

## *Rethinking Religiosity: The Reflexive Dimension of Spirituality in Post-Secular Czech Society*

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**ABSTRACT** In international comparison, Czech society emerges as strongly secularized. While we can discuss whether this could be the result of a too narrow conception of measuring religiosity, it can also be taken as a fact that we intend to use positively. This article presents new tools for the detection of religiosity focused on spiritual and transcendental dimensions. Therefore, it is an advantage to verify them on a population in which a significant part declares secularized attitudes, without, however, an empirically-based finding that its needs of spirituality or some transcendental overlap have been lost.

Czech society was led to brutal atheism in the time of the totalitarian system. For a part of society this concept works as a simple label or short-cut. In the post-secular era, however, in addition to traditional religiosity, growth in various areas of civil spirituality or transcendence, which we conditionally refer to as "lived", plays an important role. Their measurement is the focus of our article, which brings a number of positive experiences from the pilot verification of the new instrument on a representative sample of the Czech public (N=811). The constituted scales show very good consistency and reliability. Extending the measurement of religiosity to other dimensions offers the possibility of a more subtle typology, which leaves the original one-dimensional axis of "religion – atheism" as obsolete and opens the way to a more differentiated approach to religion as a multidimensional continuum, which is more fittingly indicative of the post-secular religious practice in society. Although it is primarily an exploratory and

methodologically oriented research, the content consistency of the typology is also confirmed by the correlations with other indicators of relevant values and attitudes.

**KEYWORDS** Czech society; spirituality; religiosity; secularization; post-secularism; lived spirituality; transcendence; measurement of religion

Czech society has long been considered highly secularized in international comparison, as demonstrated by the works of Roman Vido, David Václavík, and Antonín Paleček (2016), Dana Hamplová and Zdeněk R. Nešpor (2009), and Dušan Lužný (2016). Although it is debatable whether this is a consequence of an overly narrow concept of measuring religiosity (see Váně and Kreidl, 2001; Váně and Hášová, 2014), in connection with the need for standardization for international comparison, it can also be taken as a fact that we can use to our advantage.

This article proposes the extension of the tools for measuring religiosity to encompass the dimension of spirituality. Consequently, it is advantageous to test such a tool on a population in which a significant proportion declare secular attitudes (Hamplová and Řeháková, 2010). However, it is not possible to make a compelling case that this society has lost its need for spirituality or some kind of transcendental dimension based on such secular attitudes (Halík, 2024).

Within the context of a totalitarian system, Czech society was led to adopt an extreme form of atheism, which, for a minority, continues to serve as a framework for addressing the question of the relationship to faith. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of Czech society in both the active promotion and passive reception of globalization processes. In the context of religion, these processes have precipitated the emergence of a post-secular era. This period is distinguished by the waning influence of conventional religious institutions and, in contrast, a transition towards diverse manifestations of religious syncretism and non-institutional expressions of spirituality. Nevertheless, established quantitative methods for measuring religiosity are unable to adequately respond to this ongoing social change. To summarize, a situation where we detect a high degree of religiosity does not necessarily mean a significant interest in transcendence or the experience of spirituality. Conversely, a declared lack of interest in religion (in accordance with conventional measures of religiosity) does not necessarily imply an absence of spirituality or transcendence. Therefore, we want to expand the traditional measurement of religiosity, which primarily focus on the church or esoteric milieu, to encompass the dimensions of spirituality and transcendence, which we refer to as 'lived'.

The objective of this study is to extend the established methodology of measuring religiosity. The impetus for this endeavor is the recognition that prevailing conceptualization and operationalizations of religiosity are no longer commensurate with the contemporary post-secular (Possamai, 2017) or postmodern era. The basis for this assertion is the transformation of the religious sphere in the public sphere and on an individual level, where traditional forms of religious practice are superseded by novel manifestations. Concurrently, there is an evolution in the supply and demand dynamics of the religious market, accompanied by the emergence of diverse manifestations of religious syncretism. The motive for the expansion of the traditional

approach is not its inefficacy, but rather its obsolescence in the context of the circumstances of the preceding several decades. As a case in point, we may consider the contemporary concept of SBNR (Fuller, 2001; Kenneson, 2015), which is employed as a designation for individuals who self-identify as spiritual, i.e. for whom personal transcendence is of significance, yet who reject association with either religion or any of its traditional forms characteristic of their respective cultural contexts. For such individuals, it is challenging to identify a congruence between their personal convictions and the spectrum of options presented in surveys on religious affiliation. As standard religiosity frequently emanates from ecclesiastical or otherwise institutionalized perspectives, individuals who espouse these convictions may self-identify as atheists, despite acknowledging the significance of spirituality in their lives. However, the prevailing conceptualizations of religion do not encompass this dimension.

At this juncture, it is imperative to acknowledge that our conceptualization of measuring spirituality and transcendence does not accentuate their performative dimension. Instead, it is oriented towards the experiential, reflective dimension of spirituality and transcendence. This approach is considered beneficial as it focuses on the general population, albeit with the recognition that only a small proportion of this population is actively engaged in some form of creative activity. Indeed, even an actor's participation in individual activities can be considered a more or less formal matter, insofar as it constitutes a kind of external declaration. Consequently, the present study has concentrated on individual attitudes and the personal level of experienced spirituality.

