

BEATA GUZOWSKA
Institute of Philosophy
University of Rzeszow

Contemporary trends of the new spirituality

In postmodern societies, subjected to the processes of secularization there are trends pointing to the progressive development of various forms of spirituality, often referred to as a “new spirituality”. It is caused between other with processes taking place of the individuation of the religion pluralism, of desecularization, lack of individualization as a church, or of influence of the omnipresent consumer culture. If he is appointing many researchers of the contemporary culture, the man more and more often searches for meeting his spiritual needs apart from traditional forms of the religiousness turning to diverse forms religiousnesses and spiritualities a contemporary religious market offers which to him. Great denominations are losing on the popularity, for new forms little requiring the religiousness theologically, but stressing intensity experiences and a direct contact with the divinity.

As a result of occurring modernization processes within the religion and the religiousness diverse proving tendencies are being observed about “»of the spiritual« productivity of the contemporary culture”¹, manifesting itself in various ways of surviving the faith, in a wide range of practical attitudes, in new discovering its spirituality among others. New forms of the spirituality are determined frequently as equivalentents for the religion. Generally, the concept of spirituality is a broad scope as and difficult to re-assert. The so-called new spirituality is opposing in view of the spirituality of refined religions, but a complement can also constitute them. In contrast with the date the religiousness doesn’t have a spirituality of negative connotations, is more individualized, directed on non-human powers, aims at including a deep meaning of the life. The spirituality is giving the possibility of diverse alternatives to the traditional Christianity, is connected around “with ability of the man to transcending of everyday reality, »of crossing of oneself« and of searching for some forms of the spirituality”².

¹ J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2010, p. 195.

² There, p. 210.

Generally contemporary, determined also spirituality as postmodern, can manifest itself in diverse movements connected with ecology, feminism, actions for the world peace, in the search of global ethics, but first of all in the own personality, constant for creating and improving oneself. They frequently are emphasizing that for her diversifying, but also the temporariness are a permanent element of this spirituality. What is characteristic of the contemporary dimension of the spirituality it – how J. Mariański is marking – “depositing the transcendence (dechristianized) – paradoxically in the person and inside natural order. (...) the Divinity of the man is being identified from internal with Ego (differently comprehended) which is an inborn feature of the human nature, forgotten, deformed in the modern culture, that is requiring »of the transformation of consciousness« awareness to the purpose of the return to the source excellence”³.

For one the religion and the spirituality are connected with themselves, and the religion is perceived as something what he provides safe and open structure, in frames which lively spiritual experience can bloom for. For other both this reality is excluding each other, and the spirituality is being practised apart from the religious context, still other obligations and commitments are pointing at the practical way of understanding the spirituality which shows that the spirituality is choice of the certain kind in view of everything what exists, which is becoming a main context of understanding world and acting in it. By virtue of this obligation the person is concentrating on virtues of its association from other, with the natural environment, with one’s legacy and the tradition, with the own body, with the force majeure, with God⁴. Next Ursula King is emphasizing that it is possible to combine the spirituality with a whole range of human experiences, particularly with imagination, the creativity and the ingeniousness of the man, and with his relations – whether it with oneself, from other, or with transcendent reality. The spirituality is combining also with feeling the admiration and the formality, with adoration and the sacrifice, but also with problems of the everyday life and suffering.

The very definition of postmodern spirituality is a wide range-and you can tell that it refers to many of the leading cultural trends. Supporters of the new spirituality are aspiring to it her to be understood and accepted as the realistic proposal of the new look to live and to get to know, of driver to happiness. To accept comprehending the new spirituality it is possible, as the certain kind the existential attitude referring to the intuitive cognition and the highest value full of approval (*Summum Bonum*) manifesting itself by internal experiencing⁵. Calling M. Gołaszewska with the highest

³ There, p. 212-213.

⁴ There, p. 213.

⁵ V. M. Gołaszewska, *Poetyka duchowości*, in: *Oblicza nowej duchowości*, M. Gołaszewska (ed.), Cracow 1995, p. 207. The author is explaining, that understands by the date of the existential conduct “attitude determining the style of living, specific commitment to granting him the

value from one side is pointing at the welfare homogeneity of the value about character like an object – subjective, on the other whereas through so-called *Bonum Absolutum* is accepting sides, that “besides appropriate values for anthroposphere, also a value exists transcending anthropo-sphere, not object-subjective, but transcendental, over – human, axiomatic”⁶.

Amongst trends of the new spirituality undoubtedly it is possible to exchange the so-called bright religiousness which is presenting the symbolism, forms of behaviours and unbound beliefs from institutionalised with religiousness. Knowing religiousness how, A. Wójtowicz is marking, they are taking back to three types of social-cultural forms: firstly, seeking alternative to the human needs and unmet desires constitutes through so far existing forms of the religiousness (institutionalised), secondly, an esoteric Christianity is being expressed, Christianity without the faith, constituting the religiousness apart from the defined institutionally sacred, thirdly, the knowing religiousness is recognizable all over outermost positions to the sacred, that is through the agnosticism, scepticism, as well as “the atheism as the metaphor of the research on radical meanings of the life. The religiousness and the religion knowing, hidden in forms countercultural, alternative forms of the life and the thought is a criticism of the religion and the religiousness, of tradition, enculturation, processes of the socialization and institutional whole”⁷.

The new spirituality is joining the also widely comprehended ecological culture, environmentalism or with ecophilosophy. One of leading representatives of ecophilosophy – H. Skolimowski, he is writing, that the spirituality is it “crystallised essence of the human condition in the given historical period”⁸, however the ecological spirituality is bonding it together into the unity, what spiritual and what’s more,

meaning, whereas from the emotional side it can be hello, worshipping as the highest form of approval”. There, p. 207-208.

⁶ There, p. 208. Simultaneously M. Gołaszewska is emphasizing that that highest value can be understood also to other ways, for example: for theists means the Absolute Value identified with personal God, with only creator of everything what exists and constantly managing everything what created; deists will recognize God as the creator of world, however are rejecting the faith in the fact that constantly he is interfering in fates of world; *Summum Bonum* goes understood also not in the category of personal God, but the value about spiritual character understood to the abstract way, accepting the existence of God – of Ghost not as needs, but resulting from the philosophical speculation; however secular comprehending the spirituality is being brought about to the thesis that there is no God, but one should behave as if existed, “he isn’t leading it to the indifference or isn’t a sign of undergoing fashions, the conformism or the opportunism, but than being in favour of pluralism, tolerance, universalism; all at the same time means the certain kind theoretical approval, without personal employing the *Summum Bonum* concept, faiths in the spirituality”. There, p. 208-209.

⁷ A. Wójtowicz, *Współczesna socjologia religii. Założenia, idee, programy*, Wydawnictwo WSSG w Tyczynie, Tyczyn 2004, Tyczyn 2004, p. 48.

⁸ H. Skolimowski, *Wizje Nowego Millenium*, Wydawnictwo „EJB”, Kraków 1999, p. 233.

what ecological, appealing to the awareness of the unity of world and feeling the identity with everyone with his elements. Making aware oneself of it is supposed to take place through ecological rituals, meditation, and especially through the "contacts with all creature based on empathy"⁹. Ecophilosophical spirituality similarly to the so-called spirituality ecozofical¹⁰ characterized by oneself with also free attitude to different religious traditions, treating them as symbols of the deeper wisdom. Emerging here demands of the return to the common origin of all religions, can have their source also in positions of some representatives of ecophilosophy. H. Skolimowski is underlining, that in the religion "not images of God, but the road of our life are important, the beauty of our purpose, the ability to form the divine root by our living and freeing him from deep inside of us. (...) we are having no other choice, like only to assume that we are God being formed"¹¹.

A current of the ecofeminism, in which above all the role of rituals of the Earth is being stressed is also involved in the ecological spirituality (comprehended as living, self-regulating oneself determined organism with Gaia's¹² name) and critical attitude to the Christianity, the Islam and the Judaism. The recalled commitment results from the fact, that feminist spirituality "(...) is springing from experience both unities with all life forms, as well as of cyclical rhythm of the birth and the death. It is all at the same time deeply eco-friendly and near (...) for spiritual traditions affirming the life and associated with the worship of the Earth"¹³.

⁹ A. Zamojski, *New Age, filozofia, religia i paranauka*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2002, p. 277.

