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SPIRITUALITY INTERNATIONAL (SPIRIN)

An Academic Community

In recent decades the phenomenon of spirituality has unfolded worldwide, both in depth and in breadth. This revival has been accompanied by methodical study of spirituality, evident in an increase in both teaching programmes on the subject and research tools.¹ With regard to the latter, advances in the field of information and communication technology (ICT) have greatly expanded the possibilities of information dissemination. What has been totally impossible till recently is now within arm's reach: an international scientific forum for the study of spirituality, showing who is researching what topic around the world; where publications on a given subject are to be found; where practitioners, professionals, teachers, students and researchers are engaging in discussions; where information about educational programs can be found; where events in the field of spirituality can be publicised. The Titus Brandsma Institute is launching Spirituality International (SPIRIN) as a contribution to the further advancement of the discipline of spirituality.

Spirituality International is a web community in which scientists, lecturers, students and professionals in the field of spirituality are given an opportunity to exchange information and engage in discussion.

The SPIRIN web community may be defined as an academic forum, multidisciplinary in structure and multicultural in approach. 'Multidisciplinary' means that spirituality is studied from the angles of various sciences: that of the discipline itself (intra-disciplinary) and those of other disciplines like theology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, religious studies, history, literature, medicine, pedagogy, art and so forth (interdisciplinary). The web community is aimed at interdisciplinary cooperation. It enables scholars of spirituality to gather and communicate information beyond the confines of their own discipline. 'Multicultural' means that spirituality is not the preserve of any one culture or religion. It occurs in all religions and all cultures. The SPIRIN web community

¹ S. Schneiders, Spirituality in the Academy, in: B. Hanson (Ed.), *Modern Christian Spirituality. Methodological and Historical Essays*, Atlanta (Georgia) 1990, 15-37.

enables practitioners in the field of spirituality to gather and share information across religious and cultural boundaries. Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the SPIRIN web community:



SPIRIN is composed of six sections that are interlinked by way of various cross-connections.

1. *Who's Who*. This database contains essential details about the members of the web community, including their field of activity and the organisations where they work.
2. *Bibliography*. This section includes the authors and titles of publications in the academic field of spirituality, structured according to a newly developed classification system.
3. *Forum*. A virtual meeting place where members of SPIRIN can discuss topics in the study of spirituality.
4. *Encyclopedia*. Important results of forum discussions will be incorporated into the encyclopedia, structured according to the same basic classification as the bibliography.
5. *Education*. This section offers courses in spirituality by means of digital learning developed in a network of collaborating institutions.
6. *Bulletin Board & Links*. Here SPIRIN members can publicise events in the field of spirituality: ideas, initiatives, congresses, occasions, meetings. It also provides links in the scientific field of spirituality.

Spirituality International is an academic web community whose information is freely available to everybody. By joining SPIRIN, members can participate actively in the web community. This means they can publish their personal details on Who's Who and access those of other members; they can participate in discussions on Forum and initiate discussions; they can also publish notices on Bulletin Board. Membership in SPIRIN is free. To ensure the quality of contributions the admission criterion is proven scientific expertise and/or experience in the field.

As far as possible all members and the scientific institutes in which they will be employed are involved in establishing SPIRIN. The staff of the Titus Brandsma Institute will act as administrator and facilitator. SPIRIN has no profit motive. Its costs are covered by institutional contributions and support, and through fundraising.

