

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
TRANSDISCIPLINARY THEORIZATION OF SPIRITUALITY

CALL FOR MEMBERSHIP

Dear colleague,

In the wake of the international conference held in Nice in June 2011 bearing on *Transdisciplinary Approaches to Spirituality in the Arts and Sciences: Theorizing the Spiritual?*, a projected international research network emerged with a view to bringing together the researchers from various fields who would seek to construct a **theory of spirituality** as a crucial feature of the human being. Grounded in their own field of research, their approach to the topic would be consistently **transdisciplinary**. You will find below a definition of the key words on which the network will be based.

The network's priority is to circulate information regarding ongoing or planned projects, publications and scientific meetings and to federate individual researchers and teams internationally in two ways:

- By having a one day **conference** organized by one network member **every year**.
- **By creating a website** including: a directory of researchers; a bibliography; a list of events scheduled; a list of research grants and job offers; relevant links; an electronic publication of the yearly conference.

In the long run, the network might serve as a platform for developing scientific projects with European and international financing.

The network will be an association and membership will imply a yearly contribution of 20 € that will pay for the website maintenance and the organization of the yearly conference. It will be made up of permanent members (PhD students, PhDs and publishing researchers belonging to an academic institution), associate members (publishing PhDs who do not belong to an academic institution) and people with an interest in the network's field of study. An international scientific committee will be created to organize the conferences and deal with online publications.

The network will be managed by an international organizing Committee made up of the members in charge of one of the website columns. It will also be in charge of new admissions, the financial management and organization of the network, notably the yearly one-day conference. The languages used being English and French, the Committee will see to it that the information published on the web is translated.

A founding session is scheduled to take place on February 17th and 18th, 2012 in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) on the occasion of the French and Belgian PhD seminar *Esthetics and Spirituality*. The publication series "Esthetics and Spirituality" (Publishing house: Modulaires Européennes) will also be launched that day. The session participants will choose a place and theme for the network's first one-day conference to be held in 2012.

Please fill in the information below to indicate your degree of interest in the network as well as your availability for participation.

Best regards,

The network founders,

Myriam Watthee-Delmotte (FNRS/UCL, Belgium) and Jean Ehret (SHU, Luxembourg)

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KEY WORDS

Network

Researchers whose work necessitates theoretical reflection on spirituality find themselves for the most part isolated, partly because of the disciplinary divisions in the academic world and partly because of the contemporary doxa that considers this field of research uncondusive to a rational approach, thereby easily excluding it from universities. It is thus important to bring together these dispersed researchers in order to encourage a dialogue that would generally maintain an opening on the scientific landscape. This burgeoning field of research takes cultural heritage into account and creates space for an anthropological constant of humanity. More concretely, it is necessary to ensure the circulation of information on related events and publications.

The mode of functioning of the network, bringing researchers together in unrestricted fashion, whatever their institutions or research centers, their specialty or the state of advancement of their careers, responds to this objective. It ensures the freedom of action required to implement a dynamic whose sole impulse is scientific research itself. It is a voluntary commitment which seeks to compete with no other type of association. Joining the network simply requires an annual registration and fee which will pay for the two principal means of exchange: 1) the web-site run by an international organizing committee 2) the annual symposium organized by one or several members on a theme to be announced. Contributions from the symposium will be published on the web-site after study by an international reading committee. To facilitate the exchanges, both French and English will be used.

Towards Theory

The project aims at the theoretical and critical study of spirituality in literature, the arts, and the natural, human, and theological sciences. This involves questioning the direct and indirect forms of the presence of spirituality (to be distinguished from religion) within the cultural artifact. The aim of this activity is to elaborate a critical apparatus emerging from a pluri- and trans-disciplinary approach to the spiritual. The approach aims not only to provide analytical results or to reflect on different disciplinary methods, but also to develop theoretical tools that will allow a rational study of spirituality as it can be observed in the cultural artifact. It will take into account the research activity itself meta-critically.

There are no historical or geographical restrictions concerning the elements admitted to the field of study. All disciplines are welcome, inasmuch as they will foster an interdisciplinary dialogue, with no hierarchy among either the competences or fields. The network is thus open to all specialists whether in the humanities, mathematics, physics and astrophysics, or medicine, etc., wishing to debate the theoretical dimensions of research in their domain with regards to spirituality.

Transdisciplinarity

The need for a transdisciplinary approach stems from the following observations: 1) our understanding of an object emerges from the means used to study it; 2) no single method is sufficient to completely understand an object; 3) there is a systemic relationship between the various sciences and as such a new scientific result has an impact on the other sciences. We are thus not merely aiming at an interdisciplinary synthesis, but also at taking into account the heuristic influence offered by sciences other than the one that serves as point of departure.

Transdisciplinarity thus requires that researchers question their own methods and heuristic assumptions. They must also overcome the difficulties associated with the notions of comprehension and restitution so that each science retains its pertinence and rigor in the pluridisciplinary presentation of its conclusions. This requires being both rigorously and critically grounded in one discipline, managing the heuristic destabilization that 'otherness' represents, and an intellectual open-mindedness that fosters the reconfiguration of meaning encountered in new dialogues.

Spirituality

For long relegated to the philosophical and religious (particularly Christian) spheres, where the concept was born, spirituality has now emerged into wider social circles. The term has recently appeared in fields as various as psychology, management, marketing, healthcare, and even the neurosciences, with a wide variety of meanings and significations, not necessarily connected to religion. It seems nearly impossible to come up with a universal definition of spirituality, the differences being too wide-ranging among the different fields involved. In this context, "spirituality" becomes a banal concept that loses all critical value.

We may nonetheless have recourse to the etymology of the word (*spiritus*, spirit) and envisage the possibility that each human is also 'spirit,' with no assumption concerning the origin of this spirit or its relation to matter. Similarly, we may note that each individual is led to construct the self, through the spirit, in his or her relation to self and others. In this process, belief and axiology play a fundamental role: they contribute to soliciting and justifying human behavior. We thus propose to consider the spirit, belief, and also the process of building the self and relationships with others as referential frameworks to apprehend spirituality in its multitude of expressions, that is in the words, images, objects, facts, and concepts it evokes. The point of theorizing spirituality more globally is to better understand the open or coded forms of its expressions, to position it with regards to religion as well as culture, and to question the concept in its distinctive power.

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INFORMATION FORM

(TO BE FILLED IN IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE NETWORK AND SENT TO
WATTHEE@GMAIL.COM AND POETICS67@YAHOO.COM)

Mr/ Miss / Mrs / Ms:

Academic position:

Institution:

Professional address :

Home address :

E-Mail address :

Would like to become a member of the international network TTS as (please tick where appropriate)

- Permanent member (PhD student/ PhD/ active researcher, affiliated to an academic institution)
- Associate member (PhD/ researcher not affiliated to an academic institution)
- Individual member with an interest in the network's field of work
- Would agree to be in charge of one website column

Key words regarding your research on spirituality:

Publications bearing on spirituality (5 titles max.):

Please give a short account of the transdisciplinary character of your research in an appended document (500 to 1000 characters).

Place:

Date:

Signature: