

in Everyday Life. McGuire menggugat dikotomi pemikiran tradisional Barat antara spiritualitas dan materialitas yang menempatkan keduanya secara biner. McGuire berargumen bahwa pengalaman spiritual terhubung erat dengan tubuh dan lingkungan fisik. Artikel ini mencoba menganalisis kekuatan utama karya McGuire, yaitu dasar empiris yang cukup kokoh melalui metode penelitian kualitatif, seperti wawancara dan observasi sebagai basis penting yang meningkatkan kredibilitas argumennya. Namun, beberapa kelemahan juga diidentifikasi dalam tulisan ini. Pertama, McGuire tidak memberikan batasan definisi yang jelas tentang spiritualitas, di mana hal ini menyebabkan interpretasi menjadi kabur. Kedua, generalisasi bahwa aspek material selalu terlibat dalam pencapaian spiritualitas mengabaikan pendekatan non-material, seperti meditasi atau refleksi. Ketiga, karya ini mengabaikan faktor psikologis yang memengaruhi pengalaman spiritual individu, seperti trauma atau motivasi. Keempat, konsep materialitas problematik karena ia tidak memberikan penjelasan yang memadai tentang bagaimana materialitas mengarah pada pengalaman spiritual. Terakhir, McGuire dalam beberapa hal menggunakan pengalaman pribadinya sebagai landasan argumennya, sehingga menciptakan bias karena spiritualitas bersifat sangat subjektif dan berbeda bagi setiap individu. Studi ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis secara mendalam terhadap karya McGuire dan literatur terkait tentang spiritualitas dan materialitas, dengan fokus pada bagaimana berbagai tradisi mendefinisikan dan mempraktikkan spiritualitas, khususnya pada jalur yang menekankan aspek non-material dalam mencapai pengalaman spiritual.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Fisik, Materialitas, Psikologi, Spiritualitas, Tubuh.*

Introduction

Spirituality is vital to many people's lives, offering profound benefits for personal and social well-being. It fosters self-awareness by encouraging introspection and mindfulness, which help individuals understand their inner selves. It enhances emotional resilience by providing meaning and strength in adversity, promoting coping mechanisms grounded in hope and connection to something greater. Spirituality typically refers to individual quests for meaning and comprehension of what is considered holy or transcendent or feeling connected to and supported by a divine being (Hope et al. 2024, 1–2; Besecke 2007, 171–81; Sullivan 2011, 18). In line with this, Spirituality is perceived as the elevation of the human condition to a state where the mind is focused on higher, non-material realities associated with a godly existence which is also contrasted with materialism (Khan 2022, 3) and the beliefs on the idea that the soul continues to exist after physical death (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2019, 1117).

It is noteworthy that spirituality is not limited to abstract or transcendent concerns. It can also address human struggles to cope with material aspects. In this sense, spirituality provides a solution for individuals to help less longing for consumer goods, leading to lower levels of conspicuous consumption (Stillman 2012, 2–3). From this concept, it can be inferred that spirituality focuses on transcendent, non-material aspects of life, prioritizing inner growth, connection to higher

realities, and a sense of purpose or meaning beyond the physical world. Spirituality is also concerned with providing tools and frameworks for coping with life's inherent struggles.

There is no single way to practice spirituality, as it can take many forms. Some studies reveal that spirituality can be expressed through various practices, such as meditation, prayer, rituals, or acts of service, and may be deeply personal, and shaped by individual beliefs, cultural contexts, and life experiences (Besecke 2007, 181). Additionally, research shows that spirituality can be integrated into daily life in diverse ways, from mindfulness practices to ethical living, with each form offering a unique path to personal growth and connection to a higher purpose. For example, for Orthodox Christians, spirituality is primarily associated with a withdrawal from the world, history, and politics, often taking on a ritualistic character expressed through acts of piety, habits, and customs (Voulgaraki-Pissina 2023, 2–5). In addition, religion and spirituality also embrace a person's health benefits; and they provide a sense of connectedness and wisdom that transcends the total of other virtues (Nelson and Canty 2022, 31–32).

In terms of health benefits, Rosmarin, et al. stated that spirituality revealed a strong link between divine trust and improved mental health, including increased happiness and reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety. As quoted by Schiffman et al. building on these findings, they designed a spiritually integrated therapy aimed at addressing anxiety (Schiffman et al. 2023, 170). It means that trust in a benevolent and omnipresent God, as measured by the Trust in God Scale, plays a significant role in enhancing mental well-being. The research highlights a positive association between divine trust and better mental health outcomes, such as increased happiness and decreased levels of depression and anxiety. In addition, Pargament's work also emphasizes that spirituality is not merely a collection of beliefs but a vital dimension of human existence that significantly influences mental health and coping strategies. Pargament argues that spirituality encompasses a broad range of experiences, including searching for meaning, connecting to the transcendent, and integrating personal beliefs into everyday life (Pargament 2007). From this perspective, spirituality is a multidimensional aspect of human life that bridges inner beliefs, emotional well-being, and practical coping strategies. It provides a framework for individuals to find meaning, connect with a transcendent reality, and integrate these experiences into their daily lives. Beyond religious practices, spirituality fosters resilience, enhances mental health through divine trust, and supports the pursuit of personal growth and emotional stability.

Meanwhile, for some Indigenous groups, spirituality can be found through daily interactions with nature, community, and ancestral traditions (Fisher and Rinehart 2017, 33–34). For example, Aboriginal

spirituality is rooted in an embodied experience of the sacred, which is manifest in daily practices related to caring for the Country—land, water, and all living beings (Paradies and Joyce 2024, 3).

Furthermore, spirituality can be expressed through various stages. As quoted by Liu (2024), Bonaventure proposes six stages of spirituality as a progressive journey toward achieving unity with God. It starts from the Sense stage, where individuals become aware of spiritual realities through sensory experiences. This leads to the Imagination stage, where contemplation and visualization of divine truths occur. Next is the Reason stage, where rational thought is employed to understand spiritual beliefs. Following this, the Intelligence stage deepens comprehension, allowing for a more profound grasp of faith's mysteries. The fifth stage, Understanding, enhances insight into divine nature, culminating in the final stage, the Spark of Conscience, which represents an intimate awareness of God's presence within oneself (Liu 2024, 5–9). In this context, spirituality is embedded in daily life, shaping actions, relationships, and fostering a sense of unity with all living beings. It can be pursued through different methods, such as prayer, meditation, acts of kindness, or mindfulness, each offering a unique path to spiritual growth and connection with the divine.

It is important to note that in Western tradition, spirituality, and materiality are often viewed as distinct entities, which form a binary opposition that fails to recognize their interrelation (McGuire 2008, 97; McGuire 2007). This perspective can be traced back to the struggles over the definitional boundaries of religion during the long Reformation, which resulted in a strong negative evaluation of everyday religious practices, particularly those involving bodily and emotional expressions. Consequently, dominant religious groups began to prioritize belief over practice, which framed religion primarily as a matter of “creeds” or “faiths” (M. McGuire 2007, 105).

However, according to McGuire (2008), spirituality and materiality are interconnected. In her work, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, Chapter 5 on *Spirituality and Materiality*, McGuire challenges the traditional separation of the two. This perspective is intriguing as it offers a new view on the relationship between spirituality and materiality, which are intrinsically linked to human life. For McGuire, spirituality deeply engages with the physical human body, not just the mind or spirit (McGuire 2008, 97). The connection goes beyond mere concepts about the body or moral regulation of its desires. Instead, spirituality is intrinsically tied to the tangible, material reality of human bodies, not just in theory but in concrete experience (McGuire 2003, 1). A person's spiritual experience cannot be separated from the material and physical aspects of the body. In this case, McGuire asserts that the body is where individuals live their everyday lives, thus playing a crucial role in

one's spiritual experience (McGuire 2008, 97–98).

This article critically examines McGuire's work, which challenges the emphasis on materiality as a prerequisite for achieving spiritual experiences. To substantiate these critiques, the study incorporates a range of supporting sources, particularly scholarly literature that advocates for the view that materiality is not the sole pathway to spirituality. Moreover, it highlights the significance of non-material dimensions, emphasizing that many individuals have experienced transcendence and profound spiritual connections without relying on material objects or rituals. This perspective underscores the diverse ways spirituality can manifest, moving beyond material frameworks to include intangible, deeply personal experiences. This article focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of Chapter 5. Key questions explored include: Does spiritual achievement require materiality? Many traditions view physical rituals as bridges to spiritual experiences, as illustrated by Hervieu-Léger's "chain of memory" concept. However, this study argues that spiritual experiences aren't always tied to materiality; some paths emphasize meaning through meditation, viewing materiality as an obstacle.

For this study, we conduct a critical examination of McGuire's work and review other relevant literature concerning this issue, particularly related to spirituality and materiality. In this process, we analyze how different traditions and religious practices define spirituality and how they integrate material aspects into spiritual experiences. Furthermore, we elaborate on several aspects to reinforce the argument that material aspects do not always function as a bridge to an individual's spirituality. Additionally, psychological aspects, such as mental conditions and motivations, can also play a significant role in shaping spiritual experiences, indicating that the pursuit of meaning can be highly personal and not always reliant on material dimensions. To be precise, the analysis highlights five critical points: (1) McGuire's vague definition of spirituality, and potentially confusing; (2) her generalization that materiality fosters spirituality, overlooking diverse experiences; (3) the neglect of psychological aspects crucial to how effectively the body and environment support spirituality; (4) her problematic of the concept of materiality, and (5) her reliance on personal experiences, which may impact objectivity.

This study employs a qualitative method. Qualitative research emphasizes a deep and complex understanding of the issues being studied by incorporating various perspectives and mutually influencing interaction factors, rather than merely seeking simple cause-and-effect relationships. This approach allows for a comprehensive overview of the context and social dynamics shaping the experiences and realities of the research subjects (Creswell 2018, 258). In doing so, a qualitative approach is employed to provide an in-depth analysis of McGuire's work and relevant literature on spirituality and materiality, examining

different traditions' definitions and integration of materiality in spiritual experiences. This approach underscores that spirituality may not solely depend on material aspects, with psychological factors often playing a significant role. The literature search focuses on targeted keywords to maintain relevance and enhance the clarity and quality of the analysis.

McGuire's Perspective on Spirituality and Materiality

The relationship between spirituality and materiality has been interpreted in many ways. Some traditions see material things as obstacles to spiritual growth, encouraging detachment from worldly possessions and desires. They argue that focusing on inner experiences and higher realities leads to enlightenment. Others believe that material objects and rituals can help people connect with the divine. These different views show how spirituality can be both a journey of transcendence and a practice rooted in daily life, depending on the cultural or religious context.

To deal with, in many Western religious traditions, individuals seeking to deepen their spiritual lives are often encouraged to transcend their material existence, which involves a deliberate detachment from worldly desires and concerns. This journey is rooted in the belief that material impulses and physical attachments can hinder spiritual growth and connection to the divine. Overcoming these attachments requires cultivating self-discipline, rejecting indulgence in bodily pleasures, and focusing on higher, non-material aspirations (McGuire 2007, 187).

By transcending the perceived limitations and impurities of the physical body, individuals aim to achieve a state of spiritual purity and closer alignment with sacred or divine ideals. This perspective often views the body not as an end but as a vessel that must be transcended to realize spiritual enlightenment and fulfillment fully (McGuire 2007, 187). In line with this concept, certain beliefs hold that materiality has no connection to spirituality. From this perspective, materiality and spirituality are distinct and lack an inherent correlation. Spirituality is characterized as an inner state that emphasizes higher, non-material realities, whereas materialism is associated with an attachment to worldly possessions and superficial appearances. A truly spiritual person transcends material desires and remains unaffected by material luxuries, focusing instead on divine and eternal truths (Khan 2022, 4). So, these two concepts are portrayed as distinct and unconnected, with spiritual growth viewed as possible only when material concerns are transcended.

However, in many other traditions, ritual practices and material symbols serve as bridges connecting individuals to deeper spiritual experiences. McGuire argues that spirituality is not solely a mental or spiritual pursuit, but encompasses real, lived experiences involving various types of bodies—healthy, suffering, athletic, etc.—and their interactions with the material world (McGuire 2003). From a sociological

perspective, living religion is a dynamic process involving individual interaction with religious teachings and practices, where individuals actively internalize values from religious stories and rituals rather than being mere passive followers of religious norms. This process involves personal reflection and adjustment of meaning, making each spiritual experience unique and tied to their social and cultural context. Smart explains that there is a significant relationship between nature, material culture, and spirituality in various religious and cultural practices. Nature itself can be regarded as divine, with certain natural elements like rivers, mountains, and winds viewed as sacred or spiritually significant. Thus, it also suggests that material objects and places, both natural and man-made, can hold spiritual meaning (Smart 1996, 276).

