ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF SPIRITUALITY AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF A SELF-ENHANCING SUBJECTIVITY: FEATURES OF THE POST-SECULAR RELIGIOUS SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT. My paper focuses on the shift in religious values in post-socialist Romania and explores the emergence of alternative spiritual beliefs and practices among the younger generations socialized during the post-communist period. It analyses some of the changes that occurred in the wider traditional religious field and looks at the various spiritualized technologies of the self that produce a distinctive type of religious subjectivity and an immanent ethics of authenticity. By departing from the idea of an integrated religious community and from the relational understanding of religious transformation, the field of alternative spiritualities operates a radical break with traditional religion and emphasizes the possibility of spiritual self-realization and self-discovery. It is this process of the individualizing sacralization of the self that constitutes the object of various workshops, blogs, personal and spiritual development literature, courses, spiritual retreats and counselling services. My research looks at how innovative technologies of the self are developed within these spaces that emphasize creativity, wellbeing and a new understanding of subjective interiority that learns how to find in itself the resources it needs to live in a spiritualized ontology of the present.[2]

Keywords: religion, alternative spiritualities, spiritual subjectivity

The gradual emergence and institutionalization of alternative and complementary forms of spirituality represents one of the most significant changes of the Romanian religious landscape during the last decade. The early post-socialist period, when the religious field was dominated by Eastern Christianity that was trying to re-establish its inter-war national prominence and was finding ways to accommodate the growing Evangelical movements, the esoteric Yoga groups or the marginal bio-energetic therapies – all coded as

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'sectarian' activities by mainstream public opinion – are long gone. Two decades later we now have in Romania an extensive indigenization of alternative forms of spirituality ranging from various types of Yoga to Reiki, Bowen techniques, Theta-healing, Holotropic breathing, Familial constellations, Cranial-sacral therapy, etc. The wide diversification of these alternative spiritualities increasingly penetrates the popular urban Romanian culture: each year there are hundreds of new book titles on alternative religions, mindfulness, and spiritual wellbeing distributed by the mainstream publishing houses, which are widely read and referred to in blogs, podcasts, newspapers, TV programs, with wider and wider ramifications in everyday life. A new industry of personal and spiritual growth has emerged and a new sector of services aimed at commercializing spiritual development and wellbeing has taken shape in Romania during the past decade. Workshops, courses, counselling services and online stores that promote various forms of spirituality are just a few examples of this extraordinarily booming business in contemporary Romania.

These developments are indicative of much deeper transformations: not only are these alternative forms of spirituality becoming an important part of popular culture, but they are becoming gradually incorporated in various professional fields as well: there is a growing presence of various forms of spirituality in innovative management proposals that aim at supplying the sector of human resources with programs of personal and spiritual development; in psychology there are openings toward various forms of trans-personal and integrative psycho-therapies that make use of spiritual techniques; and in medicine we can see the incorporation of holistic and alternative healing therapies. The incorporation of these alternative spiritualities in the various professional fields happens along the grain of a socio-demographic pattern and signals a shift in the structure of the religious field. First of all, the vast majority of the people that are articulating an ethics of authenticity based on these alternative spiritualities are from the urban and educated strata of Romania. This can be seen not only from the profile of the people present in these workshops, seminars and spiritual retreats, but also from the scientification of religion and the way these spiritualities are grounded on an strong claim to scientific validity. Belief plays an important part in these spiritualities, but it is the scientific predicament of these practices that marks their mode of functioning, especially in the way they are employed in the above-mentioned professional fields. The complex philosophical language games in which these spiritualities are embedded, the scientification of spiritual techniques and practices and the resort to a language of self-discovery and self-mastery that makes use of psychological concepts and ideas all hint to a very specific urban and educated socio-demographic segment that has become spiritual. In this respect certain segments of spaces that were thought to be secular are emerging as deeply spiritual and genuinely interested in spiritual growth.

This structural change within the religious field also makes visible a deep and radical transformation of the language and religious ontology employed by the networks and agents of spiritual transformations. The young, educated and urban strata of contemporary Romania are becoming more religious/spiritual and in this process the nature of the religious field has been altered dramatically. Their religiosity is very different from the one of their parents and grandparents and by this I don't mean that it is different morphologically, in terms of the content of their beliefs. The new spiritual field has mediated a new sense of the subject, a new structure of temporality, new modes of religious socialization, and a new relationship to worldliness – all of these constituting radical transformations of how traditional and modern religious fields have been operating in Romania in the last decades.

Because of the overlay between a distinctive type of subjectivity employed by these new forms of spirituality and a socio-demographical pattern that is active in the new creative sectors of the post-communist capitalist economy an important question needs to be addressed: are these new spiritualities constitutive of an emerging mode of ordo-liberal governmentality and a new work ethic that is relevant within the new corporate and creative work environment? Do these new spiritualities contribute to a neo-liberal subjectivity that is instrumental for how economic enterprises are run and are the new spiritualized forms of authenticity in any way connected to the cosmologies of capitalism and entrepreneurial practices of the self that are required by the dynamic transformation of the Romanian economy in past 25 years? By asking the question of what economic and political vectors these spiritualities mediate we have to be careful in avoiding a simple, reductionist answer. When Adorno (1994) analyses the column on astrology from the Los Angeles Times and concludes that the wide consumption of horoscopes that project the 'the stars down to earth' is a symptom of how the irrationality of capitalist economy is rationalized by the dream industry which instils a blind and optimistic faith in a higher authority that will make sure each individual destiny will be providentially cared for, he remains within a analytical framework that equates religious beliefs with false consciousness. This avenue of research has two main shortcomings. First of all it fails to take into account the complex ways in which such beliefs account for features of personal identity and practices of the self that make contemporary economic transformations relevant and plausible to the individual subject. The idea of social actors brainwashed and doped by ideological formations to accept an exploitative economic system remains a reductionist idea if this is not backed up by an ethnography of how people make sense of the world around them and the social context in which they are embedded, precisely through strange and counter-intuitive ideas such as horoscopes and astrology. Secondly, only a thorough ethnography of those spaces where these religious practices are

articulated and where the mediation between people's everyday lives and socio-economic systems takes place can the question of the connection between certain religious practices and the new cosmologies of capitalism be settled.

A rigorous ethnographic investigation must proceed from the assumption that behind apparently obscure and 'retrograde' ideas there are complex perspectives on the world that are integrated in subjectively meaningful ethics of authenticity. In the case of this booming field of alternative spiritualities, the beliefs and practices are indicative of a new creative transformation of subjectivity and a new understanding of one's self in relationship to contemporary societal and cultural transformations. The deployment of innovative techniques of self-realization and self-motivation to instantiate an interiority that emphasizes spiritual authenticity, autonomy, recursivity, a temporality structure anchored in the present and producing intense living and wellbeing are some of the hallmarks of these landmark transformations. It is this cultural emphasis on the self-production of a new subjectivity and its ramifications into the emergent economic governmentalization that ethnography has to document and to analyse: this way what seems like 'false consciousness' can appear as a new sense of authenticity and an audacious ethics of perseverance in an context of global competitiveness and demand for intense personal expressivity and spectacular consumption. But simultaneously, the field of alternative spiritualities can emerge as a counter-culture that connects these inner transformations to a radical critique of capitalism, inequality and consumer society, which attempts to give meaning to an increasingly fragmented, dislocated and meaningless world.

The ethnography I have carried out led me to both conclusions. The findings presented in this paper are grounded in an extensive research carried out as part of a research team that focused on the emergence of alternative spiritualities in contemporary Romania. The research involved extensive interviews with people experimenting with alternative spiritualities, but also with spiritual teachers that have extensive experience in this field and have initiated many other people in these practices. We tried to cover the most prominent forms of alternative spirituality and explored the way they are embedded in everyday life and biographical trajectories. Most of these alternative spiritualities are being taught in workshops and seminars and this meant that we had to attend these meetings in order to understand and become familiar with the specific practices and techniques of self-development and spiritual transformations. In present-day Romania there is a variety of spectrum of workshops offered: from spiritual retreats in nature, intensive courses, feature presentations, or festivals to week long courses and workshops where complex training and exercises take place. We tried to cover as much as possible these various forms of spiritual/religious transmission and analyse the way the new ideas and practices are appropriated. An important part of the research dealt with investigating some of the most important Romanian blogs and other

virtual spaces where these new spiritual ideas are circulated, promoted, and commented upon. This enabled us to map out a wider field of positions related to what these new spiritualities are and are not and to explore the arguments mobilized by popular authors in order to delimit these ideas and practices from what are perceived as heterodox innovations and esoteric deviations. Blogs, online lectures, portals of information, online magazines and publishing houses specialized in personal and spiritual development writings were an important source for us in order to identify the books and authors that are most read and quoted in this field. A rigorous content analysis was helpful for identifying the most important features of this emergent field and this allowed us to outline the innovative religious technologies of the self that break away with traditional religious spaces of socialization. The data collected within this research project is vast and complex, hence in this paper I make direct use only of a few of the sources and materials gathered.

In order to contextualize these ethnographic findings I have analyzed two existing statistical databases on religious attitudes and practices in Romania ('European Value Survey' and 'Religion and religious behaviour in Romania'). Although this data is useful for having a broad picture regarding the generational shifts in terms of religious beliefs and practices, it conveys only a limited perspective on the diverse and complex forms of alternative spirituality emerging in Romania.

Because of the prominence given within the field of alternative spirituality to practices that aim at capacitating the self to draw on its inner resources and transform its subjectivity through specific techniques and procedures into an autonomous, pro-active and creative being I found in Foucault's (2005, 2007, 2008) and Asad's (2003, 2009) work a conceptual framework through which I could analytically demarcate the ground-research and elaborate an operative focal point that made visible the common transformative technologies of this vast and diverse field of alternative spiritualities.

Although Foucault has written little on religion, he exerted a major influence on the field of religious studies; his work on pastoral power, bio-politics, ordo-liberal governmentality, and care of the self generated a paradigmatic shift in terms of how religious practices are analysed and it produced a new epistemological framework for understanding subjectivities as constituted through various technologies of religious power. Talal Asad's genealogy of religion and his studies on the formation of the secular (Asad, 2003, 2009) represent an insightful instance of how Foucault's complex and elaborate work has been appropriated in the anthropology of religion. The epistemological strategy that establishes the precedence of governmentalizing technologies over meaning formations and of authoritative power structures over culturally constructed life-worlds has allowed for a new analytical angle that has led to a rupture with a sociology and an anthropology of religion marked by phenomenological

and interpretative approaches. This was particularly important for the study of alternative spiritualities that since Luckmann's (1967) work on 'invisible religion' has been captured in a culturalist time-space continuum and was blocked in a research program that emphasized private religiosities, popular practices, de-institutionalized beliefs and religious ideas, virtual hyper-religiosities, post-modern assemblages of fragmented religions and engaged its findings in a never-ending debate that had as an explicit agenda to demonstrate that traces of religion (now transformed into ubiquitous spiritualities) survive in modern society in spite of the alleged secularization theories. It is this phenomenological program of research that produced oblivion to the political configurations of secular and religious subjectivities and to the impact that late capitalism and its governmentalizing strategies had on the religious field. It got stuck in monotonously emphasizing the diffuse minor transcendences of the everyday life-worlds, the constitutive meaning formation involved in patchwork-spiritualities and the post-modern revival of neo-pagan exotic identities alongside sci-fi and movie-inspired religions. In doing so it ignored power structures, economic assemblages, ethical rationalities, and state governmentalities of secular and religious practices of the self.

In terms of how spiritualities are researched, Carrette and King's (2005) work has proven very valuable for breaking with the interpretativist tradition. Drawing on Foucault's work, their studies (Carrette 2002, 2007) have contributed not only to revealing how spiritualities are commodified, but also how they are connected to rebranding identities along the lines of inner authenticity and exotic consumption. Moreover, they showed the role Western psychology has played in producing the framework for enabling a new spiritual understanding of subjectivity as a locus of intervention and therapeutic adjustments.

Nikolas Rose's (1990, 1996, 1998) work on psychology and power has emphasized the important role the psy-disciplines have played in the implementation of technologies of intervention and social-scientific devices of production of the self which promoted the mass consumption of psychological expertise (through therapies, clinical mediation, self-help literature) and the tremendous influence this had in shaping an self-regulating and self-enhancing subjectivity. The neo-liberal governmentality and bio-political control of liberal societies could not be achieved without psychology and the therapeutic expertise on subjectivity that has spread in educational establishments, working environments, governmental agencies, healthcare, and social assistance programs. The popularization of specific technologies of the self that encouraged subjects to self-govern themselves through becoming more autonomous, creative, entrepreneurial, and fulfilled has played an important role in contemporary capitalist societies and this analytical focus enables us to understand how neo-liberalism is reproduced through what appears as a transformative ethics of self-realization.

What is problematic with Rose's argument is that he suspects the existence of "indirect alliances" between governing structures of advanced liberal democracies and the networks of expertise that promote these ethics of self-transformation through responsibility, autonomy, and self-regulation. Even if he insists to de-link this from the institution of the State and emphasizes the variety of procedures and strategies through which these expertises are deployed, he makes clear that the new therapeutic culture fulfils the function of a transmission belt between political and economic government agencies and the socialization of citizens as self-regulating subjectivities. For instance, it is the right-wing Tory government that has advanced these policies (Rose 1998:165) and have contributed to the general acceptance of how democratic governments should function through forging 'enterprising' individuals committed to shaping themselves in accordance with economic rationalities.

