

Towards Comprehension of Spirituality through its Semantics

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Introduction

For about last fifty years now, the emerging discipline of spirituality has been attracting the academic circles of Western culture. It catches the attention of people who do not even consider themselves to be religious. However, spirituality, as a new member of the academic field, lacks a sense of self-identity and is very often thought of as unnamed or indefinable. Indeed, spirituality is such broad field that it is really difficult to find and name all its components. The aim of this paper is to unearth the history of spirituality and to find out about identity of spirituality by uncovering the roots of the term. A number of authors have already tried to explore it (Holt 1997; Pannenberg 2001; Rollins 2002; Beck 2003; Langermann 2007; Sheldrake 2009; Grey 2009; Hamori 2010); however, the study still lacks of a comprehensive spiritual concept. This paper analyses the term and the meaning of spirituality from the linguistic and the semantic angle. The Hebrew-biblical tradition words **נֶפֶשׁ** (*nphsh*) and **רוּחַ** (*ruah*) with the Koine Greek terms **ψυχή** (*psyche*) and **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) reveal the linguistic roots of the word, which when translated into Latin *spiritualitas* gave the English term *spirituality*. The main focus of this study is the biblical context, but it also refers to contemporary literature which reflected the common use of the term.

It needs to be said that the examination of the semantic field does not produce a conclusive definition of spirituality. Fuller understanding of the phenomenon requires an exploration of a range of other grounds influencing the notion today. Among them would be for instance different social,

historical and cultural or even personal standpoints. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to construct a comprehensive vision on current spirituality, but rather to turn attention to the term and the phenomenon of spirituality from the perspective of its origins. Among the multiplicity of current propositions of defining spirituality or of explaining the concept, many of the approaches are based on the subjective 'I think...' or 'We propose...' A deficiency of the systematic validation which can be observed is often caused by insufficient development of methodology of the discipline. This paper strives to explore a meaning of spirituality in possibly the most systematic way, based on the linguistic premises which are retrieved from sources of the original term.

It is important to keep in mind that spirituality is not an invention of the last few decades; it was known and practised by generations of people down through the ages. Perhaps a revision of the origins of spirituality may be helpful in avoiding misinterpretations and may present a clearer vision of the phenomenon. Spirituality, which is intrinsic to the human condition, not just an attachment of it, should be a more a matter of discovery than of the creation of meanings. Negligence of its history may result in a narrow or distorted understanding of it. The knowledge of the semantic roots of spirituality is an invitation to sensitivity to the context, where the phenomenon used to function and where, beyond the tradition of the words, a concrete reality existed and still exists. The usage of *nephesh*, *ruah*, *psyche* and *pneuma* comes from understanding of spiritual, mental and physical practicalities and implies concrete meanings, which seems to be important for today's understanding of spirituality. Beyond these words is a world which was and which is still alive.

The Core Meaning

The English term *spirituality* has its origins in the Latin *spiritualitas* and from the very beginning the word was connected with Christianity and the early Church (McGinn 2008). The early Church was urbanized in Greco-Roman culture and accepted Latin as an official language. The context of Greek

culture, especially philosophical thought, was very influential for both the early Church and the New Testament (Beck 2003, 27). However, Hebrew, as the language of the Old Testament, is a prior base for an investigation of the meaning of spirituality. The origins of the word are there and they continue into the New Testament and later Christian tradition.

The meaning of the Latin *spiritualitas* developed under the prior influence of the Hebrew **נפש**, *nphsh*, articulated *nephesh*, *nefesh* or *nafs*, and **רוח**, transliterated as *ruah* or *ruh*, or *ruch*. There exist different opinions about which of these terms was more relevant for the generation of spirituality's original meaning. Some authors believe that *ruah* was more influential for the meaning of spirituality (Sheldrake 2009). Some maintain that only *nephesh* was influential for current psychology (Beck 2003). Nonetheless, general opinion accepts both words as the foundation for the term *spirituality* (Rollins 2002; Langermann 2007).

