

## Traditional and Postmodern Spiritualities: Strangers, Rivals or Partners?

Within a rather short time period a huge change has taken place: spirituality has garnered much attention not only on the practical level but has also become interesting to scholars from very different fields: theology, philosophy, sociology, educational sciences, and even para-sciences. As a result, we encounter today several attempts to define spirituality from different perspectives.

In 1983 the Catholic theologian Walter Principe made an important distinction between different levels of spirituality. According to him, first is the *real*, or *existential*, level in which spirituality is experienced and lived in the concrete context by a human being. The second level of spirituality is the *formulation of a teaching about lived reality*. This kind of spirituality is often influenced by an outstanding spiritual person: either by his or her way of life that serves as a pattern for the others, or, by his or her spiritual writings that provide insights and guidance for those who are seeking a more spiritual life. The third level of spirituality is a scientific *study* of the first and second levels. It is spirituality as a discipline which uses the methods and resources of several other branches of knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Less than 15 years later, psychologist Daniel A. Helminiak has given a much more detailed distinction between different levels of spirituality, which reflects the postmodern broadened perception of the subject. To the classical W. Principe's levels, he added another four:

- Spirituality as the *human spiritual nature* as such (which urges human strivings for meaning, purpose and connection in their lives).
- Spirituality as *concern for transcendence* ("the sense that something in life goes beyond the here and now and the commitment to that something"<sup>2</sup>).
- Spirituality as *parapsychology*.
- Spirituality as *spiritualism*.

Principe's understanding of spirituality was still closely related with religion. It was spirituality *inside* a religious framework, a concrete and stable system of beliefs, what I term in this contribution "traditional spirituality." Helminiak, on the other hand, places spirituality in a very broad perspective, not only including traditional and non-traditional practices, but also declaring it to be inherent to human nature. Thus, today we encounter spirituality in various different contexts: as a part of education, psychological help, nursing in the hospital, or even marketing. It is obvious that spirituality has irreversibly outgrown the framework of religion. In today's context, to be spiritual no longer means to be religious - it does not necessarily mean to believe in God; but rather, being spiritual signifies being concerned with non-materialistic values and having a broader and deeper perspective on life. These new – postmodern – spiritualities are not defined by a framework of any tradition, they are spiritualities that break the boundaries and unite, at the same time creating a spiritual market in

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<sup>1</sup> W. Principe, 'Towards Defining Spirituality', *Studies in Religion: imprimé au Canada/printed in Canada* 12/2 (1983) 135-136.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Helminiak, *The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit*, New York 1996, 32.

which each individual can compose a personal spirituality out of spiritual elements that answer the best their spiritual needs and expectations.

Postmodern interest in the spiritual dimension of life has also raised a greater interest in traditional spirituality, yet, the relation between these two is often complicated and not always clear. In this essay I will concentrate on three possible perspectives on this relation.

### **S. M. Schneiders: Religion and spirituality: strangers, rivals, or partners**

In order to examine the relation between traditional and postmodern spiritualities more closely, I find it useful to rely on a model proposed by Sandra M. Schneiders for an analogous relationship between religion and spirituality. In her analysis of the relation between religion and spirituality she has discerned three dominant types of interaction between them: as strangers, rivals or partners.<sup>3</sup>

According to Schneiders, when religion and spirituality are *strangers*, they exist parallel to each other but do not interrelate. They are like two different parallel ways relating with the transcendent. It is the position of those who respect religious beliefs but are not interested in them, or the position of those who are engaged in religious practices but do not think that a spiritual level is very important.<sup>4</sup>

When religion and spirituality are *rivals*, they compete against one another and try to undermine each other's position and value. In that situation, to be more spiritual means to be less religious, and vice versa. This position is the most dominant in contemporary society, where, on one hand, there are those who feel threatened in their traditional religion by alternative spiritualities that seem to have no apparent restrictions (and they lump together in this group, for example, feminists, Eastern spiritualities, New Age sentiments, and others). The position on the other side is maintained by those who repudiate religion: they find religion to be empty, hypocritical, or a reality that has been fossilized, and so they are now searching for new ways to live and express their spirituality outside a dogmatic framework. Today, in this so-called 'battle', orthodox religions are giving way to various alternative spiritualities.

