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THE QUEST FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORIES
ON SPIRITUALITY

*Spirituality has become a global phenomenon,
studied in various disciplines.¹*

Science must have strong nerves and must not be willing to provide people with a meaningful existence. What is more, science often has to demystify experiences of meaningful existence as ‘beguilement’. The growing scientific knowledge of the world leads to more logical coherence in modern society, but not more meaningful coherence.² What Wiebe wrote ten years ago about ‘the politics of religious studies’ seems to have become mainstream on campus. Most colleagues in our faculties of religious studies and theology share this viewpoint.

It could now be regarded as the irony of the history of science that the loss of meaning due to the scientific demystification of the world has placed the call for experiences of meaningful existence all the more higher on the agenda of many scientific disciplines. Management studies,³ psychology,⁴ medicine,⁵ educational sciences,⁶ the arts⁷ etc. currently all focus on research questions which

¹ K. Waaijman, ‘Spirituality: A multifaceted phenomenon’, in: *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007), 1-113, here 1.

² See D. Wiebe, *The politics of religious studies*, London: MacMillan Press, 1999.

³ Th. Dienberg, G. Fasel & M. Fischer (Eds.), *Spiritualität & Management*, Münster: Lit, 2007; R.A. Giacalone & C.L. Jurkiewicz (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance*, New York: Sharpe, 2003.

⁴ A. Bucher, *Psychologie der Spiritualität: Handbuch*, Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2007; R.F. Paloutzian & C.L. Park, *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality*, New York: Guilford, 2005.

⁵ See, for instance, the special issue ‘Religiosity/Spirituality and Behavioral Medicine: Investigations Concerning the Integration of Spirit with Body’ of the *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 30 (2007), no. 4.

⁶ M. Souza, L.J. Francis, J. O’Higgins-Norman & D.G. Scott, *International handbook of education for spirituality, care and wellbeing*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2009; E. Roehlkepartain, P. King, L. Wagener & P. Benson (Eds.), *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence*, London: Sage, 2005.

⁷ For an example, see I. Hentschel & K. Hoffmann, *Spiel, Ritual, Darstellung*, Münster: Lit (Beiträge zu Theater und Religion 2), 2005; I. Hentschel & K. Hoffmann, *Theater, Ritual, Religion*, Münster: Lit (Beiträge zu Theater und Religion 1), 2004.

have to do with authentic experiences of meaningful existence. Whether this is inspired by the intention to use experiences of meaningful existence as a resource for a humane society (applied spirituality), pure scientific curiosity, or other reasons is at present of little relevance to me. I am simply fascinated by the fact itself that many scientific disciplines have, in effect, made lived spirituality their object of study.⁸ And I take this fact as a starting point to ask how spirituality can be understood and studied collectively.

I shall begin by considering the many and very diverse forms of lived spirituality as cultural constructions (1). As a second step, I shall examine in which cases cultural constructions can be regarded as constructions of lived spirituality (2).

1. Lived Spirituality as a Cultural Construction

*Spiritualities are legion.*⁹

Those who involve themselves in the scientific study of lived spirituality have to deal with, amongst others, experiences of the inexpressible, which are also denoted as experiences of the mystical. It is exactly these experiences which have drawn a lot of attention in the scientific debate of the 20th century. Does the inexpressible have to be regarded as an invariable core of lived spirituality, or is the experience of the inexpressible, like all other human experience, a product of the cultural context?

The scientific debate on this question has been intense.¹⁰ Advocates of an invariable core in all spiritual experience, which is independent of culture and history, stress in particular the so-called *pure consciousness events* (PCEs). These moments of clear consciousness without content are said to lie at the heart of all spiritualities. Following Steuco, Leibniz and Huxley, this core is described as *philosophia perennis*, an inexpressibility that transcends all cultural and religious diversity. In its early days, the perennialistic line of inquiry posited, somewhat romantically, that all mystical experiences must be therefore identical in their inexpressibility. Later this viewpoint was modified: although the mystical experience is always the same in its inexpressible core, it is still expressed differently, depending on the cultural environment in which it takes place. It was believed

⁸ Kees Waaijman discusses philosophy, religious studies, literary sciences, anthropology, theology, history, psychology, sociology, natural sciences, workplace, health care and education in 'Spirituality: A multifaceted phenomenon'.