The structure of this article will guide the reader through the answers to the following three questions, which arise from the above description of the situation:

1. Is the decline in religiosity leading to a shift of spirituality and transcendence to other spheres of life (if we do not want to admit that it is actually permanently and long-term present in these areas, that some of these needs are an organic part of the development of the human species)?
2. Can we reliably identify and measure these non-religious forms of spirituality empirically?
3. Can the involvement of lived forms of spirituality broaden the scope of reflection on religiosity in favor of typology at the expense of the concept of a one-dimensional continuum?

In order to answer the first question, the present study will map the current religious situation through the lenses of selected authors who have described the changing role of religion in society as a result of the process of secularization. The primary focus of this study is the relationship between religion and spirituality, a subject which offers a more vivid insight into the contemporary religious market. The present study proposes a new research questionnaire tool, based on theoretical contributions to post-secularization. The second and third questions relate to the research methodology and the results achieved, which are described in the following sections of the article (Methods, Analysis and Discussion). These sections primarily focus on the possibilities of measuring spirituality and transcendence at the level of individualized attitudes. In this section, the article presents a series of positive experiences from the pilot testing of the new tool on a sample of the Czech public that is representative of the adult population.

### **Theoretical Background: The Relationship Between Religion and Spirituality**

Secularization theories posited that religion would diminish in influence within modern societies, both in the public sphere and in the private lives of individuals. Steve Bruce (2002) has linked this premise to the rise of individualism, which, in the context of modernity, will be more closely aligned with a privatised form of religiosity, whose significance will increase in parallel with the decline of traditional religious institutions (Norris and Inglehart, 2004). In a similar vein, Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook (2017) examined the role of secularism in modern society, including the growth of spiritual life outside religious institutions. In the context of alternative religious movements and trends, Daren Kemp and James R. Lewis (2007), who are engaged in the mapping of research on alternative spirituality today, consider the phenomenon of secularization. Attention is also focused on the declining influence of religious authority (Chaves, 1994). It is imperative that these considerations about the consequences of the process of secularization are not separated from the subsequent empirical study of religion in the light of social change.

The motivation for developing empirical research on religiosity is rooted in the aspiration to attain a more profound comprehension of the contemporary diversity of religious, non-religious, and spiritual demand. Due to the ambiguity of the concept of religion, the established term religiosity is employed in this text, which is not to be understood as a synonym for religion. Operational difficulties in dealing with the concept of religion can be observed in empirical sociological research (whether at the level of data collection or subsequent interpretation), where reflection on the concept of religion should be an integral part of the operationalization process. The pervasive, widely accepted content of the concept of religion<sup>1</sup> and the consequent social implications (and conventions) in discourse are a compelling argument against the rejection of the category of religion as such. In this sense, the concept of religion can be considered an emic category. However, in contrast to the secular environment, it is imperative to exercise the utmost caution when conducting research in the domain of religion. This cautious strategy is predicated on the ambiguity of the concept of religion, which, when employed in natural language, cannot be used as a purely analytical term in the current postmodern situation. Within the context of academic discourse, it is probable that the concept of religion will function as a general category, albeit one that is subject to elaboration within a range of reflexive contexts. The distinction between professional and lay discourse is therefore readily apparent.

The necessity for dialogue between the implicit definition of religion among researchers in various fields and the lay public's definition of the concept of religion, its content, and, last but not least, their relationship to it (which reflects their own and only partially communicable experience) is essential when using the concept of religion in the social sciences, including sociology. In the context of the sociological study of religion, the measurement of religious devotion constitutes a conventional approach. However, the conceptualization of religiosity merits further consideration, necessitating a more profound examination.

In the sociological context, religiosity is conventionally conceptualized as a multifaceted concept denoting the extent of an individual's religious orientation, encompassing their personal beliefs, values, and engagement in religious practices. This understanding is exemplified by Berger's (1967) seminal work on the subject. It is frequently an integral component of the study of other social processes that contribute to the formation of individual identity, and it can also be

an important factor in interpersonal relationships. A broad concept of religiosity is then viewed from substantial or functional perspectives.<sup>2</sup> The substantial approach seeks to answer the question of what people believe in and therefore examines religious phenomena that are typical of a given society. Conversely, the functional approach endeavors to identify what religion does in society, or the functions that religion fulfils in society. It has been argued that even phenomena that may appear profane at first glance (such as environmental movements, sports, or various forms of performance art) may fulfil the criteria thus established.

Whilst both the substantial and functional approaches (or combinations thereof) have been demonstrated to be valid (Wilson, 1982) and have been utilized in the measurement of religiosity, they are also subject to certain limitations, which can be summarized as follows: The substantial approach has been criticized for its tendency to overlook non-dominant religious expressions and its tendency to maintain an ethnocentric perspective. Contrarily, functional approaches can demonstrate an inadequate capacity to differentiate between religion and other social phenomena, which engenders conceptual challenges. In this study, we explore the relationship between religion and spirituality from various perspectives, utilizing a novel methodology termed the essential-spiritual approach.