The other underlying words come from the ancient Koine Greek language and are **ψυχή** (*psyche*) and **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*). **Ψυχή** (*psyche*) is the New Testament interpretation of **נפש** (*nephesh*) (Langermann 2007; Rollins 2002; Hamori 2010; Greggo 2005) and **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is the Koine Greek interpretation of Hebrew **רוח** (*ruah*) (Wijngaards 1988; Pannenberg 2001). To understand the origins of the word *spirituality*, it is necessary to examine its linguistic roots and the relations between them. The meaning of these root terms has largely determined the meaning of spirituality today. An examination of the etymology and the semantic meaning of these words can help to avoid misunderstanding and over-interpretation of the term *spirituality*, and it is essential for any contemporary definition of the phenomenon. Today the term *spirituality* has a wide range of meanings. This is all the more the case since spirituality has come to embrace the still wider field of experience and has departed from the root meaning since it separated from religious terminology.

In order to appreciate Hebrew words, it is important to discern the character of that language and features of Hebrew way of thinking. The mentality of ancient Hebrew people, as well as the whole Middle Eastern

culture, was less abstract than our contemporary thought. The spoken word carried greater weight and it was understood almost materially; it was more significant for the speaker and for the person to whom it was spoken. A good illustration of this is the description of the creation of the world in the first chapter of Genesis, where God creates it by His word (Gen 1). For example, to express feelings like anger, love, hate, passion and the like, Hebrews often used symbols of the body to make a word-picture of a feeling. For instance to express anger, they drew a man as a container ready to explode if the anger exceeded a certain measure (van Wolde 2008, 9). Also when God spoke to Abraham, He did it by a word that was a vision: 'Some time later, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid' (Gen 15:1)¹. Thus, the language of the Old Testament was deeply embedded in concrete reality. With its concrete and abstract nouns, it was closer to the naturalness of life. In the ancient Hebrew world, words and their meanings were more material and more physical terms than in language influenced by the philosophy of the ancient Greek world or in today's cultures. For people of the Middle East, a word contained power to create reality and in that context it should be understood. A spoken word for Hebrew was close to deed, to making the thing real and existing. The language expressions were less abstract, more concrete and physical (Grey 2009; Langermann 2007).

נפש (*nephesh*)

The word **נפש** (*nephesh*) occurs in the Old Testament 706 times in various forms. The meanings of **רוח** (*ruah*) and **נפש** (*nephesh*) are close, however not the same and they are not used interchangeably. The Old Testament translates **נפש** (*nephesh*) as a soul, a living soul, the soul that is a source of natural life and living processes (Langermann 2007). The creation of man is perhaps one of the best illustrations of the meaning of **נפש** (*nephesh*), which can be found in the Bible. 'Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living *being*²' (Gen 2:7). The King's James Version of the Bible expresses it more clearly, '... and man became a living *soul*' (KJV)³.

נפש (*nephesh*) creates life, it is a life-giving word, a reason why dry sand becomes a living creation and then it becomes one organism with the dry sand. It is a dynamic animating live breath (Beck 2003). Simply, it can be said that God gives **נפש** (*nephesh*) to make a human being alive. **פֶּשֶׁן** (*nephesh*) represents a soul as a source of physical life, not supernatural life. It stands for the natural source of existential strength that is embodied in physical and mundane reality. For instance, Psalm 74 expresses this understanding well: 'Do not surrender your turtledove to the beast; do not forget for ever the *life* of your oppressed people' (Ps 74:19). Very similar understanding can be observed in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 19:21), where **נפש** (*nephesh*) connotes life as based in the physicality of the human body: 'You must show no pity. "*Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot*". This understanding of the soul appears as a life-source of animals as well as humans: God said, 'Let the waters be alive with a swarm of *living* creatures' (Gen 1:20). This meaning can be also observed in Genesis, where God creates animals and gives them **נפש** (*nephesh*) to make them alive (Gen 1: 21, 24, 30; 2:19). Another example of this sense appears in the book of Genesis: 'And I shall demand account of your *life-blood*, too. I shall demand it of every animal, and of man. Of man as regards his fellow-man, I shall demand account for human life' (Gen 9:5; see also Gen 9:12).

Moreover, **נפש** (*nephesh*) is also used to indicate some deeper connotation than pure physical life functions, especially it can be observed in some Books of Prophets. **נפש** (*nephesh*) expresses a psychological level of the human mind, which is an area of thinking processes. For instance in Isaiah, God is shown as a desire of mind: 'Following the path of your judgements, Yahweh, we set our hopes in you, your name, your memory are all our *soul* desires' (Isa 26:8). In Jeremiah, it can be observed similar meaning: 'For I shall give the weary all they need and satisfy all those whose strength has gone' (Jer 31:25). The older translation seems to be clearer in this case: 'For I have satiated the weary *soul*, and I have replenished every sorrowful *soul*'(KJV).