My argument is that the postulate of this allegiance between the experts of subjectivity transformation and policy/decision making does not have to be put forward because these technologies of the self can be anchored, as I will show, in forms of spirituality that escape both state structures and institutionalized religious establishments. The economic environment, especially those sectors that experiment with innovative forms of management and creative policies for developing human resources, can indeed capture these spiritualized technologies of the self and employ them for re-enchanting capitalist cycles of production. But the globalizing culture of alternative spiritualities into which capitalist enterprises tap is much larger than the economic spaces and the environment of work it seeks to regulate. It does overlap with a work ethic and with the (self-)fine-tuning of a subjectivity that can connect to the contemporary demand for creative and competitive labour, but in itself the field of alternative spiritualities constitutes a component of a wider cultural ontology in which religion, myth, and ritual still play an important role, in spite the fact that it has undergone a complex transformation due to scientification and psychologization of spirituality. I argue that only an analytical approach that connects both the exploration of this new cultural ontology and the economic neo-liberal governmentality into a helix that re-forces itself and produces a compelling mode of subjectivity which exerts am increasing powerful fascination over the minds and souls of the contemporary citizens of the world will allow us to capture the complexities of the field of alternative spiritualities. This requires a substantial connection of two different projects that in recent time have opened great avenues of research: first, Charles Taylor's (1992, 2009) genealogy of the *secular age* and analysis of the transformative processes that have led us to an *immanent frame* and a self-understanding embedded in an ethics of authenticity marked by self-realization that has set the structural condition of existence for both secular and religious modes of being; and second, Boltanski and Chiapello's (2007) account of the *new spirit of capitalism* and the way the management of work incorporates

previous social criticism and the demand for a more just environment and adjustment of justification claims in gaining social legitimacy for its mode of functioning. Such an approach also makes possible to reveal that these two registers do not always overlap: sometimes this vast cultural ontology employed by the field of alternative spiritualities goes against the current economic transformations and constitutes a critique of present-day consumerist society. It puts forth the idea of alternative community that is critical of class configuration and of power structures embedded in life-styles that revolve around materialism and profit accumulation. It is also very critical of the commodification of the wider field of alternative spiritualities and of the spiritual teachers that enrich themselves from selling services of spiritual development to people working in corporations.

In this paper I will look at the contemporary field of alternative spirituality simultaneously through these two lenses. I will not analyse all the specific features of this field, but just a single one centred on the development of a new spiritual self and I will contrast it with the traditional processes of religious socialization.
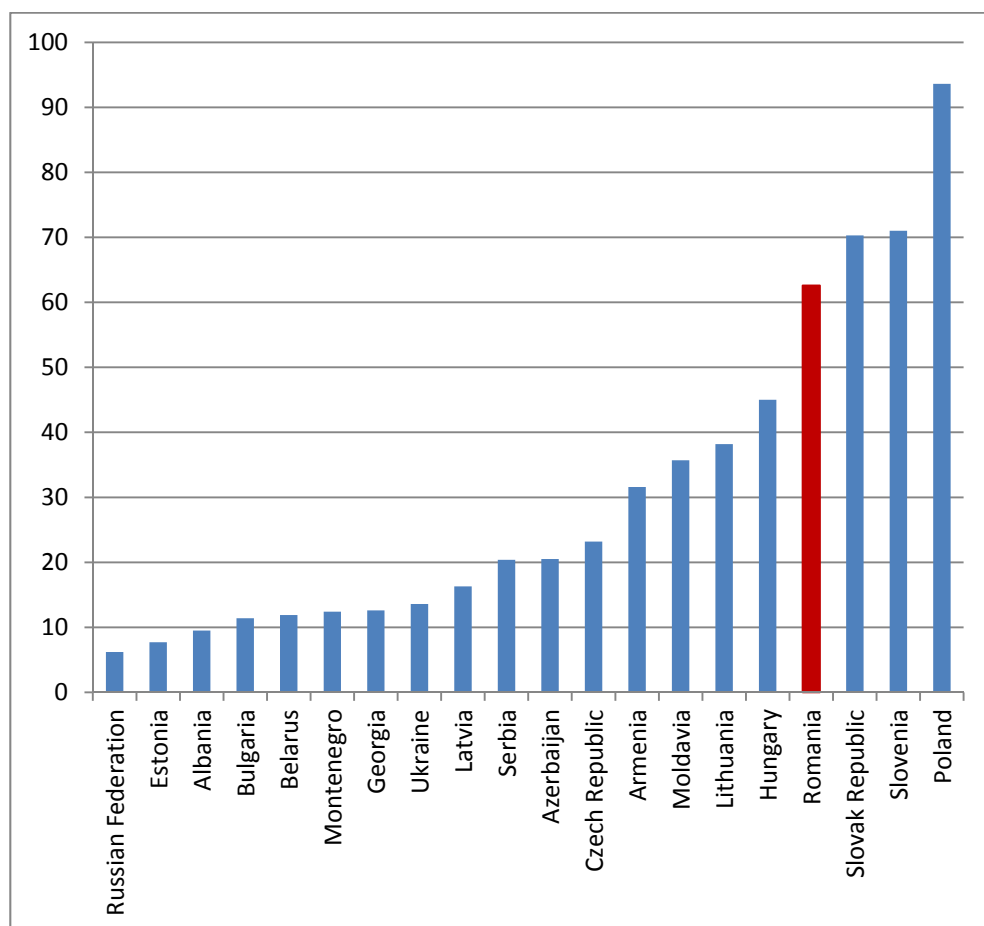
The erosion of institutionalized religion and openings toward spirituality among post-socialist generations from Romania

In this section of the paper I will analyse some of the available statistical data in order to outline the growing interest in spirituality that exists among the generations socialized during the post-socialist period. The data that we have at our disposal is not well suited for this task: most of the cross-national surveys that gather information on religious values and practices focus on institutionalized religion only and have not been designed to reveal the growing interest in a variety of forms of alternative spirituality that are becoming increasing popular in Romania. In spite of this shortcoming, the analysis of the existing surveys enable us to emphasize the decline of institutionalized religion, point out some of the important transformations of the wider religious space, and outline some proximities to openings to the field of spiritualities.