For instance, the body of the nation, often represented by its land, is a sacred symbol in modern nationalism, celebrated through cultural practices like tourism and poetry. Additionally, the blending of the natural world with human-created structures, such as temples or monuments, indicates how religious or national significance is attributed to both natural and artificial spaces. This fusion of natural and man-made elements challenges the boundaries between the two and shows how material culture can become a vessel for spiritual or national identity (Smart 1996, 276).

Similarly, some cultures illustrate how rituals and cultural practices are grounded in the care for the Country. This tradition shows that spiritual experiences are woven into daily life rather than being confined to specific religious ceremonies. For example, the Aboriginal contemplative tradition known as *dadirri* is practiced with the involvement of the environment. The notion of *dadirri* as an ongoing practice fosters a deep respect for the land and its resources, reinforcing the idea that spirituality is lived rather than merely believed. Unlike typical nature experiences, where nature is often seen as a passive backdrop, *dadirri* recognizes the Country as an active participant in the contemplative process. This means that the experiences and insights gained through *dadirri* are shaped by the dynamic interactions between individuals and their environment, highlighting the relational aspect of Aboriginal spirituality (Paradies and Joyce 2024).

It is important to note that *dadirri* refers to a deep spiritual connection with the land and an understanding of one's place within the natural world, which aligns with the article's emphasis on embodied spirituality and interdependence. In the spiritual practice, *dadirri*, the environment—referred to as Country—is not merely a backdrop for contemplation but an active participant in the spiritual experience (Paradies and Joyce 2024). This contrasts with many Western nature experiences, where nature is often seen as passive. In *dadirri*, engagement with the Country fosters a profound connection that shapes the contemplative process,

allowing practitioners to experience spiritual insights through their interactions with the land and its ecosystems (Paradies and Joyce 2024, 9–11). This perspective challenges the notion that spirituality is separate from mundane activities, highlighting instead how these activities are imbued with spiritual significance. From this perspective, it is clear that spirituality is deeply intertwined with both material and natural elements in many religious and cultural contexts. Ritual practices and material symbols are crucial in bridging the gap between individuals and deeper spiritual experiences. This interconnection highlights how the environment serves not just as a backdrop for spiritual practices but as an active participant in shaping those experiences.

As described above, McGuire explains that spirituality and materiality are connected because humans possess memory, which she argues is not solely based on brain function (McGuire 2008, 97). Memory in humans manifests through complex physical interactions, positioning the body as a repository for deep experiences that contribute to memory without necessarily involving cognitive awareness. In this context, the author's notion of a person's sense of identifying with family, community, and others—is founded on various practices of remembering that involve the body, emotions, and thoughts (McGuire 2008). In short, McGuire's work underscores the importance of both material and immaterial dimensions in shaping spiritual experiences. While some traditions advocate transcending the material for spiritual purity, others demonstrate how rituals and embodied practices play a crucial role in fostering spiritual connections. The integration of memory, as a process rooted in bodily and emotional interactions, further supports the idea that materiality is not merely a hindrance but an essential aspect of spirituality. This perspective invites a broader understanding of spirituality as a dynamic interplay between physicality, thought, and cultural context, offering a more inclusive and multifaceted approach to spiritual development.

To strengthen her argument, McGuire cites Daniele Hervieu-Léger, who describes religion as a “chain of memory” that connects people to the faith community's traditions. This transmission of memory is seen as a cognitive process, observable in religious practices that engage the senses, activated through memory within the human body (McGuire 2008, 100). Additionally, Hervieu-Léger emphasizes that emotions are crucial in this transmission, equating religious rituals to a series of practices embedded in the body, where each part can evoke deep emotions, social connectedness, and spiritual meaning (McGuire 2008, 100). Thus, ritual practices that involve the human body should not only be understood intellectually but also experienced physically and emotionally. This approach illustrates that the body, as a vessel of ritual practice, serves not just as a physical tool but also as a medium to access spiritual meaning and social connections. Therefore, understanding religious practices and

spirituality requires an integration of cognitive, physical, and emotional aspects, creating a richer and deeper experience for individuals.

