



Janusz MARIAŃSKI: *Nowa religijność i duchowość —
mit czy rzeczywistość?*
[New Religiosity and Spirituality — a Myth or Reality?].
Warszawa 2019, 265 pp.

Nowa religijność i duchowość – mit czy rzeczywistość? (New Religiosity and Spirituality – a Myth or Reality?) is the title of the latest sociological study (a monograph) written by Janusz Mariański, a famous and accomplished Polish sociologist of religion and morality. The reviewed book can be characterised as both topical and of interest to sociologists of religion, but also for other scholars and scientists, pastors, educators and teachers. As the author claims, new religiosity and new spirituality are to some extent the opposite of institutional religion and are very diverse. They often have no reference to personal or even non-personal God. Researchers describe them as alternative, invisible, privatised, fragmented, and non-binding religiosities (p. 19).

For few decades, new forms of religiosity and spirituality have been addressed as separate subjects of research in many academic disciplines, including the sociology of religion. Nowadays in the so-called postmodern society, as a result of individualisation and privatisation of religion, many alternative types of spirituality and forms of religiosity have emerged, which are independent, and sometimes completely cut-off from religious institutions. In sociology of religion, such terms as patchwork, bricolage, or religion *à la carte* are used to describe this new phenomenon.

The author underlines that nowadays spirituality develops even in secularised societies. Generally speaking, spirituality is linked to some kind of personal experience, at times extraordinary, as something that is experienced directly, without the mediation of the Church. This spirituality

occurs not only within the Churches, but above all in the sphere outside the Church and takes on new forms that are different from those found in traditional religions. Involvement in great religious events and celebrations does not always lead to contacts with one's own Church or religious community (p. 29).

In the conditions of widespread pluralisation and individualisation, the distance to all social institutions, including the distance towards institutionalised religions is increasing. What is institutional is losing its significance in shaping personal religious identities. The erosion of the religious community (especially the Church) is more pronounced than the erosion of religiosity, but the phenomenon nonetheless takes place in both the areas. On the other hand, new forms of religiosity and spirituality, which are appearing more and more clearly, create the possibility for sociologists to develop new paradigms that allow for interpretation and explanation of the transformations taking place in the religious sphere.

In described social context the author asks a few very interesting questions about the status of the sociology of religion in modern sociology, science, or the world: Should not the already emerging sociology of spirituality replace the traditional sociology of religion? Should the two sociological sub-disciplines exist side by side as equal and complementary, or is the sociology of spirituality an integral part of the sociology of religion or the sociology of morality? Towards what direction is the sociology of religion itself changing and how is the sociology of spirituality being developed? (p. 30)

The reviewed monograph contains a theoretical reflection, but it is not entirely devoid of references to empirical research on both traditional and new spirituality. First of all, it tries to show what new spirituality actually is. The concept of new spirituality is not easy to describe using contemporary sociological approaches, and the existing methodology of social sciences is not always suitable for adequately capturing this individual and social phenomenon. Even if new spirituality escapes precise definition, since it cannot be fully captured, measured and explained by scientific formulas, all this makes the issue of broadly understood spirituality even more interesting cognitively than hitherto research of institutionalised forms of religion and religiosity.

As the author claims, the religiosity as such does not disappear, but changes; it is ambivalent, multidimensional and to some extent ubiquitous. Secularisation, desecularisation and new spirituality describe three cultural trends that illustrate what is happening to religion in the modern world. Despite all these changes, Church-oriented religiosity is still present in the lives of individuals and societies, and in some societies, such as Poland or Slovakia, it is still dominant. Non-religious sacred, on the other

hand, appears and develops especially in those areas where institutional religions are not active (p. 98).

New forms of religiosity and spirituality outside the Church are becoming more and more present in the daily lives of many people today. They should not be treated as an incidental, transitory or marginal phenomena. Sociology of religion cannot ignore these facts, but rather subject them to systematic empirical research and in-depth explanations and interpretations. The new spirituality can become an interesting area for sociological research.

Ondrej Štefaňak

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9362-993X>