¹⁰ Term ecophilosophy Arne Naess which thinks that at present the time for people to become operative came led "for the entire good of living on this exhausted planet by deepening of our identification with all life forms and with Gaia, with our beautiful, old planet". A. Zamojski, *New Age, filozofia, religia i paranauka*, qtd. ed., p. 273-274. Amongst other representatives ecophilosophy is changing: H. Skolimowski, F. Capra, Teilhard de Chardin, P. Fleming, T. Berry's, J. Lovelock.

¹¹ H. Skolimowski, *Sacred Place to Dwell. Living with Reverence Upon the Earth*, Element Books, Rockport 1993, p. 66, quot. too A. Zamojski, *New Age, filozofia, religia i paranauka*, qtd. ed., p. 278.

¹² The hypothesis for Gaia refers to the spiritual traditions associated with the worship of the Mother Earth and keeping in the dynamic balance assumes all processes occurring on the level of the entire biosphere. world seen through the prism of the hypothesis for Gaia, it self-forming, self-regulating world, world of almost eternal living immune to disruptions and damage. V. L. J. Pełka, *Antropologia nowej duchowości*, in: *Dyktat, protest i integracja w kulturze*, Z. Stachowski (red.), Wydawnictwo WSSG w Tyczynie, Warsaw – Tyczyn 2002, J. Kudasiewicz, *Głęboka ekologia Arne Naessa*, Bielsko-White 1995, M. Ryszkiewicz, *Matka Ziemia w przyjaznym Kosmosie. Gaja i zasada antropiczna w dziejach myśli przyrodniczej*, Warsaw 1994, J.A. Wojciechowski, *Ecology of Knowledge, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy*, Washington 2001.

¹³ F. Capra, *Punkt zwrotny*, Warszawa 1987, p. 67, quot. too L. J. Pełka, *Antropologia nowej duchowości*, in: *Dyktat, protest i integracja w kulturze*, qtd. ed., p. 156.

Supporters of the new spirituality are calling conducting global social reforms for, economic improvement poorest, the care of the natural environment, but first of all transformations letting the awareness the transformation. Transformation of the awareness with sentence M. Ferguson, is taking place at four stages which are being described as: entry point, discovering something new, integration of new beliefs around old, forming a conspiracy¹⁴. Supporters of cultural-social trends creating and shaping the phenomenon of the postmodern spirituality are calling for among others: desire to the self-aggrandizement, transformation of the awareness, aspiration to living in harmony with the nature and the outer space. Many representatives of the postmodernism in the new formula spiritualities perceive the aspiration to infusing world with spirituality and him of dematerialization. Generally postmodernist including the spirituality ponowoczesnej manifests itself above all "convincing about the relative value different faiths, calling for the tolerance and this one search what is linking people seeking the divinity in a way in world, tendency of moving the ethical first elements of the faith to the plan, with emphasizing the importance of personal religious experience, calling for the democratization mechanisms of action of Churches, the readiness for the dialogue from atheistic"¹⁵.

Representatives of postmodernist philosophy, similarly to representatives of the spirituality ponowoczesnej are emphasizing the extraordinary role of the self-aggrandizement in creating the new social order and of "new man". Therefore are willing to sympathize with the culture new, not entirely still fulfilled which is free from any transcendent of settling and entries into force. They are calling the specific kind for paraphrasing the current spirituality, assuming that the spirituality should be free from metaphysical establishments, that is be mine free from spiritual problems connected with the knowledge as well as must cause the specific privatization of the tongue of reflection, that is deprive it of grudge against the universal importance. This paraphrase should allow to the multitude of private languages of reflection each other not competing with oneself as well as should assume the nonmetaphysical, private spirituality, consciously passing – and still ready for putting and the problem solving which until now the metaphysical thought moved, with grudges against the versatility and the need.

Postmodernist spirituality being a result of rejecting traditionally comprehended metaphysics as well as secularizing the contemporary culture, is stressing existential self-creating above all, moving away the ideal of the knowledge handed over by current narrations into the shadow. How he is underlining Rorty and Vattimo walks here fundamentally for finding the indirect way between for total believing

¹⁴ V. also M. Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Los Angeles 1980, J. Makota, *Dążenie New Age do przemiany świadomości*, in: *Oblicza nowej duchowości*, qtd. ed.