To illustrate her argument, McGuire provides concrete examples through four key aspects that can act as bridges linking spirituality and materiality. The first is the practices performed by the body. Activities such as chanting, meditating, and other physical movements are crucial for understanding how individuals engage with spirituality. In many religions, bodily practices are integral to rituals connecting individuals with the divine, ancestors, and nature in traditional religions. The second aspect is the environment and material objects. The physical environment influences how one achieves their deepest spiritual goals; individuals often seek conducive or comfortable places for specific rituals, such as prayer or worship, often in locations like their rooms or other comfortable spaces. The third aspect is music, which is also essential for humans in attaining spiritual levels. Spiritual practices manifested through the body, like singing, can directly lead to religious experiences and a sense of togetherness. The author shares a personal experience showing that singing together has been profoundly spiritual and enhanced a sense of community. The fourth aspect encompasses routine daily activities such as preparing food. Many individuals perceive these activities as mundane (McGuire 2008, 99–104).

However, the author argues that growing and preparing food is not merely a routine task but a practice involving deep thought and emotional energy. This process holistically engages the body, mind, sensations, and emotions. Although those performing these activities may not always perceive them as spiritual, these acts can connect the body, mind, memory, emotions, and soul (McGuire 2008, 104–5). Furthermore, material objects, such as food or ritual items, can serve as a means for profound spiritual experiences. McGuire also discusses that routine activities like cooking, singing together, and working possess their spiritual dimensions, especially when conducted with full awareness of deeper meanings. McGuire's view indicates that spirituality can be found in what may seem simple and mundane, but when linked to personal and emotional meanings, these activities can become ways to achieve significant spiritual experiences (McGuire 2008, 104–15).

McGuire's argument, as explained above, aligns with Ninian Smart's perspective in *Dimensions of the Sacred*, where Smart articulates the material dimension of religion as essential for understanding how individuals engage with their faith (Smart 1996, 275–76). This dimension encompasses the physical objects, symbols, and spaces that serve as conduits between spiritual and physical realms. Smart posits that the material dimension acts as a vital link between the spiritual and physical worlds. It allows adherents to experience their faith through tangible means, such as sacred artifacts and rituals, which embody deeper

spiritual truths. The material dimension underscores how material culture shapes religious experiences. This includes how objects like altars, icons, and temples not only represent beliefs but also facilitate worship and community engagement. By emphasizing shared physical symbols and spaces, the material dimension fosters community identity among adherents. These shared experiences contribute to a sense of belonging and collective religious identity (Smart 1996, 275–76). Both McGuire and Smart highlight that the material dimension is not merely an auxiliary aspect of religion but a fundamental component that enriches spiritual life and communal practices. This perspective invites a broader understanding of how faith is lived and experienced in everyday life.

Critique of McGuire's works about Spirituality and Materiality

It must be acknowledged that McGuire's work is quite commendable. Her writing offers a fresh perspective that emphasizes the existence of the body and other material aspects of the path toward human spirituality. It is essential to highlight several strengths of her article. First, one of the significant points of McGuire's work is its solid empirical foundation, especially when discussing the importance of the body in spiritual practices. McGuire refers to extensive qualitative research, such as interviews and observations, to support her claims. This research provides a concrete dimension to the theories addressed, where individual experiences of spirituality are elucidated through direct interactions with the physical environment and the body. This methodological rigor not only enhances the credibility of McGuire's arguments but also demonstrates that the relationship between spirituality and materiality can be observed in real practices, not just in theory. The use of empirical data strengthens the notion that spiritual experiences are closely tied to physical and material elements, offering a new perspective in the study of religion and spirituality.

Secondly, another strength of McGuire's work is the challenge it presents against the traditional dichotomy between mind and body, as well as between spirituality and materiality. McGuire advocates an integrative approach, allowing readers to reassess how religious experiences are conceptualized. By holistically combining physical and spiritual elements, McGuire contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of spirituality, which is relevant in contemporary discussions across various fields. Furthermore, McGuire's insights are not only significant in the study of religion but also resonate within interdisciplinary fields such as sociology and anthropology, contributing to broader conversations about identity, embodiment, and cultural expression within religious contexts.

However, McGuire's work also has several weaknesses that should be critiqued. These points play an important role in complementing the

discourse on the relationship between spirituality and materiality and in preventing subjectivity and bias in the analysis.