The essential-spiritual approach is characterized by two fundamental assumptions. Firstly, transcendence is considered to be an integral component of spirituality, encompassing both religious and non-religious practices. Secondly, it is evident that this transcendence is not confined to traditional religious communities but is also present outside the confines of established religious institutions. Consequently, the concepts of "lived spirituality" and "lived transcendence" are introduced. François Gauthier's sociological model of religion proved instrumental in the conceptualization of the essential-spiritual approach, particularly in the aspect termed the micro-level "religiosité" by Gauthier, that is to say, the individual personal transcendence of the individual<sup>3</sup> (Gauthier, 2017). In summary, the present study is concerned with the reflexive dimension of spirituality. In the essential-spiritual approach presented here, there is no opposition between spirituality and religion; rather, spirituality is understood as a lived aspect of religion or other forms of transcendence that do not necessarily correspond to the parameters of religion as commonly conceived. The lived aspect of spirituality can be experienced both within and outside religious institutions (Ammerman, 2014). In addition, the notion of "lived spirituality" cannot be identified through the presence of manifestations of invisible religion (Luckmann, 1967) or participation in activities of various religious or religiously syncretic kinds. Rather, it is necessary to offer an empirical-methodological space for the experience of transcendence (Joas, 2021).

In consideration of the individual's personal level, which is indispensable to the essential-spiritual approach, the concept of subjective turn was selected for subsequent operationalization. In their publication, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005) delineate a paradigm wherein the subjective experience of the individual assumes a pivotal role in shaping their life trajectory, accentuating the authenticity of both experience and action. The primary objective of an individual is to embark on a personal journey of self-discovery and self-realization, a process that can, on occasion, result in a withdrawal from the societal roles that are commonly expected. The subjective turn is also linked to expressive individualism (Taylor 1991, 2002), which is a fundamental concept in the ethics of authenticity developed by Taylor. The concept of self-

expression, inextricably linked to the notion of authenticity, serves to obfuscate the conventional boundaries that delineate adherents of different religious doctrines and those who do not subscribe to any specific belief system. This phenomenon also manifests in the intersection of religion and non-religious practices, where the lines that differentiate between the two become increasingly indistinct. In operationalizing the essential-spiritual approach, it is therefore assumed that spirituality (whether defined here as religious or lived) is the starting point for transcendence. This process entails an individual's discernment of the significance of this necessity, which subsequently serves as the foundational value framework for the pursuit of transcendence. However, the primary focus is on examining transcendence in terms of value attitudes. For the purposes of this research, atheists are defined as respondents who deem spirituality or transcendence to be of minimal importance in life, and who are able to lead contented lives without them.

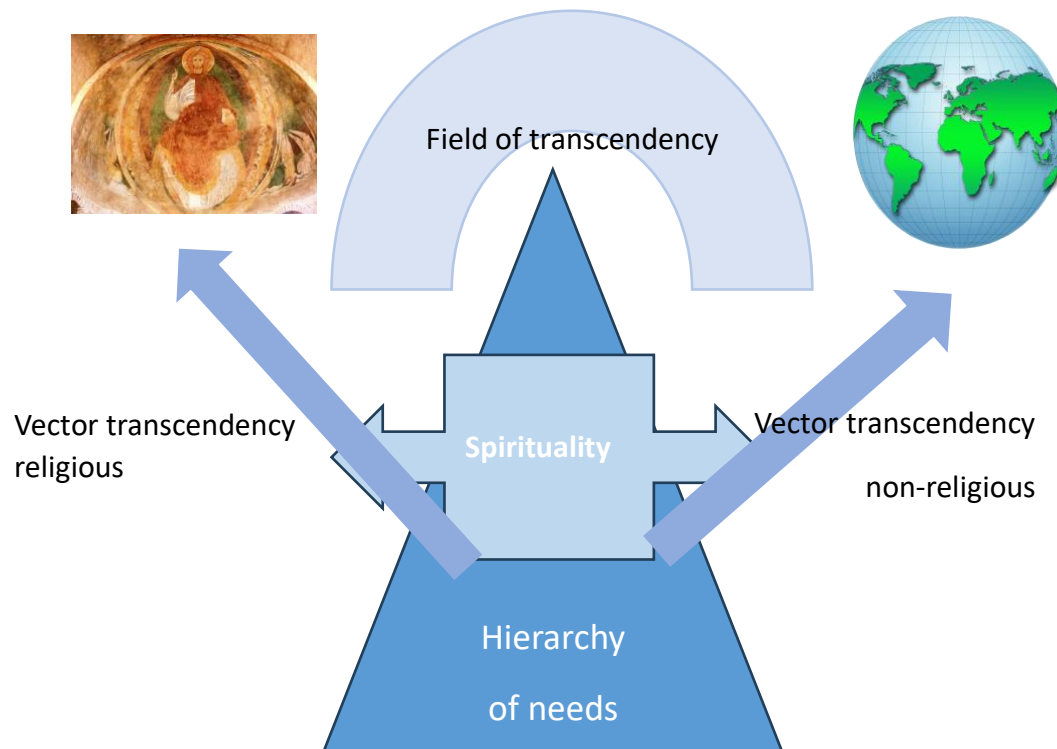


Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework of Spirituality. Created by the authors.

The micro-level refers to lived spirituality, in which on the analytical level we distinguish spirituality and transcendence. On the interpretative and experiential level, we understand spirituality as an individual quality or need that is part of an individual's value attitudes, both in religious and non-religious contexts. Transcendence is then understood as a reference point of transcendence to which spirituality relates, and is not reduced only to metaphysical content, but rather reflects a person's ability to relate to something that "transcends" them. We also emphasize overlaps using the concepts of vector and field in which transcendence is realized. (Fig. 1) The

hierarchy of needs is inspired by an essay Religions, values, and peak-experiences. (Maslow, 1970).

### Data and Methods

The present study is founded upon the theoretical framework of subjective turn, and accordingly, a theoretical model has been devised. This model comprises four newly introduced indicators, with the first dimension represented by the following indicators: a) *religious spirituality*, b) *religious transcendence*. These categories serve as reference points for the study of traditional religiosity. Furthermore, a parallel pseudo-secular dimension was created for respondents who did not score on traditional measures of religiosity, but who nevertheless did not identify as atheist or non-spiritual (non-religious). For respondents exhibiting such characteristics, indicators c) *non-religious spirituality* and d) *non-religious transcendence* were proposed.

The research was conducted in collaboration with the Median agency, which collected data (CAWI, n = 811) on its online panel during March 2024. The panel represents the adult population of the Czech Republic, as confirmed by a quota check. The research was made possible thanks to support from the SVV-ADAKIN program<sup>4</sup>. The study was fundamentally of a single-theme nature, with additional tools employed to identify other attitudes or circumstances that, in accordance with theoretical assumptions, should be related to religiosity (indications in the areas of well-being, anomie, conservatism, hedonism). In the majority of cases, the decision was made to devise our own solution, given the limited number of items and the effort to maintain the format of the answers as closely as possible. Because the project was understood from the beginning as a pilot methodological experiment and was supported only by a student grant, we did not use cognitive approaches to verify the items and relied on expert consultations. However, the originally heuristic intention brought very positive results.

The methods of measuring spirituality will be described in the results section of the article. In the questionnaire survey, the batteries assessing transcendence<sup>5</sup>, which were also designed as Likert scales with agreement scales ranging from 1 to 7, were no less important to us. These data were then utilized to construct summary indices measuring attitudes. In these indices, the content of the items is more oriented towards activity, towards a certain behavior, i.e. the conscious realization of transcendence. The following are illustrative examples of items (Q5 represents religious transcendence, Q4 non-religious transcendence):

*Q05. I can find a place and a time to connect or communicate with God/a higher principle, where I can stop and experience the present moment.*

*Q05. From time to time, people need to believe in some higher principle, such as justice that transcends the boundaries of this world.*

*Q04. Observing morality is right in itself, even without it being prescribed by various religious teachings.*

*Q04. I try to think about what I will leave behind for the next generation.*

The measurement of other concepts was conducted in a similar manner, with the intention of integrating these measurements into subsequent analyses. In this study, a selection of these will be incorporated, primarily for the purpose of evaluating the content of the presented