In the Romanian society religious socialization has played an important role: attending church together with one's family was for a long time an important feature of family life and this has been passed on along generations. If we compare Romania with other former socialist countries we can notice that in terms of attending church together with parents at age of twelve (institutionalized religious socialization), this country ranks among the first: 63% of the population claim that they have attended church at least one time a month when they were children and only 6.2% of the population state they have not usually attended church during childhood. This indicator is the best comparative proxy available for

the importance of religion within the family life and my argument is that analysing the importance of religious socialization within families across generations is a good indicator of the way religious practice changes its social form from one generation to another. This allows us to see not only the degree to which people were exposed to various practices of religious transmission but also the specific way in which religion was practiced: together with the family and attending as a family the religious services offered by the institution of the church.

Figure 1. Religious socialization in post-communist countries

Source: European Value Survey, 2008

As we can see from the following table, the importance of familial religious socialization decreases significantly from one generation to another with the important difference that the youngest generation born after 1981 has experienced a general increase in religious socialization as compared to the previous generation (born after 1965). It is important to notice that religious socialization constitutes a decision of the parents and not of the respondents and this means that the generations that were socialized towards the end of the socialist period had attended church with their parent less that the generations socialized during the post-socialist period. It is hard to tell if this difference in religious socialization is the outcome of a gradual individual secularization (religion ceases to be meaningful in everyday life at the personal level) or it is an effect of the specific Romanian communist policies that aimed to implement an atheistic world-view and advanced this secular perspective through the state and party structures.

Table 1.

Religious socialization and religious attendance across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
Religious socialization	61.3%	56.2%	60.7%	70.3%
Present-day religious attendance	38.5%	41%	54.8%	58.4%

Source: European Value Survey, 2008

Nevertheless, this difference in religious socialization within the family does not translate into present-day church attendance. There is no direct link between attending church with one's family as a child and attending church by oneself as an adult. The younger generation (born 1981-1990), in spite the fact that it has been more religiously socialized, does not attend religious services more than the previous generations: it can be easily seen how institutionalized religion is eroding from one generation to the other by the fact that the youngest generation has the lowest attendance rate. The discrepancy between religious socialization (in terms of attending church during childhood with one's parents) and religious practice (in terms of attending religious services as an adult) does not tell in itself much – it could

be just an indicator of an ineffective process of religious socialization. But this is not the case, as we will see, since the younger generations retain an interest in religion, but this interest takes a different social form than the previous generations. My argument is that this change marks a wider transformation of the religious field.

The belief in God is shared by the vast majority of the population, there are only small differences between the different generations in terms of believing in God (between 96.5 % and 97.3% for the four analyzed cohorts): the overwhelming majority of Romanians do not share an atheistic world-view in spite the fact that for almost four decades that was the official state policy.

But what differentiates them to a great extent is the object of this belief. The traditional Christian representation of a personal God that engages into a personal relationship with the human being is eroding from one generation to the next and this is replaced by a more abstract, spiritualized representation of God as Spirit or Life Force. Among the younger generation that has been socialized during the post-communist period this religious representation is shared by more than half (54.3 %) of the respondents while the traditional representation is in their case most eroded (28.3 %). Comparing the younger generation with all three other generations we can notice important structural changes in terms of the object of their belief and so we can point to a significant shift in the way religion is appropriated by the people socialized during the post-socialist period: there is a growing trend of moving away from the traditional religious interpretation and practices that were specific to the previous generations.

Table 2.

Objects of belief across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
Personal God	28.3%	34.3%	38.2%	44.9%
Spiritual or Life Force	54.3%	46.2%	47.4%	39.6%

Source: European Value Survey, 2008

This is also consistent with the way these generations perceive themselves: we can notice a strong tendency among the younger generations (born 1981-1990) to think of themselves as being less religious and thinking of religion as something that does not offer strengths and comfort anymore, but at the same time we can see that they manifest an increased interest in 'spirituality'. When

asked the question "Do you think of yourself as a religious person, how spiritual would you say you are, that is how strongly are you interested in the sacred and the supernatural?" the proportion of people that manifest interest towards spirituality is the highest among the young generations: 61.17%, as compared to 55.07% in the 1965-1981 generation, 57.17% of the 1950-1964 generation and 52.68% of the 1925-1949 generation. This contrasts with the perception of being a religious person, in the case of which we can point out a reversed trend among the post-socialist generation: only 71.5 % of those born in 1981-1990 think of themselves as being religious in comparison with 76.4 % of those born in 1965-1981, 83.6 % of those born in 1950-1964, and 84.9 % of those born in 1925-1949. There are also significant changes regarding how the four generations relate to institutionalized religion: while 87.5% of the older generation claims that religion is a source of strength and comfort, only 76.4 % of the younger generation think the same. This, again, signals an important shift in the way religion is experienced among the younger generation and hints to the decrease of traditional forms of religion and the popularity of spiritualities in present day Romania among the people that were socialized during the post-socialist period.

Table 3.

Religion and spirituality across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
Are you a religious person?	71.5%	76.4%	83.6%	84.9%
Do you receive strength and comfort from religion?	76.4%	83%	86.6%	87.5%
Are you interested in spirituality?	61.17%	55.1%	57.1%	52.7%

Source: European Value Survey, 2008

For the argument of this paper it is important to show that this interest in spiritualities over religion among the younger generation from Romania is associated with a significant decrease of the role of the church in their lives and that this produces de-institutionalized and individualized forms of spirituality that are departing from the way the previous generations experienced religion, which was to a great degree centred on the institution of the church and religious socialization within the families. The next table draws a representational map

of how respondents perceive how adequate the activity of the church is to spiritual, moral, familial and social issues. If we start from the assumption that the church has a relatively homogeneous liturgical and ecclesial activity across the country and that its pastoral functions are structurally similar, then the way its activities are perceived by the different generations constitute a good indicator of the role the church plays in their own life. As we can see from the next table there is a minor gradual trend among the younger generations to limit the role of the church to spiritual and moral issues and see it as inadequate in terms of the answers the church gives to familial and social issues. Within each generation there is a tendency to restrict the activity of the church to spiritual and moral matters, but this position is more prominent within the younger generation where the gap between spiritual/moral and familial/social functions of the church is the widest. Also when we analyse these functions across generations we can notice that each one of them (spiritual, moral, familial, social) is lowest among those born in 1981-1990.

Table 4.