1. WHO'S WHO

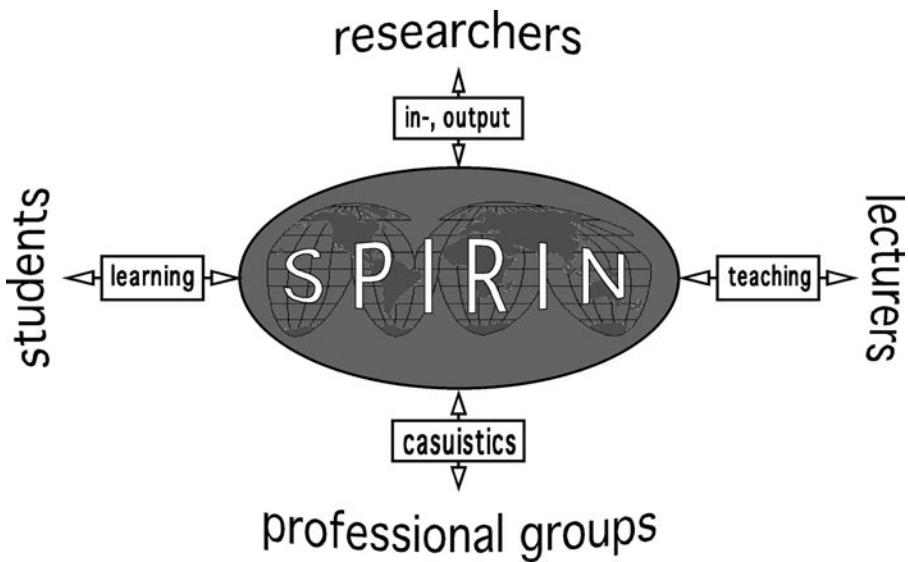
Every science has its scientific forum: a body that documents developments in the field, tests methodological premises, and exchanges research findings. Such a body is largely invisible, because it reflects the geographically and temporally dispersed history of a particular science.² Besides, it usually operates in silence. It comprises a community of critical readers silently following the discourse and silently appraising it. Sometimes such a forum becomes visible and vocal: in a work community or editorial board, in a training course or institute, in a dissertation or at a congress.

Spirituality needs a forum in which professionals, teachers, researchers and students in the field can discuss important topics, keep abreast of each other's publications, hear about educational and congress activities and the like. There are various local forums of this nature, in the United States there is the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, in Europe the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Theologie der Spiritualität and the European Association for the Study of Spirituality. South Africa has a Spirituality Association of South Africa. But there is no global forum transcending national and language divisions. Developments in ICT have made such a forum possible.

If such a forum is to become a reality, one needs to know, first of all, who is professionally engaged in the study of spirituality, where and on what theme. Hence SPIRIN's primary objective is to compile an inventory of professionals

² A. de Groot, *Methodology. Foundations of inference and research in the behavioral sciences*, (trans. J.A.A. Spiekerman) The Hague 1969.

in the field of spirituality. There are four categories: (1) students doing advanced studies of spirituality; (2) professionals with proven practical expertise in the field of spirituality: spiritual counsellors, pastors/ministers, senior nurses, therapists, et cetera; (3) teachers of spirituality: lecturers in academic courses in spirituality, those who train spiritual accompanists, those employed by formation centres, teachers at educational institutions and nursing colleges, and so forth; (4) researchers conducting scientific studies in the field of spirituality at research institutes, serving on editorial boards, et cetera. This database of names is basic to SPIRIN. These people will engage each other in discussion, present their publications to each other and report on their activities.



In establishing a scientific forum we naturally encounter obstacles. An obvious one is language barriers. There are also cultural differences. In rich countries scholars are usually well organised and sufficiently mobile, so they are not particularly interested in a forum that extends beyond their own culture. In poorer countries, on the other hand, we find that there is often a great need for a global forum. There are psychological obstacles too. Scientists, being human, tend to arrange their forums in a way that promotes the plausibility of their own ideas.

This mechanism operates in the science of spirituality as well. English speaking scholars are mostly less informed about what their colleagues in Germany are doing, in reverse. World-views are also divisive. Even in the same country (e.g., the

Netherlands) scholars of Jewish and Christian spirituality may be ignorant of each other's work. The establishment of the forum may also be impeded by scientific methods. On one university campus three scholars may be working on Eckhart without ever meeting each other, one uses a philosophical, the other a literary and the third a theological method. Finally pre-scientific convictions may obstruct serious interest in other people's research. Thus one scholar may be a confirmed proponent of New Age, whereas another regards it as utter nonsense. Collectively these factors cause scholars to lose sight of entire areas of the scientific forum.

Hence the aim of SPIRIN is to systematically increase the visibility of the scientific forum of the study of spirituality. To this end it will gradually eliminate the aforementioned obstacles and work towards greater balance in the composition of the forum. In practical terms this implies the following: not just scholars from the northern hemisphere but also scholars and scientists from the southern hemisphere (although for the time being the working language will be English); not only institutional spiritualities but also lay and dissident spiritualities; not only intradisciplinary (often predominantly theological) research but also interdisciplinary input from other sciences.

Submission of particulars for Who's Who is optional: members may decide to provide all or some information about. At its most detailed a personal database will contain the following:

- name
- institution where the person is employed
- address, email and website
- date of birth
- current activities/profession
- title(s)
- education/training (current/completed)
- field of study
- position in field of study (student, teacher, researcher, professional, other)
- research (current)
- research (future)
- religious background

The collected data will provide insight into the scientific forum at various levels: the people professionally engaged in the field of spirituality; teaching and research institutes in this field; and research areas in which professionals are active. By giving a search command (basic or advanced) one can trace the desired data in Who's Who. The system automatically searches by name, but one can also select from the available options (e.g., field of study).

2. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography as a phenomenon originated in the scholarly community and developed from the 17th century onwards. The discovery of printing increased the scale and intensity of scientific communication.³ In scholarly communities bibliographies served two purposes: contact between scholars and exchange of research results.

The study of spirituality has produced its own assortment of bibliographic aids, notably reference works with selected lists of literature; spirituality journals with book reviews; and bibliographies, the main one being the *Bibliographia Internationalis Spiritualitatis* (BIS) with some 8,500 titles.⁴ In addition, bibliographic data from libraries and publishers are available online.

SPIRIN Bibliography will offer a selection of bibliographic data on the field of spirituality online. It will incorporate four datasources (2.1), which can be accessed via the SPIRIN classification system (2.2).

2.1. Resources

The SPIRIN Bibliography combines the following databases:

1. *The library of the Titus Brandsma Institute.* The basic resource for the SPIRIN Bibliography is the specialised spirituality library that the Titus Brandsma Institute has built up over the more than 35 years of its existence. The library comprises some 90,000 titles, accessible at two levels. At the most general level the collection may be accessed by way of subject headings like mysticism, asceticism, history, psychology and the like. This retrieval method follows the *Nederlandse Basisclassificatie*, applied and made available by PICA.⁵ At a more specific level the monographs may be accessed via a network of spiritual categories such as prayer, contemplation, cultural context, virtues, devotions, conversion, et cetera (see 2.2).
2. *Intradisciplinary resources.* The discipline of spirituality, which has published its foundational research in many generations of introductions (treatises, synopses), makes its research available by way of bibliographies and journals.

In the case of bibliographies, SPIRIN Bibliography will contain selections from published bibliographies⁶ and journals with book reviews.⁷

³ A. Kouwenhoven, *Inleiding tot de bibliografie*, Assen-Maastricht 1989².

⁴ See K. Waaijman, *Spirituality. Forms, Foundations, Methods*, Leuven etc. 2002, 830-843.

⁵ European Library Co-Operative. PICA is committed to helping libraries serve people by providing economical access to knowledge through innovation and collaboration.

⁶ *Bibliographia Internationalis Spiritualitatis*; *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*. *Elenchus Bibliographicus*; *Index of Articles on Jewish Studies*; *Kiryat Sefer*. *Bibliographical Quarterly* of the Jewish National and University Library; *Ons Geestelijk Erf*. *Literatuuroverzicht*; *Religion Index One*. *Periodicals*; *Religion Index Two*. *Multi-author Works*; *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*.

⁷ *Benedictijns Tijdschrift*; *Franciscaans Leven*; *Geist und Leben*; *Review for Religious*; *Studies in Spirituality*; *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven*; *La Vie Spirituelle*; *The Way*.

Journals represent a major form of scientific cooperation. The editorial board establishes goals, develops themes and assesses writers' contributions. Writers are involved in articulating aspects of spirituality. Readers digest the proffered material and evaluate it. From the point of view of research into spirituality, journals are a kind of seismograph recording what is happening in the field of study. They could be scientific journals concerned with the discipline as such (*Spiritus* and *Studies in Spirituality*); journals that reflect scientifically on the realities of lived spirituality (*Geist und Leben*, *Speling* and *La Vie Spirituelle*); journals focusing on specific aspects of spirituality (*Bibel und Leben* and *Bible et Vie Chrétienne* in the area of biblical spirituality); journals for spirituality as practised in particular spiritual settings.