The examination of **נפש** (*nephesh*) demonstrates that the word does not have a supernatural connotation but expresses a natural character of existence of people and animals. In relation to people it reflects also the higher level of humans' life functions; however, it still represents a natural dimension of existence. Burt states that **נפש** (*nephesh*) is applied basically to express a function of life, a power which makes the heartbeat (Burt 1960). In relation to people it also means the psychological processes and characterises human personality (see also Bjork 2008). Bemporad shortly characterises it as 'the inner animating element of life' (Bemporad 1987, 205). The term **נפש** (*nephesh*) can be understood as the natural environment that is the basis of God's approach with His supernatural grace; however this supernatural reality is expressed by another word - **רוח** (*ruah*).

רוח (*ruah*)

The Hebrew used **רוח** (*ruah*) to express a divine breath, God's invisible and life-giving power, gentle but strong, reflecting reality beyond human understanding, which is a part of God Himself. The breath has a power to give a life or to kill, to create and to destroy, to save on a path of life and to turn into dust anything in just one moment. A visualisation of this word is breathing out through the nose with violence and power. People have life because of God's **רוח**(*ruah*), received by his dynamic power, which is secret, unpredictable and invisible (Grey 2009). **רוח** (*ruah*) unlike than **נפש** (*nephesh*) is the same spirit which is in God, where **נפש** (*nephesh*) is only God's gift, His grace, but substantially differs from God.

The relation of *nephesh* and **רוח** (*ruah*) may be expressed in words: 'soul [nephesh] and spirit [ruah] are two entities that straddle the division between the corporeal and non-corporeal – or if you wish between mundane and the divine – within the human organism' (Langermann 2007, 70), or 'instead, the doubt concerns the spirit that bears the soul' (Langermann 2007, 69). The term **רוח** (*ruah*) in comparison with **נפש** (*nephesh*) represents a supernatural dimension, it is a spirit that is in God, comes from God and lives in humans as God's grace or His disgrace dependently on God's will (Hamori

2010). **נפש** (*nephesh*) is united with a body, is a part of human and created entirely along with human's existence. **רוח** (*ruah*) is a different spirit which can exist separately from a human being; it can be treated as an 'extra gift'. It brings human life, expressed by **נפש** (*nephesh*) to life in God's grace, expressed by **רוח** (*ruah*).

The word **רוח** (*ruah*) occurs in The Old Testament 378 times. One of the meanings of **רוח** (*ruah*) regards a power of nature. Usually the prophets had a predilection for using the term in that context. Habakkuk uses it in terms of wind: 'Then the *wind* changes and is gone ... Guilty is he who makes his strength his god' (Hab 1:11). In a similar way it is used by Jeremiah 'I shall bring four *winds* on Elam from the four corners of the sky, and I shall scatter them to all these winds: there will not be a single nation to which people expelled from Elam do not go' (Jer 49:36). The wind as a life-giving power is also used by Ezekiel: 'He said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man. Say to the breath, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Come from the four *winds*, breath; breathe on these dead, so that they come to life!"' (Ezek 37:9). The "four winds" describe the four quarters or four directions of the world. Wind is there an invisible power, sometimes strong and destroying, sometimes delicate and giving bracing breath, such as God's spirit.

In living beings, **רוח** (*ruah*) is also their living breath. In Genesis, **רוח** (*ruah*) is related to animals: 'One pair of all that was alive and had the *breath* of life boarded the ark with Noah' (Gen 7:15; see also Ps 104:29). In Ezekiel, **רוח** (*ruah*) is the life-giving breath for human beings: 'The Lord Yahweh says this to these bones: I am now going to make *breath* enter you, and you will live' (Ezek 37:5). The same idea is continued by Isaiah and the book of Genesis (Isa 42:5; Gen 6:3). In Genesis, 'Everything with the least *breath* of life in its nostrils, everything on dry land, died,' the author talks about all living beings, humans and animals (Gen 7:22-23).

