

The purpose of the research project is to analyze a specific understanding of contemporary atheism, that emerged in the circles of French philosophy around the 20th and 21st centuries. It's not a type of atheism, that simply rejects religious systems, as it combines the critique of religion (more or less radical) with a positive proposal of replacing this traditional religious spirituality with an atheist spirituality. The purpose of the research is to confirm certain hypotheses. Firstly, whether the "new spirituality" as an alternative to traditional "religious spiritualities" addressed to atheists, is in any way similar to the traditional religious spirituality? Secondly, what are the reasons in understanding of i. e. human immortality and the means to overcome the fear of death? Thirdly, whether this new "atheist spirituality", as complementary to the critique of religious stances, is capable of contributing to the conversion of traditionally religious people and the acceptance of a spirituality that is not related to a personal Transcendence?

The research will be based on the critical analysis of the sources of four French thinkers, who in their work discussed the critique of religion and the "new spirituality", meaning: M. Onfray, L. Ferry, M. Gauchet and A. Comte-Sponville.

Research methods consist of arranging the research material in accordance with the presupposed goals. Research and description of the sources will be conducted with the standard methods of analysis and reconstruction of philosophical texts. We will employ standard analytic and hermeneutic methods, used in the interpretation of texts. We will establish the meaning of basic terms and definitions, reconstruct and define the strategies of argumentation and survey for hidden senses of meaning in the context of the whole research material.

First of all we will analyze: the history and bibliography of each author, then the sources of his thought, and his methodological principles. The next step will be the analysis of particular problems of the subject matter. The analysis of the influence of the French philosophical tradition (Cartesianism, Enlightenment tradition, reflexive philosophy, hermeneutics, the French exegesis of phenomenology) on the proposed solutions on the matter of the critique of religion will play a major role in the research.

Further, we will concentrate on the sole term "atheist spirituality" and how it can be compared to "religious spirituality", on the basis of Christian tradition.

There are numerous arguments for such research - in contemporary culture we can see changes, that on one hand strengthen the secularization processes, while on the other spawn continuous pursuit for sacrum and spiritual values based on more than just traditional religions. The "atheist spirituality" is a phenomenon that combines these two aspects: it rejects the traditional religious model, but at the same time proposes the cultivation of certain spiritual values.

Another reason for such research concerning French atheism is the fact, that contemporary French critique of religion has not yet been subject to detailed analysis in Poland, and even France, contrary to many publications concerning Anglo-Saxon atheism.

The existing discussions and polemics with aforementioned authors, cover only certain problems, but not the entire movement of the so-called "atheist spirituality". The project also points at the relation between theoretical speculation and practical life - in this case philosophy becomes "spiritual practice" and can be employed on an everyday basis.

The expected result of the research will be the publication of a monograph titled "French atheist spirituality" and the preparation and publication of results in an international scientific magazine. To popularize the research, we also plan to record a few radio interviews with experts, devoted to the French atheist thought, published on our Philosophical Radio "Sed Contra" site (www.radio.filozoficzne.pl)