¹⁵ A. Szahaj, *Co to jest postmodernizm?*, in: *Postmodernizm. Teksty polskich autorów*, M.A. Potocka (ed.), Publishing company Inter Esse, Kraków 2003, p. 43-44.

oneself for God, but the total devotion oneself individual, subjective preferences, surrender for process of the forming of oneself. Admittedly it isn't possible to talk about the coming into existence private mini – of spiritual cultures, but it what essential admittedly we can stress the right of the individual to own presenting to her alone and of her world¹⁶.

Ideas of the self-aggrandizement, creatures of the new order of the cultural and new man, linking positions of both postmodernists, and representatives of the new spirituality, causes, that for you first are willing to sympathize with the new culture, freed from all transcendent of settling and entries into force. Post-modernists being in favour of an ambiguity and an insolubility, are aspiring for making existence self-transforming oneself, deprived of permanent rules and principles. A self-aggrandizement is supposed to be a specific stimulus of changes of the individual and social awareness, constant "creating oneself", as well as "permanent »happening« like irregular, deprived of taking hold, desubjectivity of freedom which stubbornly is heading for »revealing to old-fashioned« the sphere of the ghost as fully reducible for changeable combinations of physical, specific-sensory elements building amorphous sequences of shows(...), fixing determined manners of human being in world and assuming the »shape temporary« (illusory) reality"¹⁷.

That automatic creativity often constitutes the general category organising the evocation of world and the human life, is marked by also an escape from the need. One should here mark, that "along with moving the spiritual life from the sphere of the need to the sphere of aesthetic abilities, a modern individuation is born. The individual is creating oneself as the individual now – as the unique and unique works of art"¹⁸. Process of discovering oneself, with Ch. Taylor sentence. Of Taylor, is taking place through the expression. This one idea is indicating the specific pattern to the connection between discovering oneself and the artistic creativity which constitutes it on the road to the self-determination, so "if we are becoming ourselves, giving the expression ago what is stuck in us, and if – by design – we are becoming something original, deprived of the model, in that case what we are expressing, isn't an imitation of something already given, but a new creature"¹⁹. Discovering oneself, similarly to the art, is connected with the artistic work and imagination.

Processes of "breaking a spell cast on world" constituted the source of developing of new type of the aesthetic sensitivity, set among others to the ideal of the self-

¹⁶ A. Bielik-Robson, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formułę duchowości*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2000, p. 272-273.

¹⁷ H. Perkowska, *Postmodernizm a metafizyka*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2003, p. 50.

¹⁸ A. Bielik-Robson, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formułę duchowości*, qtd. ed., p. 25.

¹⁹ Ch. Taylor, *Etyka autentyczności*, trans. A. Pawelec, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1996, p. 53.

realization and "party" by the artist of the role "of paradigmatic spiritual leader of the ones which are aspiring for discovering oneself against applicable standards, but also through heightening the awareness of the current evil in modern world, through developing forms of the neutralization of this evil"²⁰. Tearing away in our times taking place many categories from metaphysical premises, is connected with the need of surrendering to the thought their today's usefulness. That attempt been the reason with scepticism in view of metaphysics, is leading frequently for discovering new interpretative applications for her²¹. For the premodern man both the truth, and existing reality were a product of the God's idea, subjected to the possible contemplation. In modern world of permanent creating and the changeability, stressing the need for the self-aggrandizement and self-confirming "it is more and more hard to perceive secular reality as »given to« once and for all with power of the superhuman willpower; what earlier was from above authentically- once and for all with shape of created world, it is necessary now to make reliable with only effort of the self-creation"²².

Self-realization, affirmation of the normal life led for new comprehending its practical purposes. At present many individuals are feeling called for creating an own unique lifestyle, of exercise of own humanity free from external influences about social, religious or political character²³. Possibility of amending of the life on better they are seeing frequently in the process of improving, the change of the awareness, the aspiration to widening own horizons and the self-aggrandizement²⁴. These categories are usually leading for deliberate transforming its identity, as well as put emphasis on aestheticisation of the space and surrounding the life. R. Rorty is underlining,

²⁰ I. Lorenc, *Minima aesthetica. Szkice o estetyce późnej nowoczesności*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2010, p. 32.

²¹ V. there, p. 178., I. Lorenc is underlining, that in the contemporary culture behind the lack of the stability and "permanences of it what real place moving aside in front of our »experience features correspond to« today's, mediation through the technique of aesthetic experience along with his temporary and superficial character". There, p. 182. That temporariness and the noncompatibility of the lightness of the form in view of the weightiness of it, what nonseverable is leading to the fact that they often assume forms of the irony, sneer, cynicism. Also an effect constitutes it marginalize of humanistic values in our reality.

²² Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*, Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa 2000, p. 217.

²³ V.W.M. Nowak, *Spór o nowoczesność w poglądach Charlesa Taylora i Alasdaira MacIntyre'a*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2008, p. 146-147.

²⁴ Rorty is emphasizing that the self-aggrandizement of the man isn't ascribing the life subordinated to it to the idea, what aesthetic. In spite of existing contradictions between different templates for the aesthetic life, he is calling the desire for identifying the self-aggrandizement and the aesthetic life. V. R. Rorty, *Przygodność, ironia i solidarność*, trans. W.J. Popowski, Wydawnictwo SPACJA, Warszawa 1996, p. 138 and next V. also A. Szahaj, *Co to jest postmodernizm?*, in: *Postmodernizm. Teksty polskich autorów*, M. A. Potocka (ed.), Bunkier Sztuki Inter Esse, Kraków 2003, p. 44.

that for ideal of the good life which doesn't already mean ruthless fulfilling a duty and the obedience to universal principles, should "to motivate" priority value of being private, irrational and aesthetic in one's proceedings, in such a step, in which the individual individual wishes itself. Human spirituality from has always been perceived dynamically, that is in categories of the development and the creation.

In the contemporary, consumer culture drawing experiences and pleasure from the life seems to be a basic aim for many people what frequently is leading to the hedonism and ambivalence of moral judgements. Contemporary so-called consumer-collector of impressions, is creating his living space according to aesthetic criteria. He is following the track of objects fitted to experiences he is seeking which, therefore "the aesthetically organised social space is a deposit of pursuit of the experience, too new still with both the not experienced still experience, and surviving more intensive than previous experiences"²⁵.

Utilitarian model of the social life, where pleasure is becoming a principal value is associated with the so-called society of the self-realization, where "free decisions according to the »principle everything is for everyone possible« easily can lead the narcissistic-hedonistic ego, being a centre to becoming widespread particularistic and of individualized society"²⁶. Possibility of choices from the rich range of pragmatic values, the use and drawing pleasure from effects of made choices are closely associated with contemporary understanding liberties. J. Mariański is emphasizing that in the sphere of the axiological pluralism a synthesis of the value is the most beneficial prospect "old" from "new" not entirely still formed. Such a model would be supposed to combine values of the duty and self-realization values, would be supposed to contribute to the increase in the produced tangible property and to inspire to seek new solutions and to assess moral.

New spirituality (postmodern spirituality) presenting the new vision of the man and world, the special stress is putting awarenesses and structures of the social life on the transformation. That transformation is connected above all with increased intensity of the spiritual life and transformations of the quality relying awareness on "for noticing the relativity of world of the sense datum. Esoteric knowledge, starting decks superconsciousness will enable the flow of new energies. The man will change the ratio to oneself and to world. He will start living in harmony back with the outer space. Such a life will open new opportunities and powers before it in the spiritual and material field of culture"²⁷.

²⁵ A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Hegel, romantyczna ironia, ponowoczesność*, in: *Postmodernizm a filozofia. Wybór tekstów*, S. Czerniak, A. Szahaj (ed.), Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 1996, p. 402.

²⁶ J. Mariański, *Kryzys moralny czy transformacja wartości*, in: *Imponderabilia wielkiej zmiany*, P. Sztompka (ed.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa – Kraków 1999, p. 250.

²⁷ T. Buksiński, *New Age a postmodernizm, w: Oblicza nowej duchowości*, qtd. ed., p. 279.

Beata Guzowska – CONTEMPORARY TRENDS OF THE NEW SPIRITUALITY

In our times, trying to re-assert what the spirituality is, one should take into account the widest spectrum of issues to which he/she refers and which are contributing to her. The new spirituality is determining specific "product" of contemporary social-cultural transformations orientated to transcendent destinations, as well as to earthly destinations. Modernization transformations which are occurring for several dozen years West-European culture, as well as field of the religion and religiousnesses contributed to come into existence of different variants of the spirituality. Postmodern of the form of the spirituality – than religious after atheistical – are presenting competitive with oneself models of the life, they are trying to meet the diverse needs of the contemporary man, as well as are aspiring for being the alternative to the traditionally comprehended religiousness.