The term **רוח** (*ruah*) is also God's breath, which is given to people as an intake of fresh air as described by Isaiah, 'But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he

shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the *breath* of his lips shall he slay the wicked' (Isa 11:4 - KJV). For Jeremiah, breath is again a sign of supernatural life: 'At this all people stand stupefied, uncomprehending, every goldsmith blushes for his idols; his castings are but delusion, with no *breath* in them' (Jer 10:14). God's breath is displayed as the contrast to pagans' dead idols, which have not a **רוח** (*ruah*) (see also Jer 51:17). Only **רוח** (*ruah*) of God becomes the living **רוח** (*ruah*) of a human, as it can be seen in Job: 'that as long as a shred of life is left in me, and the breath of God *breathes* in my nostrils' (Job 27:3).

Other connotations of breath include power also. Described in the Book of Kings the Queen of Sheba has no more **רוח** (*ruah*); she is breathless, overwhelmed (Kings 10:5). **רוח** (*ruah*) is also used with the meaning of *courage*, where the living spirit is the brave heart of a warrior (Josh 2:11; Josh 5:1). In the book of Lamentations, **רוח** (*ruah*) represents life inspiration (Lam 4:20). In Jeremiah, Job and Isaiah, a lack of **רוח** (*ruah*) is equal to emptiness, the futility of mere breath (Jer 5:13; Job 7:7; Isa 41:29). Also **רוח** (*ruah*) signifies activity and life, for example in Job, the lack of **רוח** (*ruah*) is a lack of serenity and hopefulness during sickness (Job 17:1). In the first book of Samuel and Genesis God's spirit comes back as a second wind to revive (1Sam 30:12; Gen 45:27). Job, Isaiah and Genesis also say that in God's hand **רוח** (*ruah*) is the breath of all mankind (Job 12:10; Isa 42:5; Gen 6:3).

The above analysis illustrates that **נפש** (*nephesh*) is used only in relation to the condition of natural life and animal-manner pumping blood power. It can be extended to the psychological processes as it is then translated into Koine Greek New Testament. **נפש** (*nephesh*) is related to nature, close to something that can be called the animal part of the human. In contrast, **רוח** (*ruah*) reveals transcendence, power of spirit that comes from divinity. **רוח** (*ruah*) enriches a human, makes stronger, better, wiser, ready for transcendence and transcending. It is immaterial, dynamic, concerned and associated with material reality. **רוח** (*ruah*) is powerful and capable of self-enlivening.

Ψυχή (*psyche*)

The New Testament, describing soul, uses **ψυχή** (*psyche*), which is basically a continuation of the meaning of Hebrew's **נֶפֶשׁ** (*nephesh*) (Greggo 2005, 259). The word **ψυχή** (*psyche*) was used in the Greek philosophical tradition in relation to consciousness; 'Plato located the psyche in the brain, Aristotle in the heart' (Rollins 2002, 104). Plato assumed that human beings are born with a primordial knowledge, which is in the soul and which is immortal, existing before and after person's earthly life. Aristotle presupposed that the human comes into the world with a clear mind, a *tabula rasa* and fulfils his soul by life experience. Moreover the soul in Aristotle's conception was a form of the body (Beck 2003, 27).

Greek philosophical tradition used **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in relation to *body σώμα* (*soma*), *reason νοῦς* (*nous*), *will θυμός* (*thymos*), and *desire επιθυμία* (*epithymia*) (Rollins 2002, 104). It means that soul was related to human psychical processes; however, some relations to body appear as well, only in a smaller amount. Particularly in Aristotle's thought, there can be observed some usage of **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in relation to body (Wijngaards 1988). However, Langermann states that **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) was more useful for Aristotle to express his thought (Langermann 2007, 70).

In the New Testament **ψυχή** (*psyche*) occurs 78 times and the influence of Greek philosophical thought is seen, because it is used in relation to life functions and the mind's natural processes. Generally the uses of **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in the New Testament can be divided into three groups: life as a natural phenomenon, personality and mental processes of human mind (Beck 2003). The use of **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in relation to the phenomenon of life is understood as an earthly existence, for example in Matthew: 'Anyone who finds his *life* will lose it; anyone who loses his *life* for my sake will find it' (Mt 10:39). It can be compared to Mark, 'And indeed what can anyone offer in exchange for his *life*' (Mk 8:37)? The older translation uses the word more directly: 'Or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*' (KJV)? St John confirms this connotation: 'The second angel emptied his bowl over the sea, and it turned to blood, like the blood of a corpse, and every living *creature* in

the sea died' (Rev 16:3). Here the King James's translation is more sensitive: 'And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead [man]: and every living *soul* died in the sea' (KJV).