3. *Interdisciplinary resources.* The discipline of spirituality does not evolve only within its own field (intradisciplinary). The previous century saw explosive development in disciplines studying spirituality from their own epistemological perspectives: theology, philosophy, religious studies, literary and historical sciences, human sciences (psychology, sociology, pedagogy) and medical sciences.⁸ Interdisciplinary resources on spirituality will be selected mainly from online databases.⁹ This is a start to a more detailed investigation into journals of interest to researchers in the field of spirituality.

4. *Input of SPIRIN members.* SPIRIN's main goal is that members of the global scientific forum make a contribution to the development of the discipline of spirituality. Naturally this applies to the compilation of SPIRIN Bibliography as well. This contribution assumes four forms: (1) Members offer book reviews, which they may already have published elsewhere, for inclusion in SPIRIN Bibliography as an attachment with a description of the title. (2) SPIRIN members offer a summary of their own publications for inclusion in SPIRIN Bibliography.

⁸ Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 392-424.

⁹ Article@inist; British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC Monographs); British Library Opac 97; Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris); Bibliografie Nederlandse Taal- en Literatuurwetenschap; Collection Manager of Blackwell; Current Contents; Deutsches BibliotheksInstitut; Die Deutsche Bibliothek; Dissertation Abstracts (ProQuest); EBSCO; Eureka (Research Libraries Group); Francis; Gemeinsamer Bibliotheksverbund; Grijze Literatuur in Nederland; Integrierte Literatur-, Tonträger- und Musikalien-Informationssystem van Die Deutsche Bibliothek; Internationale Bibliographie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Zeitschriftenliteratur (IBZ); Internationale Bibliographie der Rezensionen (IBR); Library of Congress; Melvyl; Nederlands Instituut voor Wetenschappelijke Informatiediensten (NIWI); Nederlandse Onderzoek Databank (NOD); Online Contents; Open Bibliotheek Netwerk; PiCarta (contains Nederlandse Centrale Catalogus, NetFirst and Online Contents); UnCover; WorldCat (OCLC's central catalogue with 44 million titles; 14.000 libraries from 45 countries); Web of Science; CINAHL (Nursing worldwide); ERIC; International Bibliography of the Social Sciences; Invert (Nursing Dutch); Medline; MLA International Bibliography; Pascal; Philosopher's Index; PsycInfo; Sociaal Wetenschappelijke Literatuur-Databank; Sociological Abstracts.

(3) SPIRIN members contribute titles of monographs that they consider relevant to the study of spirituality, possibly with a summary, for inclusion in SPIRIN Bibliography. (4) SPIRIN members submit bibliographies on a specific topic for insertion in SPIRIN Bibliography. The Titus Brandsma Institute will incorporate these data into SPIRIN Bibliography in a standard format, if possible including tables of contents.

2.2. SPIRIN Classification system

Bibliographic data are classified to enable SPIRIN members to find their way quickly and accurately through the extensive range of publications. To this end the Titus Brandsma Institute has evolved a system tailored to the field of spirituality. The system has three categories: a basic classification, closer specifications, and key words.

1. *Basic classification.* There are four broad types of basic classification: universal schemes,¹⁰ national schemes,¹¹ subject-specific schemes,¹² and schemes developed by groups.¹³

SPIRIN opted for a subject-specific classification, on the following grounds.¹⁴ (1) Universal schemes are too broad for the discipline of spirituality; they are based on a 19th century concept of science; it is extremely difficult to classify the particular field of spirituality into the available categories. (2) While national schemes are more pragmatic, they are often overly oriented to a particular geographic area. (3) Subject-specific schemes seek to classify publications in a particular discipline. 'They do have the potential to provide a structure and terminology much closer to the discipline and can be more up-to-date, compared to universal schemes'.¹⁵ (4) Schemes developed by groups are in effect universal schemes designed by a group of collaborating professionals, whose daily job it is to classify publications. Despite the flexibility of their schemes they are often too general for spirituality. All in all the most appropriate scheme seems to be one that is specifically geared to the field of spirituality, that is, a subject-specific scheme.

