44%, 50%, 25%, 59%, 45%, 10%, 41%, 64%, 84%). The highest percentage of “spiritual” people occur in the countries with the largest numbers of “religious” people⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ P. M. Zulehner, *Gottes Sehnsucht. Spirituelle Suche in säkularer Kultur*, Ostfildern 2008, p. 44-45.

⁷⁶ S. Palmisano, *Spirituality and Catholicism: The Italian Experience*, „Journal of Contemporary Religion”, 2010, vol. 25, no. 2, p. 222.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷⁸ O. Müller, D. Pollack, *Wiereligiösist Europa? Kirchlichkeit, Religiosität und Spiritualität in West- und Osteuropa*, in: *Religionsmonitor 2008. Bertelsmann Stiftung*, Gütersloh 2007, p. 174-175.

“Spirituality” is found among the religious and the non-religious, as well as those who do not belong to any Church (non-believers); it is more prevalent among women than men, more common in older than in younger people, and frequents more often in well educated population than in those of lower education⁷⁹.

A nationwide survey conducted in Germany in 2008 by ALLBUS (German General Social Survey) revealed that 12.6% respondents in western lands described themselves as religious and spiritual, 40.8% as religious but not spiritual, 12.7% as spiritual but not religious, 33.8% as both religious and spiritual (for eastern lands, the responses were respectively: 4.1%, 10.6%, 9.1%, 76.2%). In another questions, 12.7% of respondents from western lands described themselves as very religious, 37.4% as rather religious, 15.6% as neither religious nor non-religious, 12.9% as rather non-religious, 21.5% as absolutely not religious (eastern lands respectively: 3.1%, 12.9%, 6.4%, 6.4%, 71.1%). Generally, we can say that one out of ten surveyed German places himself in the category “spiritual but not religious”⁸⁰.

Spirituality has only recently become the subject of sociological studies in German speaking countries. For the last several decades their sociologists were concerned with various forms of out-of-church religiosity, including elements of astrology, esotericism, occultism, Eastern meditation, etc. To describe these new phenomena, Hubert Knoblauch introduced the term “popular religion” (*Populäre Religion*). This term covers a significantly larger scope of phenomena than “out-of-church religiosity”, which previously used in German sociological literature, which was most commonly used in reference to parareligious phenomena (belief in UFO, occultism, esotericism, fortune telling, New Age).

The processes of individualization and privatization of religion also constitute an important field of study. Individualization and pluralisation do not necessarily mean the absence of structures whatsoever and can lead to a development of new forms of structuring social and religious life, called by German sociologists “the new religious scene”. “Scenes” are groups or collectives of people who for a short period of time share common interests and meet at a particular place and time because of individuals with special charismatic traits or unique personalities (for example, outstanding priests, preachers, modern prophets). These types of religious groups or cult communities are of a supra-regional, sometimes global, character, and are open to everyone who wants to satisfy their spiritual needs, without requiring a formal membership. People interested in new groups or congregations are most often not attached to any traditional Churches, and often frequent from one “religious scene” to another⁸¹.

The development process of new “religious scenes” is connected to phenomena known as *Events*, which are forms of perfectly organised meetings devoted to one impor-

⁷⁹ See P. M. Zulehner, *Spirituelle Dynamik in säkularen Kulturen? Deutschland – Österreich – Schweiz*, in: *Religionsmonitor 2008*. Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh 2007, p. 153.

⁸⁰ D. Pollack, O. Müller, *Die religiöse Entwicklung in Ostdeutschland nach 1989*, in: *Religion und Religiosität im vereinigten Deutschland. Zwanzig Jahren nach dem Umbruch*, G. Pickel, K. Sammet (ed.), Wiesbaden 2011, p. 136-138.

⁸¹ W. Gebhardt, *Religionssoziologie*, in: *Handbuch*, G. Kneer, M. Schroer (ed.), Wiesbaden 2010, p. 400.

tant cause (monothematic), creating a strong feeling of “us”. Various contents and forms of experience and sensation bind this great collective into a certain whole, even if it is short term. Recent decades have shown a growing popularity of such meetings, having the characteristics of religious *Events* (for example, a pop-star Pope, conventions organised by Evangelical Christian, meetings in Taizé, mega churches, esoteric fairs, great congregations organized in the world of Islam, meetings of Polish youth in Legnica, pilgrimages organized by Radio Maryja, a prominent Polish Catholic radio station) that gather thousands of participants. A modern religious *Event* is a specific combination of traditional religious contents and ritual, as well as elements of popular entertainment culture, it creates acceptable forms of expressing religious experience, and as such, gains in meaning⁸². For example – contrary to secularist theses – Papal pilgrimages have become important media happenings (*Events*); this irritates those who see religion, especially in the form of the Catholic Church, as an anti-modernistic force. Engagement in religious happenings and ceremonies does not always conclude, or rather seldom concludes, in making contact with one’s own Church or religious community. It gives the participants opportunity to express their religious experiences, sensation of community, and, on occasion, it determines changes in everyday life.

Spirituality relates to a certain personal experience which is often extraordinary, encountered directly and not “second-hand”. It is not situated solely within Churches, but manifests mainly outside Church and assumes new external forms, different from those of traditional religions (it is not “invisible”). Boundaries between the sacred and secular, transcendent and immanent vanish. Various signs of spirituality can be observed both in “small worlds” of individuals (for example, traumatic experiences related with death), as well as great congregations (e.g. huge music concerts, sports championships, meetings with the Pope, religious *Events*).

The contemporary field or map of religiosity in Europe has become diverse and pluralised. Next to traditional Christian Churches, there are various new religious movements related and unrelated to Christianity; there are parareligious movements, New Age movements, there is esotericism, astrology, theosophy, miraculous healing, etc. Although new spirituality has not dominated the tendencies in religious transformations yet, this phenomenon is on the rise, in the offensive. The religious landscape of Europe is changing, also due to the influx of immigrants of non-Christian religions. We can assume that in a laicised world, secularism will constantly accompany religiosity and will manifest itself in various forms and varying degrees of confidence. Some believe that the processes of secularization are natural consequences of the clash of modernity and religion. For others, it is a result of the unattractiveness of offers that the existing Christian Churches give. Still others – the most critical group – see it as the symptom of the dawn of religion and fall of Christianity.

⁸² Ibid., p. 400.

End remarks

New forms of religiosity and spirituality, often with no Church or even Christian tones and outlines, provoke criticism from theologians. This new spirituality as religiosity without God, in which everything is concentrated around man, his specific spiritual well-being, which often excludes all forms of Transcendence (“religious satisfaction without God”) or overlooks God. Christianity – they claim – cannot transform itself into some form of psychotherapy or general religious exercise, it cannot be a way of a complete (as much as it gets), good self-fulfilment and self-discovery⁸³.

The Catholic Church acknowledges the problem of secularization as something typical for the West, from where it spreads to the rest of the world. Although from time to time some clearly anti-Christian and anti-religious attitudes appear, secularization generally has a peaceful tone. It pervades people’s everyday lives and shapes a mentality in which God is practically absent. Apart from secularization, the world is also experiencing a rebirth of religiosity. Numerous positive aspects of searching for God and rediscovering the sacred in various religions (including Christianity) are obscured by fundamentalisms which often manipulate religion to justify the use of violence or even terrorism. Also, various new cult forms rise which use religious practices for therapeutic purposes promising prosperity and immediate satisfaction⁸⁴.

New forms of spontaneous spirituality do not originate from institutions but rather from a type of conviction and search for the meaning of one’s own existence. They can be inspired from the top down by various new cultural and ideological currents. These new forms are characterised by a limited reference to Transcendence, or its complete absence, and are often characterized by syncretism based on psychological, therapeutic, magical, or paranormal currents. New forms of religiosity and spirituality in today’s world are a sign of great transformations occurring in contemporary religiosity, which can be interpreted from the perspective of deinstitutionalization (departure from church religiosity), as well as autonomisation of the religious subject, or, finally, as a form of desecularization. Traditional sociology of religion must change both its conceptual apparatus and research methodology for the study these new cultural (ideological) currents in today’s world if it wants to diagnose, interpret and explain it. The occurring processes of religious transformation open new fields of study for a new sociology of religion, but also give a chance to once again determine the relationship between religion and society. Spirituality becomes a common characteristic of post-modern societies, perhaps even a specific socio-cultural megatrend. From the sociological point of view, it must be emphasized that the secularization of Europe is not the only socio-cultural process taking place in the continent.

⁸³ U. Körtner, *Wiederkehr der Religion? Das Christentum zwischen neuer Spiritualität und Gottesvergessenheit*, Gütersloh 2006.

⁸⁴ N. Eterović, *Presentation of the “Lineamenta” of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html

Desecularization is becoming more and more explicit and empirical sociology can no longer not notice it and not try to explain it. The Catholic Church today does not condemn secularism, much less secularization, but it does point to their dangerous consequences and proposes a fuller understanding of the Christian faith that would counterbalance those former processes. Secularization is not some historical necessity, neither is a “secular age”, but people’s choice, and Christianity finds its place and role in all times and social conditions, in modernity and post-modernity as well. In societies of various socio-political systems, there have been some tensions between the Catholic Church and secular government, and there is no basis to think that these tensions would disappear. The social forms of the Church were subjected to change, and what once seemed a dangerous novelty later became an established tradition.

Against all criticism of religion and Church in contemporary world, against bottom-up laicisation processes, religions and Christian Churches still remain (and will be in the future) significant for our civilizations, they still have not lost their position and role in public life. Perhaps the condition of Christian Churches is not as weak as their opponents describe it to be. Empirical studies on the religiosity of Europeans do not always lead to decisive conclusions, and some of the data gathered in such research is to some extent inconsistent. Undoubtedly, however, pluralism, individualism, and new spirituality form significant social processes that are general trends of civilization, greatly affecting the religious and spiritual condition of the contemporary world. It may be that this new spirituality will not always be treated as an alternative to Church religiosity.

New currents in religiosity signify of a peculiar thirst for spirituality in Western European societies. Although all religions relate to certain forms of spirituality, forms of spirituality without religion are manifesting today. There is an increase of interest in spiritual matters without commitment to church institutions (orienting on the sacred without a confessional mediator). It is difficult to reduce the developing forms of new religiosity and spirituality to a common denominator and their interpretations vary in sociological studies. Spirituality is becoming an important social category which has positive connotations but also imprecise contents. The sphere of the sacred is not disappearing, but is rather changing its position and assuming new shapes and forms. The increasing interest in spirituality and unconventional forms of religiosity only confirm the thesis that contemporary man feels a great need to look for meaning and direction in life, also in terms of transcendence. Today’s sociologists of religion are much more cautious in making categorical judgements on the religiosity of contemporary societies than their predecessors from a few decades ago. Under the conditions of secularization, the processes of desecularization are becoming even more explicit in terms of developing autonomous religiosity and spirituality. God is not dead in Europe, as critics of religion claim, but he is not as alive as some theologians and sociologists say. Western Europe is balancing between secularization and desecularization. It is reasonable to ask the questions: what will come after secularization? Yet, it is still too early to bury secularism in the cemetery of prematurely deceased theories.