The term **ψυχή** (*psyche*) is also used as an expression to describe people in their both dimensions – body and soul, 'urge you, my dear friends, as strangers and nomads, to keep yourselves free from the disordered natural inclinations that attack the *soul*' (1Pet 2:11). Elsewhere can be found: 'We are not the sort of people who draw back, and are lost by it; we are the sort who keep faith until our *souls* are saved' (Heb 10:39).

The third way of using **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in the New Testament is in relation to mind. Soul is identified with an area of thinking processes, feelings, emotions, will and a memory (Beck 2003). Soul is responsible for analysing things, making decisions and human psychological presence. For instance Mary engages her **ψυχή** (*psyche*) to express her relation to Lord, 'And Mary said: My *soul* proclaims the greatness of the Lord' (Lk 1:46). The same connotation is in Mark, 'and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your *soul*, with all your mind and with all your strength' (Mk 12:30). John, describing the Jews asking Jesus about Himself, uses *psyche*:

ἐκύκλωσαν οὖν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ ἔλεγον αὐτῷ,

The Jews gathered round him and said,

Ἔως πότε τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἴρεις

(till-when the -*soul*- of-us you-are-lifting?)⁴

"How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense?"

εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός, εἰπὲ ἡμῖν παρρησίᾳ.⁵

If you are the Christ, tell us openly" (Jn 10:24)

St Paul is an exception among the New Testament authors as he avoids using **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in his letters. **Ψυχή** (*psyche*) appears only 13 times in the whole *Pauline Corpus* and he employs other synonyms instead of **ψυχή** (*psyche*) (Beck 2003). Nevertheless, the connotation of the word used by Paul is basically the same as its use in the rest of the New Testament texts. It appears as meaning of physical life, 'Lord, they have put your prophets to the

sword, torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they want to *kill me?*' (Rom 11:3). Another translation reflects it better: 'Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my *life*' (KJV).

Ψυχή (*psyche*) in Paul's texts is related to a person in the wholeness of personality, 'Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God' (Rom 13:1). Here KJV is again more precise and clear: 'Let every *soul* be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God' (KJV). Another example of St Paul's use of the term in the same context is in his writing to Ephesians: 'not only when you are under their eye, as if you had only to please human beings, but as slaves of Christ who *wholeheartedly* do the will of God' (Eph 6:6). Here this translation can be also compared to the older one: 'Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the *heart*' (KJV). According to St Paul, people by soul express psychical actions of their will. 'Whatever your work is, put your *heart* into it as done for the Lord and not for human beings' (Col 3:23).

The usage of **ψυχή** (*psyche*) in the New Testament contextually is very similar to the usage of Hebrew **נפש** (*nephesh*) in the Old Testament. The differences correlate with cultural background, but the connotation is much the same; the differences are caused by the language and background of the cultures where those words originated. Even if the terms were used in different contexts, their meanings are very much comparable.

Πνεῦμα (*pneuma*)

The word **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) occurs 385 times in the New Testament and its meaning is a continuation of the Hebrew word **רוח** (*ruah*) (Wijngaards 1988; Pannenberg 2001). The Greek root **πνεύ** (*pneu*) means dynamic movement of air that is to breathe, to blow and also to blow a musical instrument. In comparison to **רוח** (*ruah*), the Greek connotation **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) additionally means to inspire, to encourage, to steam, to evaporate. **Πνεῦμα**

(*pneuma*) in the ancient Greek tradition was used in more abstract contexts as well. Namely, it was a spirit penetrating the whole material world as well as the world of living creatures - the spirit being able to see through, from the top to the bottom of the earth and permeating the reality of the world. **Πνευματικός** (*pneumatikos*) in the New Testament means spiritual, to live a spiritual life, which is in opposition to natural physical desires and needs of the body (Sheldrake 2009; Wijngaards 1988). Following the context of its usage, to live a spiritual life means to respect spiritual needs more than corporal needs and to live under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and to choose the spiritual path over the material needs of life. **Πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) means supernatural life, grace, God's gift enriching the human being and make person able to participate in God's life (Wijngaards 1988).

St Paul in his first letter to Corinthians draws a lucid distinction between soul and spirit: 'So the first man, Adam, as scripture says, became a living *soul* (*psyche*); and the last Adam has become a life-giving *spirit* (*pneuma*)' (1Cor 15:45). Similarly it can be observed in the first letter to Thessalonians: 'May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may your *spirit* (*pneuma*), *life* (*psyche*) and body (*soma*) be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1Thess 5:23). King's James translation could be helpful in clarifying the meaning: 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole *spirit* and *soul* and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (KJV).