¹⁰ E.g., Dewey Decimal Classification; Universal Decimal Classification; Library of Congress Classification.

¹¹ E.g., *Nederlandse Basisclassificatie*, used by PICA; Sveriges Allmäna Biblioteksörening.

¹² E.g., Iconclass; National Library of Medicine.

¹³ E.g., Yahoo.

¹⁴ For an assessment of the pros and cons of these systems, see T. Koch, M. Day et al. *Specification for Resource Description Methods Part 3. The Role of Classification Schemes in Internet Resource Description and Discovery*, DESIRE 1997. <URL:http://www.ub.lu.se/desire/radar/reports/D3.2.3/class_v10.html>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 1.3.4 (subject specific schemes).

The SPIRIN Basic Classification has three main categories: (1) Methodological aspects of the discipline with such classifications as reference works, interdisciplinary works, et cetera. (2) Documentation of different forms of spirituality, including not only those in particular religious contexts (Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, etc.), but also lay spirituality, indigenous spirituality and emerging forms of spirituality in modern society (education, health care, art, etc.). (3) Aspects of spirituality like asceticism, mysticism, prayer, virtues, spiritual exercises and the like. Using these three categories, the SPIRIN Basic Classification is as follows:

Methodological Aspects	Forms of Spirituality	Aspects of Spirituality
Basic Categories	Art	Asceticism
Bibliography	Biblical Spirituality	Devotions
Interdisciplinary works	Buddhist Spirituality	Discernment
Methodology	Catholic Spirituality	Divine Reality
Reference works	Classical Antiquity	Hagiography
Websites	Counterculture	Human Reality
	Early Christianity	Meditation and Prayer
	Eastern Christianity	Ministry
	Economics	Mysticism
	Education	Religious Life
	Environment	Spiritual Autobiography
	Esotericism	Spiritual Biography
	Health Care	Spiritual Direction
	Hindu Spirituality	Spiritual Exercises
	Indigenous Spirituality	Spiritual Reading
	Islamic Spirituality	Symbols and Rituals
	Jewish Spirituality	Virtues
	Lay Spirituality	
	Literature	
	Media	
	Medieval Christian Spirituality	
	Modern Culture	
	Philosophy	
	Politics	
	Psychology	
	Reformed Spirituality	
	Science and Technology	
	Society	

2. *Closer specifications.* Apart from the systematic and hierarchic classifications for accessing a collection (so-called main class numbers), the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) has several other specifications that describe the main class

numbers more closely (so-called auxiliary numbers). There are six auxiliary numbers: language, period, form, country, nationality and person. SPIRIN has adopted the principle of ancillary numbers. In addition to ordinary descriptions (key words), GOO (Dutch Joint Subject Indexing) has special ones: geographic, names of corporations, names of (art)works, form qualifiers, genre qualifiers and uniques. In addition, language, period and the person's name as a topic of study are given separately. Tailored to the field of spirituality, the classification offers the following closer specifications: (1) language, (2) period, (3) geographic names, (4) personal name as subject, (5) form qualifiers, and (6) genre qualifiers.

3. *Key words.* The *Nederlandse Basisclassificatie* used by PICA contains as many categories as necessary but as few as possible. The accent is on a list of key words selected from many collections. There is no predetermined relation between the list of key words and the Basic Classification. SPIRIN's list of key words is based on the same principle as PICA's Basic Classification: its basic classification is kept to a minimum; the list of key words is as comprehensive as possible and is not linked to the basic classifications via predetermined relations.