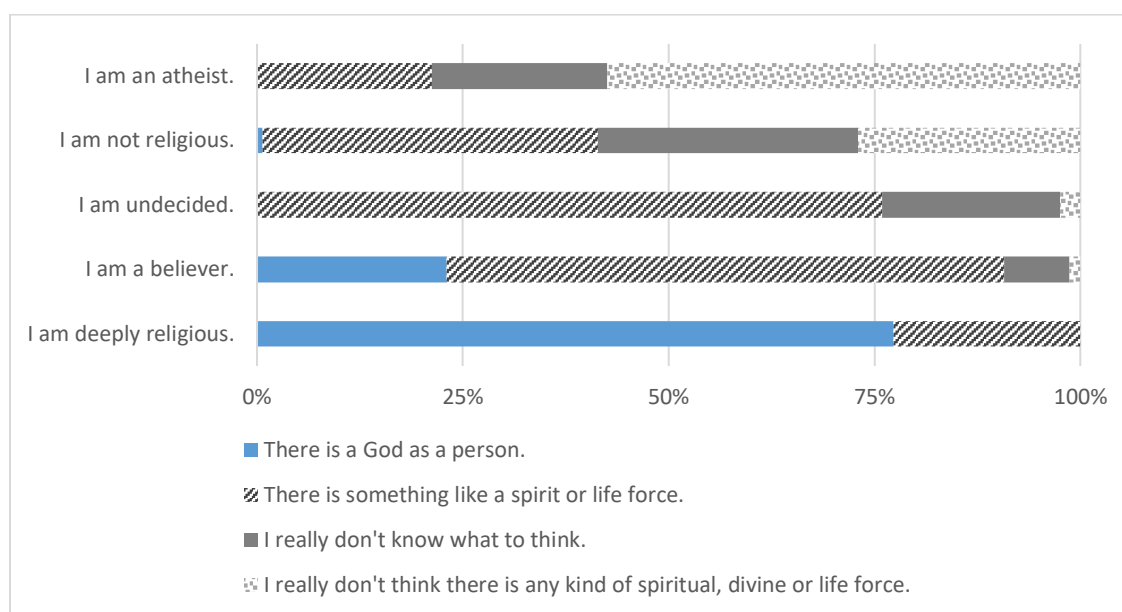
findings. The objective is thus preliminary internal validation. It is evident that these products are the result of a search for new possibilities within the pilot verification of the method. Furthermore, in these cases, the obtained quantitative indices demonstrated very good parameters, even in terms of the tendency towards a normal distribution of the resulting score. The reliability of the scales was also more than satisfactory: Cronbach's alpha was deemed adequate for the following variables: hedonism (5 items, alpha 0.71), well-being (5 items, 0.89), conservatism (3 items, 0.7), and religious transcendence (6 items, 0.89). However, it is noteworthy that only non-religious transcendence (7 items, 0.692) did not meet the standard statistical criterion of reliability, although this also fell close to the tolerance limit. The decision has been taken to keep it in the analysis, since doing so would facilitate the identification of further connections or possibilities of overlap (in connection with the secularization hypothesis). The notion of non-religious transcendence can manifest in diverse forms, thereby serving as a conceptual „container“. Furthermore, exploratory factor analysis of the complete battery for non-religious transcendence confirmed the presence of one general common component, whilst also indicating the internal dimensionality of this domain (as suggested by the two items listed as examples)<sup>6</sup>. The theoretical investigation of generational overlap is poised to yield novel insights, a perspective that is further enriched by the exploration of related research directions.

## Results

As demonstrated in Table 1, the data set under consideration does not yield any surprising results according to conventional indicators of religiosity. Approximately 20% of the adult Czech population identified as religious, with half of respondents acknowledging the existence of a higher spiritual power (including God). The variables demonstrate a strong correlation (Cramer's V 0.456, gamma even 0.739), and their relationship can be illustrated by a graph 1. The following table presents a series of conventional metrics of religiosity in the Czech Republic, expressed as percentages.

<i>Q6 Which of these statements is closest to your belief?</i>	2024
There is a God as a person.	6,7
There is something like a spirit or life force.	43,3
I really don't know what to think.	22,3
I really don't think there is any kind of spiritual, divine or life force.	27,7
<i>Q7 What is your relationship to religion?</i>	
I am deeply religious.	2,7
I am a believer.	18,7
I am undecided.	10,2
I am not religious.	39,3
I am an atheist.	29,0
Total	100,0
N = 811	

Table 1. Traditional indicators of religiosity, Czech Republic (%). Created by the authors.



Graph 1. Mutual relationship between traditional indicators of religiosity. Created by the authors.

The newly constructed indicators of spirituality are understood to be attitudes of significant value that reflect the inner needs of the individual. In the battery of questions, the items were mixed during administration; in Table 2, distinction is made between indicators of non-religious spirituality (civil non-religious, A–E) and religious spirituality, represented by the final two items. In the initial part of the battery, a discernible propensity to accept the items was evident, as evidenced by the consensus of the majority of respondents. However, a divergence of opinion was expressed by a minority of respondents concerning the spirituality items (F, G). However, this finding aligns with the observations documented by conventional indicators of religiosity, wherein a proportion of the respondents explicitly identify as atheists.

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q03A. I have many reasons to say that I am a happy person.	2,65	1,511
Q03B. It is important to be able to stop sometimes and think about your place in the world.	2,09	1,243
Q03C. True happiness lies somewhere else than in the material world.	2,26	1,286
Q03D. I feel grateful for every experience that touches my soul and gives me a zest for life.	1,89	1,155
Q03E. I need to feel that my life has meaning.	2,06	1,223
Q03F. In my life, I strive to penetrate higher spiritual realms.	4,54	1,941
Q03G. A person can live a fulfilled life without perceiving anything higher that transcends this world.	2,66	1,656
Valid N (listwise)	811	

Table 2. Indicators of spirituality (Note: 1 = I strongly agree). Created by the authors.

The creation of summary indices for both components of the battery was undertaken, with a view to characterizing the overall trend. With regard to spirituality, even after excluding item Q03A<sup>7</sup>, Cronbach's alpha attained an acceptable value of 0.73. As the religious spirituality index did not satisfy the reliability criterion (apparently due to the limited number of items in the newly formulated battery), we subsequently included both of the above-mentioned items of traditional religiosity (see Table 1 and Graph 1). Of these, the second (Q7) in particular demonstrates adequate differentiation ability. It was determined that the traditional items would not be transformed prior to inclusion in the point total, which resulted in a slight weakening of their weight in the index. However, it was ascertained that the scale continues to effectively measure religious spirituality on a scale ranging from acceptance to absolute rejection (Cronbach alpha = 0.84).