The above differentiation between **ψυχή** (*psyche*) and **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is significant for understanding spirits in the New Testament and it is also meaningful for the perception of spirituality because of its semantic roots. A human being by himself possesses the soul but to possess the spirit he needs God's grace, which is a divine source and transcendent power that exists beyond the human's potential. As Sheldrake notes, St. Paul uses it in terms of 'life in the Spirit' (Sheldrake 2009, 3), which can be explained as the participation of human life in God's life, being involved in Someone's existence, where a human being is gifted by something he cannot have purely by his own struggle: 'So that the blessing of Abraham might come to the

gentiles in Christ Jesus, and so that we might receive the promised *Spirit* through faith' (Gal 3:14).

The term **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is the Spirit, by whom God reveals and explores everything, 'to us, though, God has given revelation through the *Spirit*, for the *Spirit* explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God' (1Cor 2:10). Besides, **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is also the Spirit of community and unity of Christians: 'Take every care to preserve the unity of the *Spirit* by the peace that binds you together' (Eph 4:3; see also Col 1:8). Through **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) people have a relation to God the Father: 'Besides, we have all had our human fathers who punished us, and we respected them for it; all the more readily ought we to submit to the Father of *spirits*, and so earn life' (Heb 12:9). **Πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) also expresses the Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, 'Christ himself died once and for all for sins, the upright for the sake of the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the *spirit* he was raised to life' (1Pet 3:18). Now **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is also the Spirit of the Church as we read it in Revelation: 'Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the *Spirit* is saying to the churches: those who prove victorious I will feed from the tree of life set in God's paradise' (Rev 2:7). The Spirit of the Church is expressed by **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) as well as the Holy Spirit, what naturally is proper according to theological thought: 'Then I saw, in the middle of the throne with its four living creatures and the circle of the elders, a Lamb standing that seemed to have been sacrificed; it had seven horns, and it had seven eyes, which are the seven *Spirits* that God has sent out over the whole world' (Rev 5:6).

It seems as the most important characterisation of **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is that the word *was never separated from God* (Wijngaards 1988). God's dynamic Spirit is constantly communicating to his creation in dialogue. **Πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is God's Spirit and the human spirit **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) is a consequence of God's Spirit and God's grace in human beings. It is the power which human beings possess as a gift from God, not from any human source. Generally authors agree that **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*) characterises God's life. It may characterise human life and be an attribute of human life, but it is

always God's supernatural gift (Wijngaards 1988; Pannenberg 2001; Bucur 2008; Crump 2009). '*Pneuma* is God's direct intervention; inner dynamism; marvellous effects that go beyond human power; manifestations of God's interior reality' (Wijngaards 1988, 24). 'More often, the *pneuma* is seen as the power through which God is active. Furthermore, the *pneuma* is mentioned as a gift of God in the hearts of believers or finally as a hypostatic reality of its own, glorifying the Son and the Father' (Pannenberg 2001, 792).

From *Spiritualitas* to *Spirituality*

The Latin word *spiritualitas* is a simple equivalent of the Koine Greek terms depicting the vision of spiritual reality. The noun *spiritualitas* appeared in the fifth century theological interpretation of the *Pauline Corpus* as a state of living *within the power of the Holy Spirit* (Sheldrake 1995, 42). *Spiritualitas* was derived *spiritualis* which was used in the Early Church context and this word consequently came from *spiritus*, which meant air, breathing and breath. The semantic root of *spiritus* is the word *spirare* which meant to breath, to blow and to live. Interestingly, *spirare* gives the etymological root for instance for *inspire* and *conspire*. *Inspire* means to motivate, to breath in the idea, to blow a new spirit. The etymology of *conspire* comes from Latin *conspirare* and is to think in harmony, to breathe together and later also acquired some negative tone (Barnette & Barrett 2012). As a fact of curiosity it can be said that *respire* connotes the meaning of to breathe again and comes from the same semantic source.