⁹ R.L. Lawrence, 'Four fatal flaws in recent spirituality research', in: *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 12 (2002), 125-130, here 128.

¹⁰ Compare P. Widmer, 'Die angelsächsische Mystikdebatte', in: K. Baier (Ed.), *Handbuch Spiritualität*, Darmstadt: WBG, 2006, 49-71; P. Widmer, *Mystikforschung zwischen Materialismus und Metaphysik: Eine Einführung*, Freiburg: Herder, 2004.

that mystical experiences could be subdivided into universal types and classes. In its most recent, post-constructivist version, this line of research bases itself on a form of relative constructivism, and continues to defend only the possibility of immediate experiences.¹¹

Another line of research, constructivism, emphasises that there are no pure, immediate experiences,¹² and that also experiences of the inexpressible are mediated culturally, implying that they actually ought to be studied as cultural constructions. Steven T. Katz, one of the most important proponents of constructivism, denies the existence of an independent core of mystical experience. He states that there only exists such a thing as the mysticism of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, the Islam etc.¹³ According to this line of research, not only *before* and *after* experiencing the inexpressible do cultural sets have a governing influence, but also *during* the experience itself: mystical experiences *recondition* rather than *decondition* the consciousness. In addition, not all spiritual or mystical movements emphasise that the experience of the inexpressible constitutes the core of what should be regarded as lived spirituality.

This debate between perennialists and constructivists has only partly penetrated the empirical disciplines that concern themselves with the study of spirituality. Whereas humanities scholars have flocked in increasing numbers to the constructivist point of view,¹⁴ empirical research often continues to adhere to a rather naive perennialist position: most empirical studies into spirituality still assume that spirituality, as a general human phenomenon, can be analysed in terms of a small number of universal components.¹⁵ This does not mean, by the way, that the focus is mainly, or at all exclusively, on the experience of the inexpressible.

Both qualitative and functional components of spirituality are perceived and analysed as universal in these studies. The qualitative components of spirituality

¹¹ Compare M.B. Woodhouse, 'On the possibility of pure consciousness', in: R.K.C. Forman (Ed.), *The problem of pure consciousness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, 254-268; N. Prigge & G.E. Kessler, 'Is mystical experience everywhere the same?', in: Forman, *The problem of pure consciousness*, 269-287.

¹² S.T. Katz, 'Language, epistemology, and mysticism', in: Idem, *Mysticism and philosophical analysis*, London: Sheldon Press, 1978, 22-74: 26.

¹³ Katz, *Mysticism and philosophical analysis*; Idem, *Mysticism and religious tradition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983; Idem, *Mysticism and language*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

¹⁴ P. Almond, 'Mysticism and its contexts', in: Forman, *The problem of pure consciousness*, 211-235. Almond explains that this does not happen purely on the basis of arguments, but also because of a shift in paradigms.

¹⁵ See, for instance, the overview of extensive empirical research into spirituality of Bucher, *Psychologie der Spiritualität*. For criticism of empirical approaches to spirituality, see: E. Hense, 'Reflections on conceptual definition and empirical validation of the spiritual sensitivity scale', in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 19 (2006), 63-74.

that have been researched are, for example, the religious experience and the relation with God, as described by, amongst others, Paloutzian & Ellison,¹⁶ and Hall & Edwards.¹⁷ Spirituality as an experience of feeling connected with all life and the entire cosmos can be found in Piedmont,¹⁸ and Gomez & Fisher.¹⁹ Daaleman & Frey²⁰ describe spirituality as inner strength and self-activation. Spirituality as meditation and prayer has been studied by Goldsmith.²¹ Spirituality as social involvement takes a central role in the research of Stanczak & Miller,²² whereas Kohls²³ has concerned himself with spirituality as paranormal experience. Without a doubt, these researchers do stress the possible qualitative components of spirituality, yet at the same time they fail to take other components into account.

As regards functional components, research has been carried out on, for instance, spirituality as a buffer against stress by Kim & Seidlitz.²⁴ Walsh et al.²⁵ have looked at spirituality as a form of consolation after bereavement. Spirituality as a means of coping in case of serious illness has been analysed particularly often, by, amongst others, Kaczorowski,²⁶ Mehnert, Rieß & Koch,²⁷ and

¹⁶ R.F. Paloutzian & C.W. Ellison, 'Loneliness, spiritual well-being, and the quality of life', in: L.A. Peplau & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Loneliness*, New York: Wiley, 1982, 224-237.