The list used by SPIRIN will be compiled from the following sources: (1) the UDC notations of the Titus Brandsma Institute's library were converted into key words; (2) keywords assigned to publications in online resources; (3) where feasible, the GOO key words of PICA's basic classification notation 11.63 (Spirituality and mysticism) will be adopted; (4) the main themes of the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* and the *Dictionnaire de Vie Spirituelle*; (5) themes of the principal spirituality journals; (6) the subject indexes of the *World Spirituality* series; (7) the subject index of *Spirituality. Forms, Foundations, Methods* by K. Waaijman; (8) finally, new key words may be derived from publications to be included in the database. In this sense we operate with key words most appropriate for the field of spirituality.

3. FORUM

All scholars of spirituality have spiritual discussion groups in which the community as a whole or a significant part of it reflects on key issues in spiritual life. The Buddhist *abhidharma* schools, the Talmudic study groups, the monastic *collatio*, some forms of chapter, up to and including *revision de vie*, all display the same basic structure: a group of people who meet to deliberate on spiritual subjects. Through mutual comparison and diverse elucidation they seek to arrive at tested insight and perspective.¹⁶ The SPIRIN Forum has the same basic structure as a spiritual discussion group.

¹⁶ See Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 775-788.

1. *A discussion.* Long ago Pachomius enjoined his monks to engage in daily discussion (*conferre inter se*) on spiritual subjects.¹⁷ In much the same way, the SPIRIN Forum is a place where SPIRIN members engage in dialogue on a spiritual subject.

2. *A spiritual subject.* Nigronius defines a *collatio* as a gathering of several persons to discuss matters pertaining to perfection.¹⁸ What Nigronius calls matters pertaining to perfection we call subjects pertaining to the field of spirituality. The SPIRIN Forum allows all members to raise subjects that they consider important for discussion. These need not be confined to the intra-disciplinary domain. In fact, a major goal of these discussions is to expand the traditional boundaries of the subject to new areas, such as lay spirituality, indigenous spiritualities and forms of spirituality manifest in contemporary secular culture.

3. *Intensive discussion.* Augustine wrote: 'It belongs to philosophers, to conduct a *collatio*'.¹⁹ Collation implies acquiring knowledge systematically by carefully weighing propositions against each other. Thomas Aquinas sees this as a way to new knowledge: 'A human being needs *collatio* and *discursus rationis*, to investigate the unknown'.²⁰ The SPIRIN Forum is intent, not only on a critical exchange of complementary or mutually contradictory data, but also on critical testing of the style of reasoning.

4. *Insight into truth.* Isidore of Seville said in his *De summa bono*: 'Whereas *lectio* is good for instruction, *collatio* furnishes more insight. After all, conducting a conference is better than giving a lecture. A collation makes things comprehensible. Subject matter is set in motion because questions are raised. Frequently a hidden truth is proved by objections. For what is obscure and doubtful is soon made transparent by a conference (*conferendo*)'.²¹ The aim of the SPIRIN Forum is to make spiritual subjects more comprehensible, insightful and transparent through probing discussion.

The procedure of the Forum is as follows: As at a congress, experts on a particular topic will be brought together. The primary aim is not to confront each other with problems, but to share a thought process. This could take the form of notes or submitting first drafts of articles to each other. The panel is asked to

¹⁷ See Pachomius, *Regula* nos 19-20 (*Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, acc. J.-P. Migne, vol. 23, 65-90).

¹⁸ Quoted by M. Olphe-Galliard, *Conférences spirituelles*, in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 3, Paris 1953, 1390.

¹⁹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 8,1 (*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*, vol. 47, Turnholt 1955, 216).

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q.11, a.3.

²¹ Isidore of Seville, *De summo bono*, caput 15. Quoted in Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke* V, (Hrsg. J. Quint) Stuttgart 1963, 312.

respond so as to take the thought process further. The results of such a discussion could form the basis for an article in SPIRIN Encyclopedia.

Any registered member can start a discussion group on a specific theme and situate it in the framework of the standard classification of the SPIRIN Bibliography. She or he can invite all members, or a select group, to join in the discussion. The initiator is responsible for leading the discussion.

A special type of Forum discussion is the presentation and discussion of a thesis in spirituality, a theme or a methodological problem. Conceivably a digital defence of a dissertation, comprising both a brief presentation of the contents by the doctoral candidate and a discussion with a number of experts in a virtual examination hall, can be published in toto under a particular key word. That would mean that dissertations will not simply be buried in a bookcase but will become part of the scientific forum.