Role of the church across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
Church / spiritual	83.3%	87.9%	90.8%	88.7%
Church / moral	62.6%	65.5%	72%	75.9%
Church / familial	55.2%	59.9%	63.9%	65.8%
Church / social	30.6%	34.1%	38.3%	41.6%

Source: European Value Survey, 2008

This data is consistent with research from other surveys regarding religious representations and practices in Romania[3]: the younger generation thinks the church not only offers inadequate answers to the above-mentioned issues, but also to matters regarding their own personal faith in God. A bit more than half (58.8%) of the younger generation states that the institution of the Church is not relevant for their religious quests and matters of faith. We can again notice

[3] The statistical analysis in this section relies on the survey *Religion and religious behavior in Romania* from 2011 which used representative statistical samples for all major religions from Romania. The data presented in this section focuses only on the Christian Orthodox religion (who make up approximately 85% of the entire Romanian population) because some of the religious indicators are not applicable to Protestant and Evangelical religious groups, such as for example confessing to a priest.

how big the generational differences are in terms of their positions towards their Church (58.8% for 1981-1990 cohort, 65.2% for the 1965-1980 cohort, 70.7% for the 1950-1964 cohort and 81% for the 1919-1949 cohort). This has an important impact on the frequency with which they ask representatives of the church to bless objects of current use (house, cars, etc.). This is significantly lower among the younger generation than the older generation and shows the different modes of appropriating the sacred in their lives.

It is interesting to notice that the attitudes towards priests too have changed dramatically between the different generations. It was customary in the Orthodox Church to have a religious advisor/director to whom one confesses and from whom they receive spiritual guidance. This is no longer the case for the generations socialized during the post-socialist period: only 38.9% of them still have a religious advisor from the church in comparison with 61.4% of the 1919-1949 generation. The same erosion of the social function of the priest can be seen by looking at how many people turn to priests for advice in time of sorrow. Overall less than half of the population still consults with priests in such periods, but this is not evenly distributed among the four generation: the younger ones do this significantly less than the older generations.

Table 5.

The erosion of the role of the priest across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	**Born 1965-1980**	**Born 1950-1964**	**Born 1919-1949**
Have a religious advisor	38.9%	41.6%	58.3%	61.4%
Talk to priests in time of sorrow	28.2%	30.8%	34.5%	47.1%

Source: Survey - Religion and religious behaviour in Romania, 2011

On an individual level religion still plays an important role, but in the public sphere religion has a limited impact. This is arguably in spite of the fact that the Church plays an important symbolic role for the construction of Romanian national identity. One way to look at this issue is to see how people perceive and legitimize the relationship between the state and religion. Currently the state financially subsidizes those religious denominations that are legally recognized by the state; but only 56.7% of the population agree to this and, again, this is unevenly distributed among the four generations analysed. Only 50% of the younger generation think that this arrangement should continue. It

is also revealing to look at the stance towards the idea that only people that have religious faith should occupy public functions within the local and national state structure. In this case there is a more homogeneous position across the generations in opposing the overlap between state and religious function, but a difference between the younger and older generations still remains.

Table 6.

Separation of state and church across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
State should finance churches	50%	54%	55.6%	65.2%
Public functions should be occupied by people that have religious faith	48.2%	54%	58.5%	56.2%

Source: Survey - Religion and religious behaviour in Romania, 2011

The younger generations, in spite the fact that they were more religiously socialized, overwhelmingly believe in God, and think of themselves as spiritual, tend to depart more from institutionalized forms of religion than the previous generations: they attend church less, think that the church is strictly relevant for spiritual and moral issues and not for familial, social, and political issues, and tend to operate a slightly stronger separation between church and state. The traditional relationship with the priest has changed as well: the younger generations cease to have a spiritual director and reach out less for his advice when they are experiencing personal sorrows. The expression of this gradual dissolution of the institution of the church and its traditional functions is given by the growing perception of the younger generation that religion needs to modernize to fulfil the needs of the people: 50% of those born between 1981-1990 think that this should happen in comparison with 34% of the 1919-1949 generation.

In spite of the fact that the younger generations show a greater degree of secularization when it comes to institutionalized forms of religion there is a significant growing acceptance among them of specific religious beliefs. Whether we look at traditional Christian forms of belief (such as the belief in heaven, hell, and final judgment) or general religious beliefs (such as belief in miracles, belief in soul) or beliefs in alternative forms of religious ideas (such as astrology, charms, and reincarnation) we can notice that there is a general trend of decline of these beliefs from one generation to the other, but that the youngest generation

socialized during the post-socialist period is again an exception, in the sense that among them we see a general growth. The fact that there is gradual erosion of these beliefs among the other generations does not imply a progressive decline of religion as assumed by an historicist secularization process, it only hints to the different social contexts in which the religious life has been embedded and shaped: what differentiates the post-socialist period from the previous periods is an increase of social and religious pluralization and a growing contact with multiple religious traditions and practices due to cultural and social globalization.

Table 7.

Religious beliefs across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
God	91.7%	91.2%	96%	97.9%
Devil	73.1%	64.8%	68.7%	76.8%
Sin	86.6%	80.4%	90.9%	92.3%
Soul	89.8%	84.8%	87.7%	94.4%
Heaven	79.2%	77.6%	82.1%	84.9%
Hell	76.4%	72.8%	78.6%	81.4%
Final Judgment	64.4%	60.4%	62.3%	73.3%
Life after death	56.9%	50%	50.4%	59.6%
Miracles	73.6%	64%	61.9%	61.4%
Reincarnation	22%	22%	16.7%	15.1%
Bad charms	64.4%	60%	59.9%	70.9%
Astrology	34.7%	31.2%	23.8%	20%
People with special powers (healing, clairvoyance)	48.6%	47.6%	48.4%	46%

Source: Survey - Religion and religious behaviour in Romania, 2011

It is interesting to notice that when it comes to the question of how different religious traditions are perceived by the four generations none has a more open attitude towards other religions than the generation socialized during the post-socialist period. This means that this generation has a more de-centred religious experience and regards other forms of religious experience as having value in themselves, which is an important precondition for practicing alternative forms of spirituality.

Table 8.

Position towards other religions across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
There is only one true religion	29.6%	34.4%	40.5%	40.7%
There is only one true religion, but other contain fundamental truths as well	46.8%	40.8%	33.3%	34.4%

Source: Survey - Religion and religious behaviour in Romania, 2011

This can also be seen from the way they regard the idea of a single religion as being the true one: the post-socialist generation is the one least in accordance with this idea. Only 29.6% affirm that there is only one true religion in comparison with 34.4% of the 1965-1981 generation, 40.5% of the 1950-1964 generation and 40.7% of the 1925-1949 generation.

Finally, the position of this generation towards religious education in school is also edifying for the argument of this paper. The Romanian society recently underwent a big debate regarding the teaching of religious education and whether this should be mandatory in schools or elective (depending on the decision of the parents). Again it is important to notice that the younger generation is slightly more favourable to teaching religion in schools as a mandatory class in comparison with the 1965-1981 generation, but still not more than the previous generations. But also it is the one generation most in favour of teaching classes in which religions other than their own are taught as well (in opposition with studying only about the religion to which they belonged) and are the ones most in favour of the idea that this class should be taught by professors that have a degree in history of religion (as opposed to having it taught by pastors and priests - as a form of religious catechism).