Spiritualitas was transliterated from Latin into today's English language as the term *spirituality*. All the terms, Hebrew, Koine Greek, Latin and English, reflect the same meaning and refer to the same matter. Linguistic decomposition of the term spirituality allows us to draw a conclusion that spirituality is considered as the correlation of the two main fields of human reality, the field of the human soul and the field of the spirit, which interpenetrate and complement each other. Soul (נפש – *nephesh*; ψυχή – *psyche*) is related to mind-body spheres and natural human processes, which can be compared to the physical, inborn and animal condition of humankind.

Even if we were to assume the unlimited potential of the human mind's development, soul is still considered only within the area of the nature and natural human strength. It can be said that **פֶּשֶׁן** (*nephesh*) and **ψυχή** (*psyche*) represent the immanent dimension of the term of spirituality.

The second main component of the notion of spirituality is spirit (represented by **רוח** – *ruah* and **πνεῦμα** - *pneuma*), which signifies the transcendent element of the human spiritual condition. Spirit as a supernatural attribute, does not have its roots in human nature, but rather within supernatural reality; it comes from transcendence. Thus, the linguistic components of the term *spirituality* communicate the existence of two dimensions, which compose the complete vision of the phenomenon of spirituality – they are immanence and transcendence. The transcendent sphere functions in the world through immanence and the immanent sphere exceeds the secular reality by correlation with transcendence. These two realities exist as spirituality within human life. In other words, spirituality and consequently spiritual life does not function as a relationship of immanent objects (e.g. between two or more people). Spirituality also cannot exist without relation of the immanence to the transcendence; a person cannot relate to one's own self, acting as 'I am' or 'I create my spirituality'. As it was already said, a human being has no capacity of transcending within one's own self; therefore, the relation to the transcendent object or transcendent reality is necessary.

To visualise the concept of the semantic construction of the term of spirituality, a graphical model of these relations can be used.