In order to verify the composition of the recently constructed indices, a reclassification procedure according to the conventional indicator of faith (Q7) may be employed. In this instance, indices were transformed in the standardized form of a z-score, a method that is more appropriate for the purpose of comparison (however, it should be noted that this approach reveals the deviation from the average value). It is symptomatic that only in cases of lived transcendence are insignificant differences evident; in all other instances, the dependence follows the anticipated course (Table 3). This observation suggests a distinction between the responses "*I am not religious*" and "*I am an atheist*."

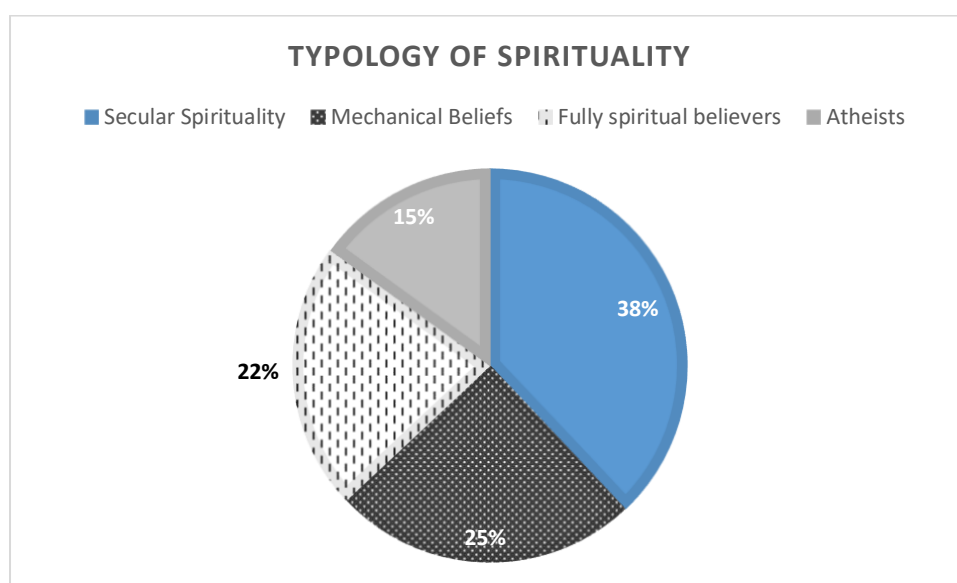
Q07. What is your relationship to religion?	Z-score: Spirituality non-religious	Z-score: Spirituality religious	Z-score: Transcendence non-religious	Z-score: Transcendence religious
I am deeply religious.	,74	2,24	,09	1,74
I am a believer.	,31	1,08	,04	1,10
I am undecided.	,11	,51	,18	,58
I am not religious.	,00	-,22	,00	-,28
I am an atheist.	-,31	-,79	-,10	-,71
TOTAL	,00	,00	,00	,00

Table 3. Spirituality and transcendence indices according to the indicator of faith (relationship to religion), N= 811, For non-religious transcendence, the differences are insignificant, otherwise  $p < 0.001$ . Created by the authors.

The functionality of distinguishing between two types of spirituality can be verified by creating a typology based on both indices, which correlate with each other, albeit not to a substantial degree ( $R = 0.23^{**}$ ). The focus will be on exploring avenues for greater differentiation at both ends of the original continuum, specifically between believers and non-believers. In order to obtain a more realistic perspective, the present study employs rough index scores (K-means cluster method).

	Cluster			
	Secular Spirituality	Mechanical beliefs	Fully spiritual faith	Atheists
Spirituality non-religious	25,31	21,89	26,59	17,71
Spirituality religious	4,65	9,34	12,71	4,63

Table 4. Typology of spirituality: Average index values for individual clusters. Created by the authors.



Graph 2. Typology based on spirituality indexes. Created by the authors.

The created typology can be checked using other indices. In consideration of the strong correlation between religious spirituality and religious transcendence ( $R=0.74^{**}$ ), it is unsurprising that there is a substantial discrepancy in the mean value of the religious transcendence index when comparing individual types (Table 5). Spiritually minded believers have been shown to exhibit a higher degree of conservatism and a greater orientation towards non-religious transcendence. In this respect, however, they bear a resemblance to representatives of secular spirituality, who are equally oriented towards transcendence and declare an equivalent level of well-being, but are only slightly more hedonistic. The mechanical belief type is characterized by a relatively flat spiritual profile, exhibiting minimal deviation from the prevailing norm. The atheist group demonstrates consistently low scores on virtually all criteria, exhibiting a concomitant decline in well-being and a marked dissociation from conservative values and attitudes.

The types defined in this way do not differ according to age or education; however, a significant difference is observed according to gender, with women more often falling into the spiritual believer category (28%), while men fall into the atheist category (20%). Furthermore, even when posed with a direct question, women reported identifying as atheists less frequently.