Table 9.

Religious education across intergenerational cohorts

	Born 1981-1990	Born 1965-1980	Born 1950-1964	Born 1919-1949
Religion should be a mandatory class	49.5%	46.8%	54%	60.4%
Students should attend classes where more religions are taught	41.7%	30.4%	28.2%	26.3%
Teacher should be expert in history of religions	55.1%	47.2%	44.8%	36.1%

Source: Survey - Religion and religious behaviour in Romania, 2011

Among the younger generations there is a gradual decline of institutionalized religion, an increased perception that the church does not offer adequate answers to their religious quests, and a tendency to separate the church from social and political matters and to reduce its legitimacy to spiritual and moral matters, yet this does not lead to secularization but to a growing interest in spirituality. We can see among them a growing interest in different types of beliefs (that are syncretically accepted) and a more open attitude towards different types of religious traditions and spiritualities. This is also consistent with the way they perceive themselves as less religious, but more spiritual than the previous generations. Although the dataset is very broad in terms of the religious ideas and practices it surveys and insufficient for capturing more complex trends related to the emergence of a culture of spiritual and personal development of the self, this nevertheless allows us to position our ethnographic research into a wider social context regarding the transformation of the main religious structures in contemporary Romania.

Radical individualism and the self-development of the spiritual subject

One of the most important features of the field of alternative spiritualities is the employment of a distinctive type of subjectivity that is self-referential and seeks to find in its own interiority the resources and means for self-development and self-amplification. It produces not only a spirituality of interiority which becomes the locus of religious experience (as the one operated by Sufism in Islam or by Pietism in Protestant Christianity), but also a distinctive type of a productive subjectivity that spiritualizes a circular looping of the self in order to enhance its well-being, immanent authenticity, and validation. The radical self-iteration of the subject that encloses itself and taps into its inner transformative resources represents an innovative projection and socialization of subjectivity that is often encountered within the new field of alternative spiritualities. In terms of religious experience this is translated through an immanentization of the object of faith: this ceases to be external to the subject, it becomes internal and indwelled; the spiritual gaze is not towards an alterity, but towards the newly discovered self that is an integral component of a wider Presence, Force, Energy, or Divinity.

> Your mind tells you to validate your-self. Because this is what reiki is. Self-validation. A mantra of validation. And from this comes healing: from acceptance, from self-acceptance, from understanding the shortcomings that you have (A.Z., Reiki master, personal interview).

Within the Christian theological traditions in Romania (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism and Evangelical) the religious experience is always conceptualized as a mediated (through church hierarchy) or unmediated (personal belief) encounter with a Greater Being, even when this is apophatically conceived as Non-Being or Nothingness. The traditional religious experience dwells on the postulation of an epistemological religious dualism that distinguishes between the subject that believes and the Subject that acts as the object of the belief. The progression of the self towards God involves in all of these Christian traditions the idea of communion with divine beings: even in the most modern forms of Christianity (American Evangelical movements), where there is a strong emphasis on the religious subject and personal religious experience, the ideas of encounter, relationship, and dialogue continues to be a substantial aspect of how the religious experience is defined. The religious work on one's self is very important, but this always takes place by projecting the transformation of the subject in relationship to another Subject. Let's take as an example a fragment from a sermon by the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch regarding the relationship of the believer with God:

> We enrich ourselves in God, first through faith and gratitude when we give Him thanks for the gift of life and health and for all the help received from Him. Through prayer, the connection of man to God, the love of God becomes the fortune of our soul. When man binds himself to Him, the grace of God enriches the soul, it makes it glow, makes it kind, uplifting, it humanizes it. We become even richer in God when through the gifts received from Him, as signs of His love, we also give to others. The purpose of today's gospel is to teach us that God's mercy prompts us to be merciful as well.[4]

The religious subject experiences enlightenment and spiritual progression in relation with a divine Being. In contrast with this, the new spiritual environment emphasizes the development of a spiritual self that turns to itself as the central axis of the religious experience. The main idea of this spiritual practice is self-referentiality and inwardness. This does not imply the production of a mystical inner space in which the spiritual experience of God takes place; it means that the subject looks within the self in order to discover in-its-self the power and vitality to become an authentic presence. The generalization of this subjective recursiveness and the deployment of the Self as both the agent and the source of spiritual development represent a radical new idea within the Romanian religious space:

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[4] http://basilica.ro/patriarhul-romaniei-prin-rugaciune-iubirea-lui-dumnezeu-devine-bogatia-sufletului-nostru, [last accessed: 15.12.2016], my own translation, emphasis in original.

Did it happen in your life to achieve something from nothing, only because you wanted that certain something? Certainly, it happened to you. And now let me tell you why: because in that moment when you wished [this] you were in the present, you were connected to you own Self. When you thought about that certain something in this state of connection it was as if you showed your own Self what you wanted, and it, as a strong guardian of yours, said "So be it!" And the entire universe listened to the message from GOD THAT SAID "SO BE IT!" AND IT HAS BEEN DONE. Your Self is always with you, it is in your interiority, it is your guardian angel, it is also God, also the Holy Ghost, also Saint X, everything you look at on the outside is in fact inside you. Not long ago I read this story in which some deities that were coordinating humans on the fields where they were working, were discussing where to hide the power of man so that man doesn't realize how strong he is and refuses to be obedient to them in the future. Everyone [deities] found a place, namely: either in the Sun, in nature, in water, in air, but one of them said: "let's hide their power in their interiority because they will never look for it there". And from then on the power of Man lays in him, but our man always looks for it in the outside, in celestial bodies, among the initiated, in religious advisors, cults, nature, etc.[5]

This mode of subjectification that sacralizes the self is not an exotic example encountered within the field of alternative spiritualities, this is not an Oriental guru speaking about an out of ordinary experience, but a psychologist and motivational speaker that expresses in words a common assumption embedded in the subjects in the field. The creation of a self-referential spiritual self is one of the most important aspects of these new spiritualities that is reproduced in many different alternative form of spirituality regardless of their morphological aspects, in workshops and seminars, in books and blogs. The recursiveness of the self is not a radical marginal idea, it is a new technology of self and a new type of subjectivity that is advanced by many transformative projects taking hold of highly educated people from Romania. In a more secular language the exact same idea occurs in various neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) workshops and popular techniques of reprogramming the self in order to become a happy, fulfilled, and proactive person. There is congruence between the (secular) personal development programs and the spiritual ones in terms of how the subject is deployed - as a resourceful interiority that can be mastered by each individual in order to enhance its own genuine subjectivity:

Trust in you means that you can start from anywhere, anytime, being conscious of what you have to offer and that you are an important stake for any country. Trust in yourself is not about what you knew and what you did until now, but about how you can learn and become anything. Trust in yourself is not what you feel when you are complimented,

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[5] http://www.holisterapi.ro/cand-traiesti-in-prezent-esti-conectata-la-sinele-tau-divin, [last accessed: 15.12.2016], my own translation.

but what stays when the things you hear are not pretty at all. Trust in yourself it is not the great title from your job, but that what makes you feel alive and full of life, even if you choose that way and know you can make a future for yourself out of this.[6]

The projection of a self that finds in it-self the required resources to live an authentic and spiritually abundant life constitutes an important structural change within the Romanian religious field. It is important to emphasize that this is not just an exotic phantasm, but the most important device that is employed by both alternative spiritualities and personal development programs that popularize various forms of NLP. It is encountered in most alternative spirituality programs even if these have different origins, employ different historic networks and address different groups of people. The idea that the subject becomes the object of the spiritual quest and that spiritual subjectification becomes a radical immanent project constitutes the basis of a new religious counter-culture that shapes more and more the imagination of believers from Romania.

An important consequence of this project of the self is that the religious community fades in importance, and it virtually disappears. Within the various Christian denominations from Romania the religious experience cannot be imagined without the religious community and the ecclesial gatherings which are a vital part of what it means to grow spiritually. Within Christian Orthodoxy and Catholicism the liturgical participation and the communion with the 'Body of Christ' represent vital requirements for all believers; within the Evangelical communities being part of a local church and getting actively involved in its religious activities is a consequence of acknowledging that each lay-believer has been called to become a priest and potentially assume a clerical position within the church; even in the Protestant churches (Lutheran and Calvinist) where church attendance is the lowest, the religious community is an important aspect of the spiritual practice; all the individualizing religious practices (reading the scriptures, praying, personal belief, etc.) enfold within a local religious community. Within the traditional field of religion there always was a communitarian vector embedded and the way the believer was religiously socialized always entailed the requirement of social belonging and religious fellowship. This does not mean that Christian ideas and practices don't thrive outside the institution of the Church, or that these religions don't develop individualistic tendencies that weaken the fabrics of the religious community. Nevertheless, the main tendency of the traditional religious field and one of its central technologies of religious socialization and mobilization is that of church attendance.

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[6] http://www.nicoletapopliceanu.com/increderea-in-sine/ [last accessed: 15.12.2016], my own translation.

This aspect radically changes in most of the alternative spiritualities projects. The spiritual awakening produces a distinctive type of subjectivity that does not need the others in order to grow spiritually. Relying on one's own self is the single resource needed in order to experience spiritual fulfilment, and this deems the religious community obsolete. Depending on others means a lack of autonomy and a lack of spiritual maturity: the whole idea of spiritual development is to become a pro-active person capable of finding the inner resilience to overcome the obstacles of life and if this does not happen, to become invulnerable to them and experience in yourself the needed Presence and Peace. The spiritualized subject learns to discover in him/her-self all the required answers and it is socialized to become as a subject with its own authoritative truth:

> In what way does it help you to find out who you are, when you can decide any moment who you want to be? And if someone could give the answers you search for so much, how would like to be them [the answers]. Because... guess what?! You are your own Master/Teacher/Healer/Prophet, everything else is only 'signalling marks' that guide you to find your own Answers, Truth, Way...[7]

In comparison with the traditional religious field this represents a radical new innovation. Here, not the self-centring of the self was important, but the exact opposite: the social integration within a community of saved believers. A passage from the Epistle to Corinthians written by St. Paul that is often quoted in the sermons and religious text in Romanian churches states:

> Just as a body, though one entity, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. [...] Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues[d]? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-31, New International Version, The Bible)

Within the field of alternative spiritualities various gatherings and networks are created, but the idea behind them is not to form a religious community. Workshops, seminars, classes are important as a tool of spiritual transmission, but the result of this is not the formation of religious community

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[7] http://copiicurcubeu.ro/ce-conteaza-cu-adevarat/ [last accessed: 15.12.2016], my own translation.

in the Weberian sense.[8] These networks developed within the field of alternative spiritualities are occasional and temporal. Their only purpose is to help out the individuals to become aware of their inner spiritual capabilities and to mediate a transaction (sometimes monetized) between a person that has the spiritual know-how and the individual that wants to acquire techniques of self-development. These occasional networks aim at igniting a spiritual awakening in persons that most of the time are already open to this realm and equip them with the necessary teaching and instruments to become self-sufficient spiritual subjects. This does not produce a permanent religious community or a communitarian ideology in which becoming part of an ecclesial unit is valorised as an essential part of spiritual development. Nor does it produce a permanent master-disciple relationship. The new spiritual subject does not need a clerical hierarchy - even if this is referred to - this is secondary in relation to the individual subject who discovers that his/her spiritual interiority already contains the possibility of fulfilment. There are many spiritual teachers and many socializing units (workshops, tutorials, courses), but all of them aim to help the spiritual subject discover that its own subjectivity is an inexhaustible resource of joy and that mastering the spiritual techniques, truths, and practices will enable an autonomous connection to this source. This is why these spiritual teachers do not ask for restrictive membership and their teaching does not produce unique and exclusive spiritual ways to follow: they are compatible and the spiritual competences are inter-changeable precisely because they all mediate the access to the resourceful inner self.

> I went to that [group] meditation just so, because I had to meet someone, to give a book to someone that was there. Somebody gave me a book to give to someone, this was the context. I am not going to group meditations with other reiki practitioners. [Interviewer: Why so?] Because this is not the essence of reiki. The essence of reiki is the dialogue with the self. The true reiki practitioner is that who understand that it is just a mirror for the you [addressing the interviewer] and everything that the you take from that process of healing and knowledge is your own merit and his merit [reiki practitioner] is that of reflection. In the moment when we start to credit ourselves, that I heal you, we are already in the area of ego-idolatry. The process is bilateral. In this moment [addressing the interviewer] you as well are a master to me (A.Z. Reiki master, personal interview).

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[8] "Such a transformation of a personal following into a *permanent congregation is the normal process* by which the doctrine of the prophets enters into everyday life, as the function of a permanent institution. The disciples or apostles of the prophets thereupon become mystagogues, teachers, priests or pastors (or a combination of them all), serving an association dedicated to exclusively religious purposes, namely the *congregation of laymen*." Weber, 1978: 454 [emphasis added].