¹⁷ T.D. Hall & K.J. Edwards, 'The spiritual assessment inventory: A theistic model and measure for assessing spiritual development', in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002), 341-357.

¹⁸ R.L. Piedmont, 'Does spirituality represent the sixth factor of personality? Spiritual transcendence and the five-factor model', in: *Journal of Personality* 67 (1999), 985-1013.

¹⁹ R. Gomez & J.W. Fisher, 'Domains of spiritual well-being and development and validation of the spiritual well-being questionnaire', in: *Personality and Differences* 35 (2003), 1975-1991.

²⁰ T.P. Daaleman & B.B. Frey, 'The Spirituality Index of Well-being: A new instrument for health-related quality of life research', in: *Annals of Family Medicine* 2 (2004), 499-503.

²¹ M. Goldsmith, *Knowing me, knowing God: Exploring your spirituality with Myers-Briggs*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

²² G.C. Stanczak & D.E. Miller, *Engaged spirituality: Spirituality and social transformations in mainstream American religious traditions*, Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 2002.

²³ N.B. Kohls, *Außergewöhnliche Erfahrungen: Blinder Fleck der Psychologie? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit außergewöhnlichen Erfahrungen und ihrem Zusammenhang mit geistiger Gesundheit*, Münster: Lit, 2004.

²⁴ Y. Kim & L. Seidlitz, 'Spirituality moderates the effect of stress on emotional and physical adjustment', in: *Personality and Individual Differences* 32 (2002), 1377-1390.

²⁵ K. Walsh et al., 'Spiritual beliefs may affect outcome of bereavement: prospective study', in: *British Medical Journal* 324 (2002), 1-5.

²⁶ J.M. Kaczorowski, 'Spiritual well-being and anxiety in adults diagnosed with cancer', in: *The Hospice Journal* 5 (1989), 105-115.

²⁷ A. Mehnert, S. Rieß & U. Koch, 'Die Rolle religiöser Glaubensüberzeugungen bei der Krankheitsbewältigung maligner Melanome', in: *Verhaltenstherapie und Verhaltensmedizin* 24 (2003), 147-166.

Renz.²⁸ Faulkner & Harding²⁹ have interpreted spirituality as a form of compensation in situations of dissatisfaction. Pearce³⁰ has studied spirituality as an evolutionary advantage.

Some researchers interconnect several qualitative and/or functional components of spirituality, but these studies remain limited as well: certain aspects of spirituality are labelled and studied, whilst others are not. The clearest evidence that spirituality lacks fixed core components comes from Schwartz.³¹ This author has carried out an extensive and thorough study into cross-cultural values that are significant to human behaviour. In his theory, Schwartz postulates a typology of eleven universal values, including spirituality. Schwartz has investigated spirituality as a path of practice, as inner harmony, as meaning in life, as a bond with nature, as acceptance of shortcomings, and as ritual expression. His survey of more than 60,000 people in 64 countries shows that spirituality cannot be understood universally, that is, spirituality cannot be described in terms of fixed components.³² Schwartz suspects that there are different kinds of spirituality, characterised by different configurations of potential components. The sociologist David Moberg postulates hundreds of components for spirituality.³³ A study which would include and/or link all these components, and which accordingly would comprise the total of all possible configurations, may be theoretically feasible, but is difficult to implement from a practical point of view.

For these reasons, the conviction has been growing amongst empirical scientists that it would be presumptuous to rank their own limited research on certain components of spirituality above that of other studies,³⁴ as there exists no study design which represents spirituality in its entirety. This raises the question whether spirituality can be studied as an independent phenomenon at all, or whether meaningful research is only possible if it focuses on a concrete cultural manifestation of spirituality.³⁵

²⁸ M. Renz, *Grenzerfahrung Gott: Spirituelle Erfahrungen in Leid und Krankheit*, Freiburg: Herder, 2003.

²⁹ J.L. Faulkner & S.E. Harding, 'Spirituality: The key between life satisfaction and body satisfaction' (2004) <http://psych.hanover.edu/research/Thesis04/Faulkner&Harding.ppt>

³⁰ J.C. Pearce, *The biology of transcendence: A blueprint of the human spirit*, Rochester: Park Street Press, 2002.

³¹ S. Schwartz, 'Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries', in: M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*. Vol. 25, San Diego: Academic Press, 1992, 1-65.

³² However, see for a revision of Schwartz's model: F.M.E. Grouzet et al., 'The structure of goal contents across 15 cultures', in: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89 (2005) no. 5, 800-816.

³³ D.O. Moberg, 'Subjective measures of spiritual well-being', in: *Review of Religious Research* 25 (1984), 352-359, here 352.

³⁴ See also Bucher, *Psychologie der Spiritualität*, 56.

³⁵ See M. Farias & E. Hense, 'Concepts and misconceptions in the scientific study of spirituality', in: B. Spalek & A. Imtoul (Eds.), *Religion, spirituality and the social sciences*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2008, 163-176.

Current historical research on lived spiritualities confirms this supposition. An overview of the overwhelming diversity of spiritualities has been given in the series *World Spirituality*.³⁶ There are the major spiritual traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, the Islam, and also – especially in Africa and America – many local indigenous spiritualities. Added to this, we have esoteric and secular forms of spirituality, such as Jainism and the Sikh tradition. Many spiritualities have become extinct in the course of history – think of, for instance, the Egyptian, Greek and Roman spiritualities, or the Zarathustrian, Sumerian, Assyro-Babylonian and Hittite traditions. Also, new forms of spirituality are constantly developing: the new religious movements within the big traditions, as well as the many forms of spirituality that arise outside established religion. In all cultures over the world we encounter spirituality, which does not go to say that people are necessarily spiritual. In many cultures it is possible to lead a life without spirituality. Moreover, spiritualities are not static: human beings can become more or less spiritual over time, just as they can alternate between various spiritual lifestyles. Someone can live within the confines of a particular tradition or be familiar with several traditions at once. Sociological research concludes that globalisation has led to increasing ramification of the big spiritual traditions and to a growth in the number of inceptions of new forms of spirituality.³⁷ More than ever, we live in a world of spiritual diversity. Not only are the symbolic structures and schools of thought in which spiritual experiences are articulated extremely varied, the practices of spirituality associated with these experiences, too, are characterised by great diversity.³⁸

2. Cultural Constructions as Lived Spirituality

*It is by courtesy of the chooser that a would-be authority becomes an authority.*³⁹

Spiritualities develop in certain contexts from the cultural elements that belong to these contexts.⁴⁰ Gordon Lynch has proposed to interpret spiritualities (and

³⁶ Compare E. Cousins (Ed.), *World spirituality: An encyclopedic history of the religious quest*, New York: Crossroad, 1985-. This reference work gives an interesting overview of the diversity of spirituality; however, a clearer presentation of non-western perspectives would be desirable.

³⁷ J.A. Beckford, 'Foreword', in: Spalek & Imtoul, *Religion, spirituality and the social sciences*, vi-viii.

³⁸ N. Smart, 'Concluding reflections: Religious studies in global perspective', in: U. King (Ed.), *Turning points in religious studies*, Edinburgh: Clark, 1990; Idem, *Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and allies*, London: MacMillan, 1993, 299-306.

³⁹ Z. Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

⁴⁰ M. de Certeau, 'Culture and spiritual experience', in: *Concilium* 2 (1966) no. 9 (section Spirituality), 3-16; Idem, 'Histoire et mystique', in: *Revue d'Histoire de Spiritualité* 48 (1972), 69-82.

religions) as socio-cultural systems oriented in relation to sacred objects.⁴¹ In other words, that which makes a cultural construction a form of spirituality can be explained in terms of the orientation of such a construction towards a sacred object. A valid sacred object is the self, which has acquired the status of sacred object in present-day culture;⁴² another example is that of superhuman powers,⁴³ which are often symbolised by (mythological) persons or (material) things. Whether the self or something else actually functions as a sacred object ultimately depends on the person who chooses the sacred object. Potentially, the chooser can regard anything as sacred or non-sacred.