Cluster:	Transcendence non-religious	Transcendence religious	Conservatism Index	Hedonism	Well-being
Secular Spirituality	<b>33,0</b>	10,2	12,2	<b>22,3</b>	<b>20,6</b>
Mechanical beliefs	30,5	17,3	13,1	21,0	19,2
Fully spiritual faith	<b>33,5</b>	<b>25,7</b>	<b>13,4</b>	20,5	<b>20,6</b>
Atheists	27,3	8,5	11,5	19,9	18,0
TOTAL	31,7	15,3	12,6	21,2	19,9

Table 5. Characteristics of individual spirituality clusters, *index averages*. All differences between averages are highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), with an eta of 0.69 for sacral/religious transcendence. Created by the authors.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The ensuing discussion focuses on the interpretation of the main findings and their broader implications. Our data set shows consistency with traditional indicators of religiosity (see Table 1 and Graph 1). In the Czech Republic, religiosity is notably lower than in neighboring countries (see Evans, 2017). This ensures that the sample is not tainted by bias, and the proposed alternative tool is applied to a standard population that is frequently referred to as highly secularized.

Although our data show a relatively low level of religiosity in traditional measurements, as expected, our proposed conceptualization reveals a new perspective. In addition to the small group of convinced atheists, two parallel lines emerge. Alongside conventional religious adherents, as measured by traditional metrics of religiosity, the data reveals the existence of a para-secular dimension. One of the most significant findings of the present study is the empirically documented existence of non-religious spirituality and non-religious transcendence, which correspond to the current post-secular situation and confirm the potential lived presence of a subjective turn in people's lives. The proposed indicators of spirituality thus contribute to a more profound understanding of the (non)religious situation in a country that is often designated as atheistic. The degree of validity of non-religious spirituality in terms of empirical identification can be derived from Table 3, which shows the spirituality and transcendence indices according to the indicator of faith (relationship to religion). These indices are distinctive and consistent.

This study also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the methodological underpinnings of conventionally employed instruments used to assess the degree of religiosity. It has been observed that individuals for whom transcendence constitutes a significant aspect of their existence have trouble in identifying with questions that are typically posed within the context of "classical" religion. Consequently, it is necessary to re-evaluate the classic dichotomy of believer – non-believer, which deserves to be expanded to include other dimensions. This one-dimensional approach represents a limitation that the sociology of religion has yet to fully overcome. The research presented here suggests that when examining religion, we are not dealing

with a single continuum, but rather with a multidimensional space, even in the case of a society that is often referred to as a country with a high level of measured atheism. The introduction of new indicators has enabled the development of more precise maps of both declining levels of religiosity and the shift towards more subtle forms of spirituality and transcendence that can be observed in other areas of life. In addition, we undertake a critical examination of the discussion surrounding the measurement of religiosity in relation to a single item (Morgan et al., 2025).

The results obtained also raise several important questions regarding operationalization, i.e. the formulation of commonly used questions. It can be hypothesized that the employment of religious terminology or expressions may carry a suggestive charge that can quite straightforwardly anticipate disagreement. It is evident that the religious, non-religious and spiritual milieu is considerably more diverse than traditional institutions and the esoteric scene. Consequently, it can be posited that degrees of religious orientation or identity can be approached in a manner that would facilitate a greater degree of differentiation on both sides of the imaginary continuum (between so-called believers and so-called atheists). In other words, in contrast to the conclusion that Czech society is atheistic, we can also offer the hypothesis that such a conclusion is not very informative about society such as, but rather opens up a discussion about whether we are able to ask the right questions and whether we create the necessary space for this in questionnaire surveys. The findings of this study indicate a number of promising possibilities for overcoming such a handicap.

The typology of spirituality presented here sought to expand the scope of reflection on religiosity, moving away from a unidimensional approach towards a multidimensional continuum. The results of the cluster analysis proposed demonstrate that the relatively large cluster of secular spirituality includes individuals who are neither anti-spiritual in the sense of an absence of spirituality nor traditionally religiously spiritual. For these individuals, the concept of non-religious transcendence assumes significant importance. However, they remain virtually invisible to conventional measures of religiosity. Consequently, they may be compelled to reinforce the so-called group of atheists. The appellation of the cluster, mechanical beliefs, alludes to the external acquiescence of the attributes of faith without a profound spiritual substructure (see Halík, 2024). This analysis provides a novel perspective by highlighting a certain degree of similarity between pairs of clusters. According to the control indices, secular spirituality exhibits a certain degree of proximity to the cluster of fully spiritual believers. Similarly, the mechanical belief cluster demonstrates a certain degree of proximity to the cluster designated 'atheists'.

In the context of cluster analysis, the averages of the indices in individual clusters for the newly constructed indicators are also noteworthy. It is interesting that civil spirituality, akin to individuals who are fully spiritual, exhibits very similar values concerning non-religious transcendence and well-being. Conversely, individuals who predominantly adhere to a mechanical belief system demonstrate comparatively lower mean values for these outcomes. The highest average value of hedonism is observed in non-religious spirituality. The atheist cluster exhibited the lowest mean value for all constructed indicators, thereby confirming the internal consistency of the proposed tool.