What constitutes a radical novelty for the Romanian religious field is the imagination of a new dispositive and of new spiritual techniques that authenticate the self as its own resource of spiritual growth and at the same time entrust and capacitate the self with the power to creatively renew its interiority. A pro-active self, an autonomous self, a self that knows it is both the agent and the object of spiritual development, an individualized self that does not need a religious community and does not rely on an ethic of brotherliness (Weber, 1978) is at the centre of these spiritual innovations. Something truly remarkable has to have happened in order for the field to register a switch from the traditional religious logic of kenosis (an emptiness from the human decayed nature and acceptance of the sufferings of the Cross, that is still so prevalent in Romanian Christianity) to a perspective that emphasizes that power of the self to achieve everything and to become its own authoritative legitimating frame for an immanent plenitude:

> You have the power to create everything you want in your life, and this process starts with the vision you have. How do you see the world in which we live? As a vast universe of infinite possibilities or you are not capable of imagining a new person, a fantastic collaborator?[9]

Conclusive remarks

The gradual erosion of institutionalized religion and the developing area of alternative spiritualities represent some of the most influential changes of the Romanian religious field in the past decade. Christianity in its various denominational forms continues to be the most popular religion, but among the urban and educated strata there is a clear opening towards alternative forms of spirituality. Yoga classes, meditation, complementary healing techniques, holotropic breathing, reiki, theta healing, shamanism, spiritual development workshops - to name just a few of the options available - have become an integral part of the contemporary Romanian religious environment. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to consider these changes just in terms of the multiplication of world-views or in terms of morphological differentiation of objects of belief. This is not a just a 'post-modernization of religions', the effects of globalization of local religious practices and the emergence of new form of religious eclecticism. Something much deeper has happened in the past decade in Romania, namely a profound and a radical structural change of the religious field. In spite of the

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[9] http://www.nicoletapopliceanu.com/ganduri-pentru-o-dimineata-magica/ [last accessed: 15.12.2016], my own translation.

vast diversity of practices and the various religious ideas that are actualized in this new field of alternative forms of spirituality, there are several features that cut through most of these emergent practices and constitute a substantial alteration of the religious field.

By emphasizing these communalities I don't mean to say that the variety and diversity of these spiritualities are in fact indistinguishable, or that the differences that they engage are negligible. Quite the contrary: there is an ever increasing spectrum of ideas, practices, projects, and transformative requirements that one finds in this expanding field which are highly innovative and creative. But at the same time, in spite of this kaleidoscopic religious rhizomatic ramifications there are some important features that recurrently appear in most of these spiritualities and certain proximities in terms of how these are appropriated by believers. This constitutes, I argue, a substantial alteration of the wider Romanian religious field and produce several discontinuities with how the religious space has functioned so far. In this paper I have dealt mainly with how spiritualities are decoupled from traditional religious communities and with the individualized forms of believing that produce a new sense of subjectivity centred on the amplification and development of one's own self.

But there are other important structural changes of the religious field that need to be explored and that are important features of emergent spiritualities. The spiritual subjectification I have described here is embedded in a new ontology of presence and a temporality structure that produces a radical form of presentism. Salvation is not about a future spiritual kingdom anymore, nor about the restoration of past tradition, but the spiritual valorisation of this very present, the here-and-now in which the illuminated subject can find fulfilment and happiness. This also produces a new ethic of authenticity centred on self-realization that shifts from traditional moral concerns with the creation of an integrated and just community or with a righteous and ascetic way of life as opposed to the worldly, secular one. The field of spiritualities operates an opening to multiple religious traditions and to the idea that all of them contain spiritual truths from which the subject needs to learn: this generates a cosmopolitan syncretism that legitimizes the appropriation of divergent spiritual techniques, religious ideas, and ritualized practices as long as they mediate a process of self-discovery and spiritual self-emancipation. It also produces a strong reaction against any form of dogmatism and religious exclusiveness, which is considered to be the hallmark of traditional religions from which the field of alternative spiritualities have to distinguish themselves, and leads to the abandonment of all forms of radicalism based on religious dichotomies which institute a scission between a community of believers and the profane world. All these features of the

field of alternative spiritualities remain the topic of future research. An important focus of research has to be set as well on the ways these alternative spiritualities are embedded in various professional fields.

In management there is a growing awareness that the classic personal and professional development programs for workers are insufficient and that they have to be complemented with programs that are open towards spiritualities, which enable employees to reach their full potential as human beings within the organizations where they labour. Spiritual entrepreneurialism within the field of management of human resources means engaging one's whole being, body-mind-soul, in becoming a proactive, creative and resourceful person, but it also means acquiring various spiritual techniques (meditation, holistic perspective, spiritual NLP, the ontologization of the present) that mediate the production of such a subjectivity.

In the field of medicine and healthcare there is a wide tendency to use alongside allopathic medical treatment complementary medical remedies as well, that are imbued with various forms of spirituality. One can now find clinics in Romania where doctors that specialized in oncology for example, are also offering spiritual healing and meditation techniques. The guiding idea of these integrative clinics is that only a holistic treatment of the human being is capable to get to the root of the medical condition of patients. Treating the body means just treating the effects of the illnesses, not their causes. Alternative and complementary medicine is not anymore subterranean, esoteric and something that popular healers perform in their private practice, it is something that has been introduced in mainstream medical establishments.

A massive outburst of spirituality has taken place in the field of psychology as well. There is a growing number of psychologists that think that classical cognitive-behavioural forms of psychotherapy are not sufficient for helping patients and that these need to be either complemented or completely replaced by post-rational psychotherapies that integrate either light forms of mindfulness, meditation, or spiritual wellbeing, or stronger forms of spiritual practices such as yoga, familial constellations, shamanism, etc. Among psychologists this paradigmatic shift is often generated by their own existential crisis during which they discover that the classical psychotherapeutic tools that they acquired during their college education or in the various post-graduate professional trainings are not capable of addressing their own deep ontological questions and anxieties. The shift can also be the result of their professional practice which produces the conviction that for a lot of the patients that are estranged from institutional religion - but open to alternative forms of spiritualities - such spiritualized psychotherapies are helpful in establishing a common language and a meaningful environment in which patients can be counselled and treated. This

turn towards spirituality in psychology can be observed in many instances: either in the individual practices in their counselling offices and psychotherapeutic centres or in the wide spectrum of workshops and seminars that are organized by psychologists for people interested in exploring and healing their emotions, anxieties, depressions, relationships, or professional dysfunctionalities.

Future research needs to emphasize the role these spiritualities have in these professional fields, the function they fulfil and how the wider field reacts to these transformations and paradigmatic shifts. The increasing embedding of these spiritual ideas and practices within management, healthcare, and psychotherapy signals the growing interest for personal and spiritual development in contemporary Romania.

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