When religion and spirituality are *partners*, then they are "as two dimensions of a single enterprise which, like body and spirit, are often in tension but are essential to each other."<sup>5</sup> In such a relationship, spirituality breathes new life into traditional dogmatized religion and religion provides spirituality with forms of expression.

### **(Im)possible relations between traditional and postmodern spiritualities?**

Since traditional spirituality is closely tied to a particular religious tradition, my contribution will apply Schneiders' framework to the (im)possible relations between traditional and postmodern spiritualities. In doing

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<sup>3</sup> S. M. Schneiders, 'Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?', *The Santa Clara Lectures* 6 (2006) 2.

<sup>4</sup> Schneiders, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Schneiders, 2-3.

so, I will investigate whether these spiritualities have any points of contact between them, whether they are mutually exclusive, or perhaps, whether they might be able to collaborate.

### 1. Strangers: “subjective-life” and “life-as”

During the last decades, religion has radically changed its character: it has become less visible, more privatized, and individually shaped;<sup>6</sup> orthodox religious forms are giving way to non-traditional ones. Sociologists relate this contemporary religious change to the growing individualization of our society which objects to the acceptance of authorities and traditions *and* proclaims moral individualism.

In today’s context, individualization has two main sides: either it is seen as a liberating process (liberation from old stubborn patterns of life, patriarchal moral norms and values, etc.), or it is perceived by traditional religions as a threat to the well-being and integrity not only of religious communities but of the society as such. Our position in this paper is neither to judge nor defend either of these positions, but rather to see how and why this phenomenon changes spirituality.

Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead have formulated a thesis of individualization that states that the religious change and secularization are the results of the “the massive subjective turn of modern culture’ [that] favours and reinforces those ... forms of spirituality which resource unique subjectivities and treat them as a primary source of significance, and undermine those ... forms of religion which do not.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, according to this thesis, changes in the culture and society have generated different expectations for religious life, which are often answered by new spiritualities and seldom by organized religion. Due to that, the popularity of new spiritualities has markedly increased whereas belonging to a traditional religion has widely decreased. But is it really the case?

In order to better understand changes in religion and spirituality on the individual level, Heelas and Woodhead make a distinction between two ways of life: *life-as* and *subjective-life*. *Life-as* represents life lived in term of duties and obligations. It also comprises traditional forms and implied roles of community. *Subjective-life* is “life lived by reference to one’s own subjective experiences,” that are represented by emotions, memories, sentiments, passions, states of mind, and various sensations. Such “subjectivities of each individual become ... the unique source of significance, meaning and authority.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, *life-as*, which also stands for religion or traditional spirituality within religion, promotes subordination of *subjective-life* to the ‘higher good’ or transcendent authority. *Subjective-life*, by contrast, represents postmodern spirituality which is outside organized religion.

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<sup>6</sup> D. Houtman/P. Mascini, ‘Why Do Churches Become Empty, While New Age Grows?’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002) 458.

<sup>7</sup> P. Heelas/L. Woodhead, *Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Malden MA/Oxford 2005, 78.

<sup>8</sup> Heelas/Woodhead, *Spiritual Revolution*, 2-4.

The subjective turn has not yet affected all levels of western culture; that is why the subjective-life and life-as forms live side by side in our society. However, this generates a fundamental clash of values in our culture: those that promote unique subjectivities and those that are externally imposed by having to live a goal-oriented life.<sup>9</sup> Our society is still ordered according to old – life-as – roles, duties, rituals, traditions, offices and expectations to which we have to submit as citizens, employees, students, etc. These external life models and rules are supported and imposed by various institutions, such as the State, the Law, employers. Yet, free time and personal life no longer fall under the control of these external institutions and therefore become the space of liberation from standardized life. Family and friendship roles and models, personal development, beliefs, worldviews, etc. belong already to the subjective-life, where the sole meaning-giving subject is the person itself.

Since subjective values moved from counter-culture to mainstream culture after the 1960s, religion has become a personal realm and, thus, it has fallen under the judgement of personal choice. The “sin” then, of organized religion and traditional spirituality, as it is perceived, is their imposition of particular life roles and values, worldviews and formations that, in the present context, clash with contemporary core values. In this way, religion falls under the tendency of a larger process in which social changes since 1960s have conditioned the decline of hierarchically structured and communal congregational activities, such as men’s clubs, traditional women’s organizations, political parties, and others.<sup>10</sup> Christian communities were not immune and exceptional in this social development. Thus, the decline in congregational activities is mostly caused by decline in life-as values and, as the survey-based study by Dean Hoge and David Roozen on church growth and decline argues, a much more important factor in disaffiliation from congregational domain is loyalty to values that are perceived to be irreconcilable with those of the congregation, rather than a loss of belief.<sup>11</sup>

Growing and radicalizing individualization, caused by the subjective turn of our culture, is the main factor not only for the decline in religious congregational activities and development of secularization, but it is also the reason for a religious change, mainly, the rise of postmodern spiritualities. Heelas and Woodhead argue that postmodern spiritualities are “a relatively specialized or distinctive variant of the much more widespread culture of subjective wellbeing.”<sup>12</sup> That is to say, new spirituality is not a counter-current to the postmodern flow but, on the contrary, is one of the many possible ways to live and promote subjective-life. This spirituality attracts those people who are already involved with the more prevalent culture and are searching for activities that reflect their way of life and, at the same time, taking them further and deeper - to its spiritual level.

Subjective wellbeing culture, according to Heelas and Woodhead, refers to “all those cultural provisions or activities which explicitly dwell on enhancing the quality of subjective-life,”<sup>13</sup> and, first of all, the psychological quality: feeling well about oneself and about the surrounding world. Promotion of wellbeing has become one of the main requirements of the contemporary market: goods or services that used to be merely practical and useful

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>11</sup> D. R. Hoge/D. A. Roozen, *Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978*, Philadelphia 1979.

<sup>12</sup> Heelas/Woodhead, *Spiritual Revolution*, 83.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

today open the 'gate' to new life, to harmony with the self and the whole world, or help to feel the real taste of life, etc. Subjective culture is no longer satisfied with necessities and facts. For the contemporary consumer, the emotions and feelings that purchases arouse in them have become more important than even the intended function of these items.

The individualization thesis suggests that traditional spiritualities attract and are supported mostly by those people who are sympathetic to life-as values. At the same time, they have not succeeded to retain and attract people who are well-affected by the subjective turn. Therefore, we could say that traditional and postmodern spiritualities may live side by side without too much interaction, in Schneiders' words - as complete strangers.

## 2. Rivals: Tradition vs. Intuition

No one would deny today that postmodernism and postmodernity have dethroned the rationalistic and materialistic self and replaced it with the expressive, humanistic and experiential self. Already in 1978 Christopher Lasch observed that "[e]conomic man himself [*sic.*] has given way to the psychological man of our times."<sup>14</sup> The self is still the beginning and end of everything – it is the main prism through which everything is evaluated and given a meaning. Yet, instead of one centre of universe, today we live either in a decentralized cosmos or in multi-centred personal universes.

In this context, rationalisation and secularization of religion were superseded by an intuitional and experience-based holistic spirituality. Such a central position of the self is the cause of various problems in postmodern spirituality. Following sociologist Steve Bruce, I would discern two of them: diffuseness and the commodification of spirituality.

### (a) Diffuse spirituality

Bruce terms the type of ideological belief system where an individualistic epistemology produces tolerance and relativism *diffuse religion* or *belief*. Postmodern spirituality easily falls under this category with its emphases on the experiential nature of spiritual knowledge and its eclectic choice of different beliefs. Bruce believes that diffuseness signifies the final stages of secularization instead of announcing an optimistic rebirth of spirituality. He also claims that diffuse beliefs are precarious because they (1) do not contain any control mechanism and uniting power, (2) are not able to have a social impact, (3) do not require personal conversion and commitment, (4) have no transmission mechanism, and (5) tend to compromise, which leads to the dilution of belief.<sup>15</sup> It is worth taking a closer look at these claims.

Diffuse belief has no future because, as Sandra Schneiders says, it "makes no doctrinal claims, imposes no moral authority outside one's own conscience, creates no necessary personal relationships or social

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<sup>14</sup> Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York 1978, xvi.