First, McGuire does not provide a clear definitional boundary of what is meant by spirituality, which stands as one of the main shortcomings in her analysis. The lack of this definition creates difficulties for readers, as spirituality is a concept that is vast and diverse, influenced by social, cultural, and religious contexts. For instance, spirituality in the Christian tradition is often understood as the individual's relationship with God (Forster and Marchinkowski 2024, 7–8; Inbadas, 2016), while in the Buddhist tradition, it is more associated with the attainment of enlightenment through meditation and detachment from material desires. These fundamental differences require a specific and measurable definition so that the concept of spirituality presented is easily understood in various contexts. In other words, spirituality, as defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004), involves possessing clear beliefs about the purpose and meaning of the universe and acknowledging the existence of a transcendent, non-material dimension. This dimension provides individuals with a sense of higher purpose that influences their values, decisions, and behaviors. Spirituality is characterized by the integration of these beliefs into daily life, guiding moral actions and providing a framework for understanding one's existence in the cosmos (Schiffman 2023).

As noted by Forlenza and Vallada (2018), the definition of spirituality has evolved over the past few decades. Spirituality, once closely linked to religion, is now increasingly viewed as a personal experience that may be independent of formal, organized religious beliefs. In this context, spirituality can encompass various dimensions, such as psychological well-being, the search for life's meaning, or relationships with nature and others (Forlenza and Vallada 2018, 1741–42).

Spirituality is often viewed through the lens of cultural heritage, which affects how individuals define and practice their spirituality. For instance, African Americans may integrate traditional religious practices with personal spirituality, while Black Caribbeans might emphasize communal aspects rooted in their cultural narratives and histories (Hope et al. 2024). In this case, cultural differences profoundly impact personal spirituality by shaping definitions, practices, and expressions of spirituality among various ethnic groups. It means that spirituality is not a one-size-fits-all concept but rather a highly individualized experience shaped by cultural and social contexts. While spirituality is historically intertwined with formal religious practices, its modern interpretation emphasizes personal and subjective dimensions, such as psychological well-being, the quest for meaning, and connections with others and nature. Additionally, cultural heritage plays a pivotal role in how spirituality is understood and practiced, as demonstrated by variations in how African Americans and Black Caribbeans approach their spiritual lives, blending traditional and

communal elements. This underscores that spirituality evolves across cultures and individuals, reflecting diverse interpretations and practices (Hope et al. 2024).

Meanwhile, in the context of health, Haug identifies four dimensions of spirituality, including cognitive, affective, behavioral, and developmental highlighting how these aspects help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives as manifestations of their spirituality (Inbadas 2016, 1–2). Similarly, spirituality as a relational process is transformative, impacting individual identities and societal structures through deepened connections with the Divine, fostering both personal growth and community engagement (Forster and Marchinkowski 2024, 7–8). It means spirituality nurtures individual growth by fostering self-discovery, emotional resilience, and ethical living while simultaneously encouraging community engagement through social responsibility, relationship building, and cultural enrichment. This interconnectedness ultimately leads to a more compassionate society where individuals are empowered to contribute positively to the world around them.

From the description above, the definition and context of spirituality should be articulated in detail. Without a clear boundary, as seen in McGuire's work, the concept of spirituality can become multifaceted. This overly broad interpretation can obscure the validity of arguments attempting to link spirituality with materiality, as the concept of spirituality itself can be understood very differently by various individuals or groups. What is meant by spirituality, and how does one experience it when reaching a point of spirituality? Is spirituality a moment when someone feels tranquility or happiness, or is it when an individual encounters extraordinary phenomena beyond themselves? These are some critical questions concerning the limitations of the concept of spirituality. Given the expansive definition of spirituality, it is crucial to delineate its boundaries and context in detail to allow readers to grasp its various facets more clearly.

Secondly, McGuire's generalization about the relationship between spirituality and materiality deserves critique because it does not consider the variation in spiritual experiences that do not always involve physical aspects. McGuire argues that the body and physical environment play a crucial role in attaining spirituality. As mentioned earlier, activities such as drumming, dancing, vision quests, smoking, feasting, sweating, and chanting are fully perceived as aligned with achieving advanced spiritual growth (McGuire 2008).

However, this view overlooks many spiritual traditions that emphasize inner experiences and transcendence without physical involvement. For example, meditation practices like in Buddhism aim to achieve inner peace, enlightenment, or nirvana through deep concentration and reflection, which are undertaken entirely as mental and inner processes without

the need for physical objects or external rituals. Meditation practitioners often strive to detach from material attachments to gain a deeper spiritual understanding. In this context, the body and physical environment are not always central elements in the spiritual journey and are often seen as aspects to be relinquished. As quoted from Sheldrake (2007), such spiritual experiences are referred to as “inner silence” (Manolea 2019, 5).

