

A FEW THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUALITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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The paper aims to examine the place and the role of spirituality in the contemporary world.

Keywords: spirituality, human being, contemporary world, human existence.

ДЕКІЛЬКА ДУМОК ПРО ДУХОВНІСТЬ У СУЧАСНОМУ СВІТІ

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Метою статті є дослідження місця та ролі духовності в сучасному світі.

Ключові слова: духовність, людина, сучасний світ, людське буття.

The contemporary picture of the world resembles a puzzle that we are trying to put together, which, in turn, makes us to rethink the very concept of a human being. The rational individual, “captivated” within the framework of stable institutions, is replaced by a personality who is much less predictable, hungry for life and change, whose soul takes spiritual delight. The era described by Lyotard as the end of the great meta-narrative gave rise to a new reality, in which everything is an interpretation: we create our own reality by interpreting the world around us. One of the forms of self-identification in contemporary world is an attempt to break through to our true self, to the lost Eden, which is seen as a way of self-realization of spiritually oriented planet dwellers.

In the 21st century, spirituality might be seen as a kind of a bridge between secular and religious worldviews, and there is enough room for many perspectives: “Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred”¹.

Spirituality is a transcendent journey to something bigger than us. Many religious institutions, their leaders and followers become rigid, preach about their exclusivity, and claim superiority over others². Thus, religions are turned into ideologies and are not helpful anymore.

¹ Rothenberg, J. (ed.). (1985). *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetry from Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania*. Los Angeles and London, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 672.

² Culliford, L. (2015). The Big Mistakes of Religion and Secularism. *Psychology Today*. URL: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/201503/the-big-mistakes-religion-and-secularism>

Lacking spiritual enquiry and development, people move away from religions. But the secular world and its queen – science – failed to replace it: classical rationality turned a person into an element of a huge economic, social, political, ideological machine, and “selfish, material and commercial values overtake spiritual and humanitarian values”³. It is time for contemporary humans to bring themselves in touch with a spiritual domain, with a sacred reality.

The search for the “self”, purpose and meaning of life, comprehension of multidimensionality and complexity of a human being largely depends on the worldview of an individual, on his/her level of spiritual awakening. Many people associate their existence predominantly with the physical world. A “physical person” cannot realize his/her purpose and final destination perceiving the physical dimension of the world only. However, sooner or later they begin to feel the presence of something greater – the Eternal Human. Thus, they embark on the path of their spiritual development in order to return to their true self.

Almost all religious-philosophical teachings argue that thought (idea) is primary and matter is secondary. It is impossible to understand the divine nature of a human without realizing his/her multidimensional structure. The structure of a human and the universe are identical: each plane of the universe or human body has its own shell – subtle or physical. Each subtle body has its own consciousness, its own potential, due to which the ability to control certain parts of its consciousness arises.

The idea that human beings are multidimensional, i.e., that beyond their physical bodies, humans have other, subtler bodies, due to which they can interact with the universe, is very ancient. Understanding of a human being as a complex multidimensional phenomenon laid the foundations for the development of many Eastern and Western esoteric schools, such as schools of Yoga, Buddhism, Zen, Sufism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Occultism, Kabbalah, Pythagorean school, ancient Greek mysticism, Gnostic Christian tradition, etc.

Modern Western esotericism is also based on the concept of subtle bodies: after physical death, a human continues to live in the subtle bodies, then the Soul, or Spirit, returns to the “real home” to “rest” before the next reincarnation (however, the details may vary). Contemporary spiritual teachers and researchers continue the ancient tradition. For example, Little in his book “Yoga of the Subtle Body: A Guide to the Physical and Energetic Anatomy of Yoga”⁴ uses somatic concepts as grounds for exploring the subtle body. “Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the

³ Culliford, L. (2015). The Big Mistakes of Religion and Secularism. *Psychology Today*. URL: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/201503/the-big-mistakes-religion-and-secularism>

⁴ Little, T. (2016). *Yoga of the Subtle Body: A Guide to the Physical and Energetic Anatomy of Yoga*. Shambhala, 304.

West: *Between Mind and Body*” edited by Samuel and Johnston explores subtle-body practices from a variety of perspectives⁵. Mead examines the doctrine of the subtle body in the West⁶. Each tradition describes a human and his/her bodies from different angles, and none fully describes it which is probably impossible.

Acknowledgments

I am thankful for the support from the Institute of International Education’s Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) and the Graduate School for Social Research, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences for enabling my research.

⁵ Samuel, G., Johnston, J. (2013). *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*. Routledge, 290.

⁶ Mead, G.R.S. (2005). *The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition*. Cosimo Classics, 116.