<sup>15</sup> S. Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Oxford/Malden MA 2002, 92-240.

responsibilities.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, it lacks the essential core which consists of sacrifice, commitment and community. This triad creates a control mechanism that enables a belief system to remain intact as well as to build a bond necessary for community.<sup>17</sup>

Postmodern spiritualities require neither commitment nor sacrifice. So even if there are some groups or ‘communities’ united by similar beliefs or practices, their “bonds are weak because they are entirely voluntary and their voluntary nature is repeatedly asserted.”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, any belief or practice can be easily changed or abandoned whenever it seems not to work for the practitioner.

Thirdly, for the postmodern person individual preferences are the highest authority. Bruce calls postmodern spiritualities “a world in which individuals select from a global cafeteria of ideas, rituals and therapies that appeal to them.”<sup>19</sup> This does not give much space for genuine inner growth and development because these involve commitment and external guidance. Besides that, postmodern beliefs and practices usually do not require a conversion, which is a key concept in traditional religions that implies a radical change of the person. Without conversion and commitment, a postmodern person can easily go from one spiritual path to another without enduring any real individual impact from any of them.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, diffuse beliefs, instead of being transmitted intact like coherent belief systems, have to be reinvented by each generation. This does not deny postmoderns’ need to share their views with similar-minded people or to communicate a personally discovered truth to their offspring. However, the core truth of postmodern spirituality – that something is true only if it is proved to be so by personal experience – does not allow one to impose personal beliefs and truths on anybody else. This, according to Bruce, will result in even more diffuse beliefs and, finally, in a completely secularized western society that will be indifferent to any religious or spiritual issues.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the lack of tradition within postmodern spiritualities leads not only to a variety of different beliefs and practices but also to the very dilution of beliefs and practices. As Jeremy Carrette and Richard King have claimed, “[p]rivatized spirituality emerges ... as the new *cultural prozac* bringing transitory feelings of ecstatic happiness and thoughts of self-affirmation, but never addressing sufficiently the underlying problem of social isolation and injustice.”<sup>22</sup> Misuse of a compromising nature of postmodern spirituality, according to this critique, provides only spiritual superficiality and an illusion of personal growth.

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<sup>16</sup> S. M. Schneiders, ‘Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum’, *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 3 (2003) 173.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce, 95: “Shared beliefs sustain the community, which in turn extracts commitment and sacrifice from the individual. Sacrifice reinforces the sense of commitment and of belonging to a community, which strengthens the beliefs.”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>22</sup> J. Carrette/R. King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, London/New York 2005, 77.

### *(b) Commodified spirituality*

It is no secret that the individual's well-being and health of body-soul-mind are the main goals in postmodern spiritual quests. A person chooses one or other spiritual path to make a personal life synthesis precisely because that path makes him or her feel good, helps them to be a better person, assists in becoming the true self – it simply “works” for him or her. Looking at the history of traditional religious spiritualities, existential anxiety for deeper meaning of the surrounding world or for inner peace, have always been the starting points for deep spiritual quests and the inner journeys that follow. Yet, in traditional spiritualities, such a journey was towards a closer relationship with the divine reality (in monotheistic religions, with a personal God); happiness, inner harmony, spiritual wisdom and many other positive fruits of this relationship were considered to be – if I may call it this – “by-products” but never its main objectives. Thus, what for millennia was an ancillary outcome of a lived relationship with the transcendent dimension, has today become the main goal of spiritual practices. Concern with life in the here-and-now leads to both positive and negative consumption of life.

Looking from the positive perspective, life is ‘consumed’ or ‘consuming’ when it is lived in its fullest sense (*Carpe diem!*) and is “put to work, to cultivate what it is to *be* alive.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, the critics of postmodern spirituality state that the consumptive perspective of inner life has led to a commodification of spirituality itself.<sup>24</sup> In the last few decades, the experience has become a key product of the market in western societies. As a result, the great majority of necessities and activities of postmodern spirituality have been converted into consumer products.

Consequently, whatever values and effectiveness postmodern spiritualities might possess, in the end it is all “ravaged and dissipated by consumption.”<sup>25</sup> The biggest paradox is that, proclaiming to combat modern materialist values and the economically-oriented fragmented self, these spiritualities very often end up indirectly and directly supporting, even contributing, to those phenomena; their “emphasis on immediacy, spontaneity and novelty fragments, rather than augments, the symbolic integrity of the self.”<sup>26</sup>

It is clear that from this perspective, traditional and postmodern spiritualities will be unable to agree with one another's premises, like ‘rivals’ on opposite sides.

### *3. Partners?*

From what we have seen thus far, it seems that traditional and postmodern spiritualities could never work hand in hand as two equal partners. But it is worth exploring whether a partnership might be possible, and what form that might take.

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<sup>23</sup> P. Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, Malden MA 2008, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Carrette/King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, S. Bruce, *God is Dead*.

<sup>25</sup> Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> R.L.M. Lee/S.E. Ackerman, *The Challenge of Religion after Modernity: Beyond Disenchantment*, Aldershot 2002, 121.

In order to better understand Schneiders' proposed partnership model between religion and spirituality, we will follow George Simmel's analysis of the concepts of religion and religiosity.<sup>27</sup> According to Simmel, there is a continuous dialectic of form and content, which is reflected in a relation between religion and religiosity: religiosity is perceived as a content which creates religion, and religion is seen as the form which informs that content.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as religion without religiosity would be an empty form without content, so religiosity, as a kind of transcendent experience (though, not necessarily religious), needs a special language – forms of expression – that only religion can provide. Without religion, religiosity is condemned to be mute or, in the best case, very vaguely expressed, e.g., as belief in or experience of “something.” As Kate Hunt, in her research on the spirituality of people who do not go to church, has observed, “people have no language with which to describe their experiences of the sacred or their beliefs. The Church itself has struggled to find an adequate language to speak of the divine, so it is hardly surprising that those who have had little or no contact with religious tradition find themselves literally lost for words.”<sup>29</sup>

Following Simmel's line, we could draw two possible approaches to the role of religion: a) religion as merely an institutionalisation of religiosity or simply a tool for expression, or b) religion as the “form” that not only lends its language (symbols) in order to facilitate expressions of transcendent experiences but also the “form” that, through its language, deeply structures those experiences.

The first kind of “partnership” between religion and spirituality is very common today; it seems to be the most appealing to a postmodern person and is supported by contemporary pluralistic theology which claims that there is one spirituality with many different ways of expression that are embodied by different religions. From this perspective, any religion is just a means for expression and, therefore, all religions have the same value and can be equally helpful tools. In that case, “spiritual vocabulary” can be easily created as a mixture from different religious traditions, depending on personal taste, likes and dislikes. On the one hand, this leads to religious tolerance and respect for other beliefs, yet on the other, by ignoring the formative aspect of religious language, it contributes to religious syncretism and eclecticism that creates more inner confusion than solving existing spiritual dilemmas.

From the second perspective, religion and spirituality are bound in a much closer interactive relationship in which they mutually influence one another. On one end, liveliness and force of spirituality condition religion and its forms of expression: “contents do change the forms.”<sup>30</sup> On the other, by entering into the language of religion, we allow religion to carry the power of directing and structuring our spiritual experiences by its symbolic order.

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<sup>27</sup> I. Varga, ‘Georg Simmel: Religion and Spirituality’, *A Sociology of Spirituality*, eds. K. Flanagan/P. C. Jupp, Aldershot 2007, 145-160.

<sup>28</sup> G. Simmel, *Essays on Religion*, trans./eds. H.J. Helle/L. Nieder, New Haven CT 1997, 150.

<sup>29</sup> K. Hunt, ‘Understanding the Spirituality of People who Do Not Go to Church’, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*, eds. G. Davie/P. Heel/L. Woodhead, Aldershot 2003, 163.

<sup>30</sup> I. Varga, ‘Georg Simmel: Religion and Spirituality’, 148.