Even though this approach initially seems pluralistic, and open to all forms of spirituality (everyone determines for themselves what they perceive as a sacred object), on closer inspection, this turns out not to be the case, because the same normative yardstick, that of being related to sacred objects, is applied to each and every form of spirituality. As we saw earlier, however, spirituality cannot be reduced to one single, essential and determining feature. The relation to sacred objects can be important for some forms of spirituality, but other forms – such as, for instance, the mysticism of Dionysius Areopagita or Master Eckhart, or the experience of *sunyata* in Buddhism – are hard to describe in such terms. There are many different forms of spirituality, and these are not grouped together by virtue of having a common defining feature or essence. In fact, no one single feature of spirituality can be singled out that is shared by all spiritualities, and which may therefore be regarded as a sufficient prerequisite for the category ‘spirituality’. It seems that it is only the courtesy of the chooser which defines a cultural construction as a form of lived spirituality.

To indicate that lived spiritualities are impossible to define, some researchers have been trying to devise a new means of categorising spirituality. One such new categorisation and its theoretical underpinning can be found in the works

⁴¹ G. Lynch, ‘What is this “religion” in the study of religion and popular culture?’, in: Idem (Ed.), *Between sacred and profane: Researching religion and popular culture*, London: IB Tauris, 2007, 125-142. Here, objects are meant in the sense of object relations theory rather than simply material objects.

⁴² P. Heelas & L. Woodhead, ‘Homeless minds today?’, in: L. Woodhead (Ed.), *Peter Berger and the study of religion*, London: Routledge, 2002, 43-72; P. Heelas, ‘Expressive spirituality and humanistic expressivism: Sources of significance beyond church and chapel’, in: S. Sutcliffe & M. Mowman (Eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring alternative spirituality*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, 237-254; P. Heelas, ‘On things not being worse, and the ethic of humanity’, in: Idem (Ed.), *Detraditionalization*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 200-218.

⁴³ G. Lynch, ‘Dreams of the autonomous and reflexive self: the religious significance of contemporary lifestyle media’, in: Spalek & Imtoul, *Religion, spirituality and the social sciences*, 63-76, here 74.

of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.⁴⁴ Wittgenstein⁴⁵ intensely studied categories that are not defined by common aspects. He illustrated their vague and indistinct boundaries with the example of games: games are so varied and dissimilar from each other that no single attribute can be defined which characterises all games.

What is common to them all? – Don't say: 'There *must* be something in common, or they would not be called "games"' – but look and see whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.⁴⁶

Wittgenstein called the nature of the connectedness between games 'Familienähnlichkeit' (family resemblances), that is to say, games resemble one another just as family members do. It is my hypothesis that spiritualities, too, are connected by such a family resemblance: they are puzzles of diverse components. Some components are shared, but not by all spiritualities. Researchers cannot deny this insight, which means that, in practice, it is impossible to use a comprehensive format and study all spiritualities at the same time. Rather spiritualities must be investigated separately, form by form. The various components of each family member (or specific form of spirituality) need to be considered separately.

In order to adequately describe each family member or specific form of spirituality, well-versed representatives of the spirituality in question could be questioned regarding components.⁴⁷ Specialists from various disciplines can closely examine specific components and compare results with each other. Subsequently, religious and theological scientists could provide their opinion on the relative weight of the components: apart from making an inventory of the importance of different components for a given spirituality, the weight of the separate components must also be determined. Experts in the various spiritual traditions will have to establish this weight via empirical, but also literary-historical studies.

In a next step, empirical scientists can evaluate spiritualities with respect to their proto-typicality. Rosch and Mervis⁴⁸ have developed a method for this. Via

⁴⁴ See V.S. Harrison, 'The pragmatics of defining religion in a multi-cultural world', in: *Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 59 (2006), 133-152.

⁴⁵ See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical investigations*, transl. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1959.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, paragraph 66.

⁴⁷ Interesting progress is shown by C. Hyman & P.J. Handal, 'Definitions and evaluation of religion and spirituality items by religious professionals: A pilot study', in: *Journal of Religion and Health* 45 (2006) no. 2, 264-282. The authors have asked religious leaders (priests, imams, rabbis, etc) after their definitions of religion and spirituality, and whether these two categories could be said to overlap.