It is evident that the outcomes of the K-means cluster procedure are not particularly stable.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, our result cannot be interpreted as a verified classification scheme; rather, it should be regarded as a stimulant challenge to adopt a more structured perspective on

religiosity. The analysis demonstrates that the continuum for measuring religiosity does not necessarily have to be understood as one-dimensional. The decline in measures of simply declared religiosity indicates not only differences at the pole of religiously oriented people, but above all the existence of a relatively large group of people who fulfil their spiritual needs in non-religious ways. The question of whether this development should be interpreted as an indication of the ongoing trend towards secularization, or alternatively as a call to explore alternative avenues for meeting the spiritual needs of these individuals, remains a subject of ongoing discussion. The proportion of staunch atheists with no greater need for transcendence remains relatively large, but it undoubtedly does not represent the main trend in Czech society<sup>9</sup>.

Despite efforts to achieve methodological precision, there are factors that may represent certain limitations of this study. First and foremost, we acknowledge the complexity inherent in the stated objective, namely the endeavor to map non-religious (non-traditional) spirituality in conjunction with religious spirituality. This undertaking is predicated on the recognition of the typical characteristics that characterize such spiritualities, namely the absence of clearly delineated boundaries and the dearth of conventional institutional frameworks and hierarchies. In the interest of thoroughness, it is imperative to address the operational functionality of the recently introduced terminology. The selection of these terms for integration within the designated instrument could constitute a subject meriting further deliberation.

It is important to comprehend the findings in the context of Czech society, as they are not designed to claim universal applicability. The article does not aspire to generalization; rather, it poses a heuristic-methodological challenge. The proposed research methods are by no means definitive and must be verified in other cultural contexts. However, we assume that the implementation of the measurement tool presented here in other cultural contexts could offer a novel and interesting perspective for mapping religious and non-religious spirituality in a given country. Conversely, this foreign implementation has the potential to serve as a valuable source for international comparison and validation of the tool itself. In future research, the interconnection between the reflective and performative aspects of spirituality may also be a fruitful way for exploration. The tool for expanding the quantitative measurement of religiosity presented here could also be useful in practice for qualitatively oriented researchers, and such cooperation could yield mutually beneficial results. The possibility of psychological interpretations is also still open.

In conclusion, the present questionnaire tool confirms the assumption that there has been a shift towards lived spirituality. The quantitative measurement of religiosity should move away from the original one-dimensional axis of religion–atheism. In the context of exploring the rich religious reality, new avenues for a more differentiated approach should be opened up, offering possibilities for more subtle typology on both sides of the imaginary spectrum.

## Notes

1. In this context, the concept of religion can be considered a standard component of the so-called handy supply of knowledge (a concept developed by Alfred Schütz).
2. This division was only introduced by modern theorists of the sociology of religion in the mid-20th century.

3. In his three-component model, Gauthier considers the macro-level “religieux”, which represents the general-abstract level of social systems that are a constitutive part of a given society. The meso-level “religion” is intended for the institutionalized form of religion, alternative spirituality, or variously organized religions, while the aforementioned micro-level concerns personal lived transcendence. In practice, these levels are interconnected. The present tool is intended to conceptualize the micro-level “religiosité”, a dimension that has thus far been under-researched in the context of quantitative measurements of religiosity. In contrast, the other two dimensions have been the focus of comparatively extensive research in the quantitative empirical field.
4. This article was produced as part of the overarching project entitled Specific University Research 2024 – 260671 (SVV-ADAKIN), which was conducted at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. The project was also endorsed by the Cooperatio project of Charles University. Online panel of Median agency yielded a response rate of 29% : out of 2835 contacted respondents, 820 completed the survey.
5. We have not yet examined the acquiescence bias or other forms of response setting, and there were no deviations in the distribution of indices that would indicate a problem. However, we noticed that part of the population reacts negatively to questions containing clear religious symbolism, which is apparently typical for the Czech environment. In the construction of the batteries, we applied randomization and alternating positively and negatively worded items.
6. We do not see the presence of a second latent dimension in lived transcendence as a reason for its exclusion, since the reduction of the scale did not demonstrably improve reliability. We strive to maintain content validity in a complex construct. We take into account that the orthogonal varimax rotation artificially increases the possibility of finding independent factors, therefore we understand the occurrence of relatively specific items with otherwise adequate communalities as a challenge for future research aimed at creating a broader set of items.
7. In spirituality, we do not consider a certain approximation to the psychological dimension to be a disadvantage, because we operate at a micro-level. In the construction of the index, we ultimately purposefully omit some items, for example, Q3A (Happiness) only fulfilled the function of an introductory question to the set of indicators.
8. We verified the stability of the cluster analysis by using various types of variables; in addition to factor scores at the first step we consequently used indices; the differences in the representation of individual types were not substantial (it was a matter of percentage points). We are not yet addressing cluster optimization using silhouette scores (Shahapure, K. R., Nichols, Ch. 2020), because the division into four types based on two dimensions answers the basic theoretical question. In subsequent analyses, we have

already verified the possibility of distinguishing 5 clusters when including a larger number of variables, some of which perform a control function.

9. The absence of a significant age effect is also confirmed by preliminary regression analyses. However, if a drastic "atheistic turn" in society occurred 70 years ago and if the younger generations are looking for a "way back", the result is not such a big surprise.

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