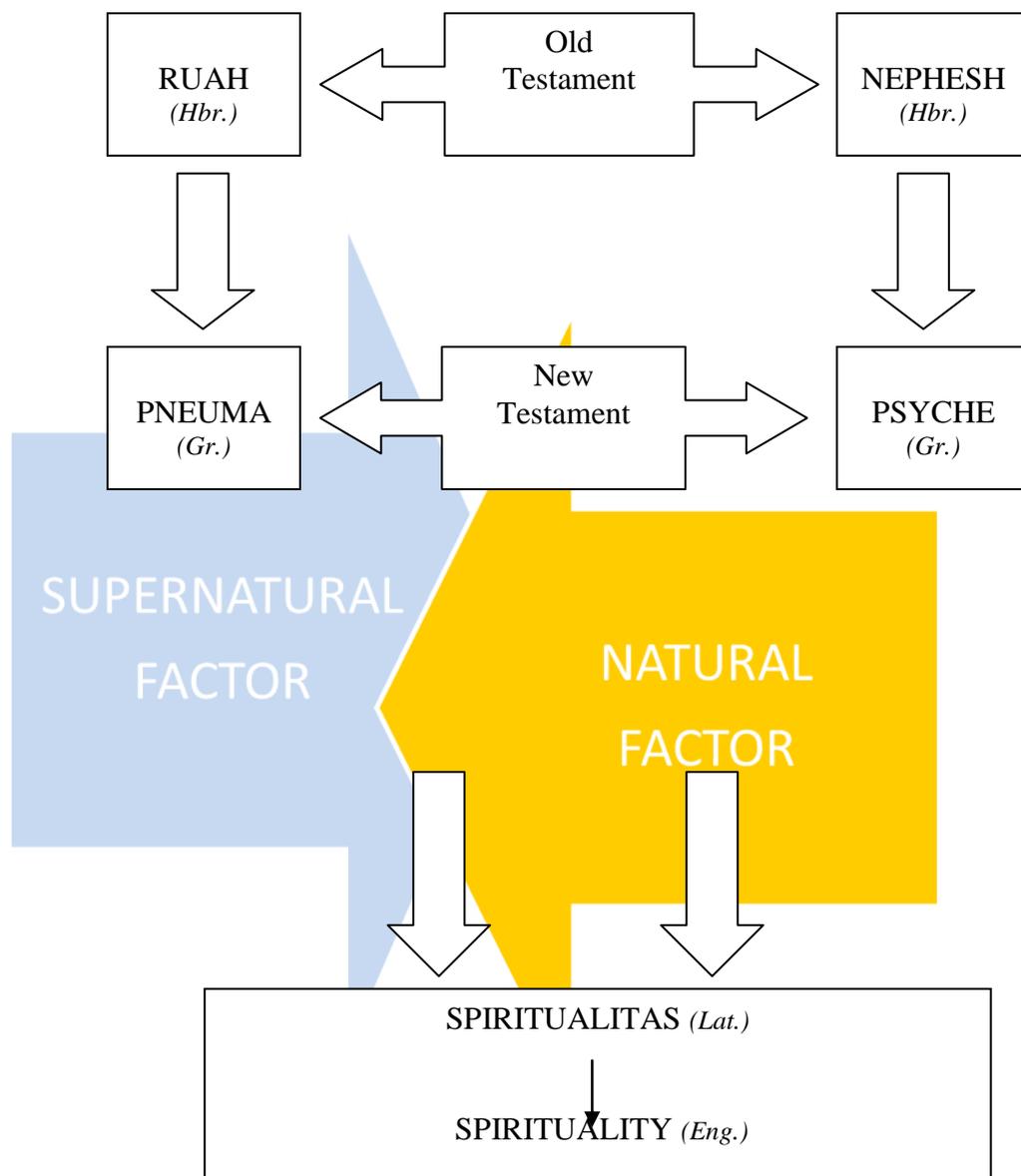


Figure 1. Defragmentation of the internal relations of the term *spirituality*. There are two main dimensions: transcendent (supernatural) and immanent (natural) which correlate and complement to each other. The history of the development of the term starts in the Hebrew tradition, passes through Greek and Latin and ends with the English term *spirituality*.

Conclusion

The reason why the above examination matters for the comprehension of spirituality today and why the root words, expressing spiritual reality from thousands of years ago, have an importance for the present understanding of spirituality, find its justification in the holistic view on the phenomenon of spirituality. A perspective on the phenomenon of spirituality cannot be limited

to tiny categories of some particular cultural context or specific social grouping or interest, because it is very easy to lose important aspects of spirituality and to comprehend it in a fragmented way. It can be observed that many current circles try to adopt spirituality for their own particular purposes such as workplace, medicinal or feminist enquiries. The fact that spirituality is not a modern invention and that the phenomenon really does not represent something new, needs to be considered and because the discipline only recently crossed the academic thresholds cannot change respect to tradition of the phenomenon. Sadly, an emphasis in spirituality as a deep human dynamic can often be observed, searching for a deeper meaning and values in people's reality without a transcendent dimension. A tendency may go in the opposite way as well, where perception of spirituality neglects the secular dimension of the discipline, which naturally can be even more risky, this threat is however of smaller likelihood in the current culture. The progress of secularisation rather stimulates the first leaning.

The tendency today is to understand spirituality in a modern, which often means in an academic way. In this new context, it is important to be able to distinguish which of the characteristics of spirituality are just the old and redundant baggage of history and which of them belong to the essence of the phenomenon. This study does not explain the complexity of the phenomenon but only explores the constituents of the notion of spirituality and reveals the way the concept should be understood. The culture of the West is going now through a curious moment in its history. On the one hand, there is visible desertion of people from the Church and progress of secularisation processes. On the other, there is uncommon growth of interest in spirituality, understood in a broad context. The current performance of spirituality as a new humanistic discipline is broad and developing dynamically. It embraces vigorously still more fields of interest and trespasses the boundaries against the background of people's religious and worldview differences. Nonetheless, the discipline of spirituality has much to learn and to build. Most importantly, it needs to work on the field of self-recognition and concepts about self-identity, however not without respect for its roots.

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¹ Literal translation of quoted fragment:

אחר	הדברים	האלה	היה	דבר	יהוה	אל	-
אברם							
After	the·matters	the·these	he-became	word-of	Yahweh	to	Abram
achr	e·dbrim	e·ale	eie	dbr	ieue	al	abrm
	במחזה	לאמר		אל			תירא
	in·the-vision	to·to-say-of		must-not-be	you-are-fearing		
	b·mchze	l·amr		al	thira		

²All italics within the quoted biblical text refer to the source term, here: **נפש** (*nephesh*).

³ Authorised King James Version (1769) is better to use for some purposes because is closer to original Bible languages and is more sensitive for translating such words as *soul* and *spirit*. Contemporary translations of the Bible reflect more contexts than a literal meaning (Beck 2003, p. 25-26).

⁴ Interlinear translation.

⁵ Koine Greek.