⁴⁸ E. Rosch & C.B. Mervis, 'Family resemblances: Studies in the internal structure of categories', in: *Cognitive Psychology* 7 (1975), 573-605.

a mathematical procedure, a prototype can be computed within a certain spiritual tradition or, alternatively, in the pool of all spiritualities. The prototype reflects exactly those components that are present most often in the other forms of spirituality. This means that a prototype can only be computed if all forms which it has to represent are known in terms of all their components. Also, the weight of the different components must have been identified beforehand. On the basis of the data thus acquired, scientists can calculate the distance of each specific spirituality from the prototype: spiritualities at little distance share more components in a more equivalent weight with the prototype than spiritualities that lie further away. In this manner, spiritualities can be compared and evaluated in their diversity.

The fact that components of spirituality are always strongly interwoven with everyday culture has been well-illustrated by, for example, Albert Piette with his minimalist programme.⁴⁹ In his sociological research, Piette⁵⁰ has analysed how people live their faith. With contradictions, silences, hesitations and denials they skirt round their faith; meanwhile the theme keeps recurring of trivial, worldly and often dull daily life. It is noteworthy that people often change in their outlook; they reflect on their experiences from a variety of perspectives. Sometimes they are sceptical, sometimes they are deeply moved.

In his carefully designed study of fragments of the social interaction and conversation in a French parish, Piette shows that, indeed, the spirituality of the vicar and his parishioners cannot be that easily compartmentalised. For the actual believers, God is present in many and constantly changing ways and, ultimately, absent after all. Religion in the making is unpredictable. Piette is therefore critical of the often-claimed heightened emotion in religion, the collective fervour to accept religious ideas and the effervescence specific to religious rituals. Neither do his observations suggest that symbols have an unvarying and universally valid meaning: rather he stresses the fragmented nature of everyday spirituality. These deconstructivist tendencies in Piette's work reveal the many less than spectacular and common aspect of spirituality. Spiritual experiences are experiences in a minor mode, because they are interwoven in a disorderly fashion, or messy manner, with the commonplace. In Piette's view, 'It is perverse for sociologists to ignore the overwhelmingly ordinary features of most religious activity for the sake of inflating the perceived significance of its highly unusual features'.⁵¹

⁴⁹ A.S. Lamine, 'Croyances et transcendences: Variations en modes mineurs', in: *Social Compass* 55 (2008) no. 2, 154-167.

⁵⁰ A. Piette, *Le fait religieux: Une théorie de la religion ordinaire*, Paris: Economica, 2003. Although Piette does not use the term *spirituality*, he does deal with religious experiences, the living of one's faith and the interactions of religion in the making.

⁵¹ J.A. Beckford, 'A minimalist sociology of religion?', in: J.A. Beckford & J. Walliss (Eds.), *Theorising religion: Classical and contemporary debates*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2006, 182-196, here 185.

This means that he no longer makes a principled distinction between culture and spirituality. Instead, he prefers 'to leave it to processes of social construction to decide whether something counts as religious or not'.⁵²

Conclusion

In the present debate, theories that base themselves on, on the one hand, the diversity of culturally constructed spiritualities with variable overlap and, on the other hand, a strong intertwining of concrete cultures are the most convincing. The plausibility of these theories partly has to do with the reigning scientific paradigms. Also, they tie in with current developments in the realm of lived spirituality: modernity does not make lived spirituality redundant, but causes it to diffuse to an ever greater extent into culture. As a result of this, the diversity of different forms of spirituality constantly increases,⁵³ and new forms of spirituality are often not encountered in an explicitly religious domain, but rather in a secular context, such as education, health care, the workplace, psychotherapy, and the arts.

The research into components of concrete and minor forms of spirituality seems most fruitful at present. In this type of research, the interest lies in the social, material and symbolic dimensions of culture, human physicality, and language. Considering minor forms of spirituality involves paying close attention to the specific findings of different disciplines. 'The various disciplines begin to have dialogue with one another on questions of religiosity and spirituality so as to break down some of the artificial and unhelpful borders that have been placed around knowledge'.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., 186-187.

⁵³ P. Heelas & L. Woodhead, *The spiritual revolution: Why religion is giving way to spirituality*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005; T. Luckmann, *Die unsichtbare Religion*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991.

⁵⁴ B. Spalek & A. Imtoul, 'Introduction', in: Spalek & Imtoul, *Religion, spirituality and the social sciences*, 1-5, here 1.