In Louis Dupré's words, "we allow our ideas, values, and customs to be shaped by a given order, in the very process of transforming that order."<sup>31</sup>

Neither the first nor second approach to "partnership" between religion and spirituality is satisfying for the relation between traditional and postmodern spiritualities. The first approach merely instrumentalizes traditional spirituality since it needs tradition only as a means of expression. The second one seeks to frame postmodern spiritualities within its traditional forms. It is not acceptable either from a traditional perspective (who would view postmodern commodification and diffuseness as transgressions) or from a postmodern view (due to their evaluation of traditional spirituality as dogmatism). However, I believe, there must be a third way which could in some sense satisfy both parties. My suggestion would be a mutual constructive critique approach, where postmodern spiritualities and religion engage each other with constructive challenges. Let me elaborate.

The subjective turn of the West with all its consequences is a factor that has strongly changed our culture, society and especially private lives of individuals. In spite of how critical traditional structures of society and religion can be about growing subjectivity, they cannot deny or ignore the change that has already taken place. Thus, today the Christian community is challenged by postmodern spiritualities to respond to the new situation by developing an integral spirituality that would remain within the Christian tradition and at the same time would answer, as Ursula King says, to "new ideas about transformation and integration, about embodiment, inclusiveness of language and praxis, about re-imagining and renaming the Ultimate Reality." At the same time, it would offer "a growing sense of interdependence and sacredness of all life, ... of our special human relationship to the whole earth and the cosmos"<sup>32</sup> and to the wounded, fragmented and empty selfhood of the postmodern person. Thus, postmodern spiritualities in some sense mirror spiritual longings, quests and sensitivities of people immersed in postmodern culture. No matter how sceptical traditional spirituality may be of the postmodern forms of expression of these spiritual needs, it can no longer ignore their content, which can sometimes even evoke forgotten or neglected riches of traditional spirituality (for example, the search for one's true self within the Christian mystical tradition).

Nonetheless, the Christian tradition maintains that real spiritual growth and development require guidance, support and encouragement from outside and therefore cannot be merely closed within its subjective domain. Moreover, a chosen spiritual path has to be consistent and possess critical tools. One of the main tools for such is the community, which is a source of support, encouragement and objective criticism. It is also a place of thoughtful and critical systematic theology, which is a crucial element in supporting coherence of faith and morality "that are integral to any spirituality."<sup>33</sup> Finally, traditional spirituality has always been a discipline whose results are based on the praxis of particular sets of rules and beliefs. Thus, even if postmodern spiritualities have opened up new horizons for the spiritual searches and have tried to apply old traditions to new

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<sup>31</sup> L. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture*, New Haven CT/London 1993, 11.

<sup>32</sup> U. King, 'Spirituality in a Postmodern Age: Faith and Praxis in New Context', *Faith and Praxis in a Postmodern Age*, ed. U. King, London 1998, 108.

<sup>33</sup> S. M. Schneiders, 'Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum', 176-177.

life situations, from the perspective of traditional spirituality, the postmodern spine is not strong enough to guarantee what it promises - a coherent non-fragmented selfhood – because it lacks these supporting elements. The traditionalists' critique towards postmodern spiritualities is therefore often harsh and rather negative, which evokes a spontaneous rejection from the side of postmodern spiritualities. However, hopefully a genuine spiritual search will allow spiritual seekers of today to rediscover directly (as a member of a Christian community) or indirectly (if outside an institutionally defined community) the richness and experience that two millennia of Christian spiritual tradition has to offer.

## **Conclusion**

In this contribution I have tried to view possible and impossible relationships between traditional and postmodern spiritualities by applying Schneiders' proposed model on religion and spirituality. Today we mostly encounter these postmodern and traditional spiritualities as either strangers or rivals. These spiritualities are seen as two completely different value systems that may live next to each other without any interaction; or, they are perceived as a threat to one another.

Schneiders has argued that the best relationship between spirituality and religion is partnership. However, this model does not work for the interaction between traditional and postmodern spiritualities due to their incompatibility. The weakness of postmodern spiritualities is that they are fluid and individually defined. This is a problem for partnership with traditional spirituality which although individually experienced is community oriented and guided. I therefore have proposed a mutual constructive critique approach which challenges both parties to learn from each other in a non-recriminating way. I believe that postmodern spiritualities are neither an indication of the death of traditional spirituality nor the final stage of secularization. Though it has both attractive sides and hidden dangers, I believe that their genuine thirst for the "authentic" and "true" may finally direct people to spirituality resting on a firm spiritual tradition supported by a community that believes in a personal God.