4. ENCYCLOPEDIA

The standard reference work for the science of spirituality is the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, on which hundreds of scholars worked from 1932 to 1995. The thousands of entries are divided into two main categories: persons/trends and themes. The *Dictionnaire* is largely confined to Christian traditions and is historically oriented. It deals mainly with classical forms and themes, as becomes evident when one compares it with, for instance, the *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle*.²² The latter tries to bring spirituality and everyday life together,²³ as is evident in the entries: present-day categories, cultural involvement, a human sciences approach, et cetera.²⁴ The overall result is a categorisation containing 50% new material compared with the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. If we compare these two reference works with spirituality journals,²⁵ we observe a further thematic shift of some 40%. About half the themes in journals are not really reflected in the dictionaries.²⁶ In several respects SPIRIN Encyclopedia will update the existing reference works.

1. SPIRIN Encyclopedia is structured on the same lines as the SPIRIN Bibliography. According to this basic structure attention is not confined to forms of spirituality (figures, groups, trends, schools, etc.) in various religious and

²² A French edition (1983) of the original Italian *Nuovo dizionario di spiritualità* (1979).

²³ See the 'Présentation' in: *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, Paris 1983, viii.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, vii-x.

²⁵ For purposes of comparison we chose the journals *La Vie Spirituelle*, *The Way* and *Speling*.

²⁶ For all this, see the comparative study by Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 824-841.

philosophical contexts, and to aspects of spirituality (asceticism, prayer, virtues, etc.), but extends to methodological questions relating to the development of the discipline.

2. SPIRIN Encyclopedia will not limit itself to the intradisciplinary field of spirituality (intradisciplinary methodological issues; intradisciplinary forms and aspects), but will also reflect the interdisciplinary field: spirituality and education, spirituality and health care, spirituality and management, ecological spirituality, et cetera. The Encyclopedia will not only document the interdisciplinary field but also explore the methodological implications.

3. One drawback of printed reference works is that some entries are decades old and require updating. Thus themes in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* such as emotionality, soul, abstinence, wonder, asceticism and spiritual biography date back to the 1930s. The advantage of a digital encyclopaedia is that in principle all entries can be started simultaneously and raised for discussion at any time.

4. Thus the matrix for entries in SPIRIN Encyclopedia will be the discussions conducted by experts in SPIRIN Forum on a carefully defined item of spirituality (both intra- and interdisciplinary, substantive and methodological), including a selective bibliography.

5. As a first step a global overview of the main categories in the basic classification will be presented, together with – and that is essential – an inventory of the cardinal questions at issue. In a sense this inventory will serve as an agenda for discussions in the medium term. Obviously the list will have to be reviewed every five to ten years.

5. EDUCATION

One indicator of the development of the discipline of spirituality is 'the proliferation in the academy of courses and programs in spirituality. The graduates of these programs are increasingly being invited to teach in their area of expertise, a sign that interest in the field at the undergraduate level is also increasing'.²⁷ Normally spirituality is taught in physical classrooms. Developments in the digital sphere now make it possible to provide instruction in an expanded virtual classroom, so that students all over the world can communicate with each other. SPIRIN Education was developed for such digital education, and will be carried out by a collaborative association of various institutions. By means of the digital learning environment the SPIRIN Education network (SPINE) offers teaching

²⁷ S. Schneiders, Spirituality in the Academy, in: *Modern Christian Spirituality. Methodological and Historical Essays* (ed. B. Hanson), Atlanta (Georgia) 1990, 19.

modules for academic education in spirituality. The modules can be used by local academic institutions to teach the subject. They are designed in such a way that students complete the module partly by way of face-to-face sessions at their local educational institution and partly by way of assignments set in the digital learning environment. In the process the local educational institution remains responsible for teaching on the spot, but at the same time students have the opportunity to learn interactively in an expanded virtual classroom.

The following modules are available at present: (1) seven general modules developed by the Titus Brandsma Institute with contents based on Waaijman's book, *Spirituality*, and (2) several specific modules, such as 'Philippine spirituality' (developed by the Center for Spirituality, Manila) and 'Interaction between religious traditions' (developed by the Nijmegen Faculty of Theology). Technically, the content of these modules is presented by the SPIRIN website and are implemented via links in various digital learning environments.

The Titus Brandsma Institute's seven general modules are the following:

Introduction to spirituality. On the basis of certain forms of spirituality and the root metaphors current in lived spirituality this module explores the material object of spirituality; it determines the formal object in terms of the history of the discipline and by means of interdisciplinary insights.

Basic forms of spirituality. This module deals with the three basic forms of lived spirituality: primordial spirituality (including lay spirituality, indigenous spirituality, and forms of secular spirituality); schools of spirituality (both spiritual traditions within religions and present-day secular trends), and counter movements (e.g. liberation spirituality, environmental spirituality, feminist spirituality and peace spirituality). This module pinpoints the material object more specifically.

Methodology of spirituality. On the basis of the introductory module, which determines the material and formal object, this module presents the methodology for the study of spirituality. The premises are the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* and the spiritual notion of *diacrisis*, both of which express the cognitive mode of discernment. This mode is explored and translated into four methodological processes: description, hermeneutics, systematics and mystagogy. Hence the model determines the formal object.

Form-descriptive research. This module explores the methodological process of phenomenological description with reference to the paradigm of spiritual biography and works it out in interdisciplinary dialogue with historical method.

Spiritual hermeneutics. The module deals with the hermeneutic approach: on the basis of the spiritual reading practice of various spiritual traditions, this module examines the hermeneutic process and develops that process methodologically in dialogue with contemporary hermeneutic scholars.

Systematics of spirituality. This module examines the systematic perspective: on the basis of the paradigm of the spiritual dialogue, the module explores and develops the concept of truth in spirituality in interdisciplinary dialogue with contemporary philosophers.

Mystagogy. This module examines the mystagogic theme on the basis of the paradigm of spiritual accompaniment and develops it in interdisciplinary dialogue with psychology.

The inclusion of Education in SPIRIN enables students and teachers to form a joint learning community. They can also engage in dialogue with representatives of professional groups in the field of spirituality and come into contact with concrete cases for teaching and research. SPIRIN offers them topical discussions by researchers in the field of spirituality. Thus they are introduced into the scientific community and learn to become active members of that community.

All this will change the teachers' role. They will increasingly become coaches. The role of coach assigned to teachers corresponds with the mystagogic view of internalisation processes that is unique to spirituality.

6. BULLETIN BOARD & LINKS

It is useful to the scientific forum to know where and when congresses, symposia and other gatherings are held, not only with a view to possible participation but also to get a picture of what is happening in the discipline of spirituality. SPIRIN Bulletin Board is a facility for members to keep each other informed of events in their field. As mentioned already, this could take the form of announcements of congresses, symposia or seminars. Other possibilities are book presentations, jubilees and similar occasions. Thus SPIRIN Bulletin Board will provide an up-to-date calendar giving the dates and venues of all events in the field of spirituality.

In addition to the Bulletin Board SPIRIN also has a Links component. SPIRIN Links are divided into two groups.

The first comprises links to the websites of scientific research and teaching institutions in the field of spirituality. By consulting these websites visitors to SPIRIN can find out more about the various research and teaching programmes.

The second group comprises links to websites dealing with the contents of the discipline. These links are included, albeit very selectively, in the relevant entries in the SPIRIN Encyclopedia.

SUMMARY

There is a need for an international academic forum in the field of spirituality. Spirituality International (SPIRIN) is the construction of such a forum, using the results in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). Basically, SPIRIN is a web community in which scholars, lecturers, students and professionals exchange information and engage in discussion. SPIRIN is composed of six interrelated sections: Who's Who, Bibliography, Forum, Encyclopedia, Education, Bulletin Board & Links. Of course, the members of SPIRIN will form the backbone of the academic forum: they are the ones establishing SPIRIN. The staff of the Titus Brandsma Institute (Nijmegen, The Netherlands) will act as facilitator.

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