According to Sheldrake, inner silence is crucial for spiritual development, creating the mental and emotional conditions necessary for connection with the Divine. Inner silence denotes a state in which there is no inner movement, whether in the form of thoughts or emotions. This condition reflects a state of complete calmness with full awareness and openness to the Divine. In ancient Christian tradition, this condition is called *Hesychia*, which grounds and culminates the life of prayer, where the soul and body are at peace, tranquility, and total quietness, thereby allowing profound spiritual awareness and inner peace to be attained (Manolea 2019, 5). In this regard, McGuire’s argument about the indispensability of physical engagement in spirituality may be overly narrow. While she highlights the importance of bodily involvement and material culture in fostering spiritual growth, this perspective does not account for traditions that prioritize inner experiences and transcendence.

Similarly, in the Sufi mystical tradition of Islam, religious experiences are often interpreted as a direct union with God through *dhikr* (remembrance) and contemplation, focusing on the inner dimension without involving material objects or complex physical rituals. For example, certain people experience gaining knowledge without formal learning, known as *‘ilm ladunnī* (hidden divine knowledge), or “interior knowledge” acquired through God’s illumination. In Sufi tradition, this illumination is believed to grant an ability to access hidden truths beyond the reach of ordinary people. This type of knowledge is not transmitted to Sufi disciples through books, but rather through sustained, attentive discipleship to a saint (Hegazy 2021, 15). This perspective indicates that spirituality in the Sufi tradition prioritizes an inward journey of self-discovery and divine connection, transcending material or formal academic mediums. It emphasizes the transformative power of direct experiential knowledge (hidden divine knowledge), acquired through divine illumination rather than structured learning or material aids. The role of a spiritual mentor (saint) in guiding disciples underscores a personalized and mystical process where spiritual truths are revealed through inner reflection and devotion, rather than through external rituals or written doctrines. This highlights a distinct aspect of spirituality, focusing on the immaterial and the deep personal connection with the divine.

Thirdly, McGuire overlooks crucial psychological aspects of an individual’s spiritual experiences. An individual’s psychological condition, such as trauma, mental disorders, low motivation, and self-awareness,

significantly influences how one achieves or feels spirituality. Someone facing severe stress, for instance, due to financial issues, family conflicts, or work stress, may find it difficult to attain inner peace solely through physical rituals or bodily movements. Recent research in the UK indicates that spirituality is not always a solution for individuals experiencing depression or mental burdens. A study by Denend et al. reveals that a solid understanding of religion correlates positively with better mental health compared to mere spiritual experiences. Data shows that religious individuals experience mental disorders and substance abuse less frequently than their non-religious counterparts. Conversely, individuals relying on spirituality without a religious framework are at a higher risk of experiencing mental disorders, including anxiety and abnormal eating behaviors. These research findings underscore that the structure present in religious beliefs contributes to better mental health, whereas spirituality without religious support can heighten susceptibility to mental health issues (Denend et al. 2022, 3573–75)

In another context, McGuire's article also overlooks the varied levels of needs among individuals. Referring to the work of Abraham H. Maslow (1964) in *"Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences,"* spirituality is seen as part of higher-level needs in self-actualization that can only be attained after basic needs, such as physiological needs, safety, social connection, esteem, and self-actualization, are fulfilled (Maslow 2017, 9–20). Maslow describes spirituality as a "peak experience," an intense moment experienced by an individual when they feel deeply connected to themselves and the surrounding world. This experience can bring feelings of ecstasy, happiness, or a profound understanding of existence. Maslow views peak experiences as a part of the self-actualization process, as through these moments, individuals can experience higher psychological and spiritual growth (Maslow 1964, 45).

Peak experiences transcend basic needs and even the need for esteem, leading individuals to profound spiritual or emotional experiences (Maslow, 1964). For example, again as explained above, "peak experience" can be found when the Aboriginal community practice Dadirri. Peak experiences in dadirri involve a significant elevation of consciousness, where practitioners may feel an overwhelming sense of connection to the Country (Paradies and Joyce 2024, 9). This heightened awareness can lead to insights about personal identity, community, and the broader ecological system. Within Aboriginal cultures, these peak experiences are not isolated events but are integral to the ongoing practice of caring for the Country. They reinforce the belief that spirituality is embedded in everyday interactions with the environment and that such experiences contribute to a holistic understanding of life (Paradies and Joyce 2024, 9).

It is therefore peak experiences that highlight the profound interconnectedness between individuals and their environment,

suggesting that spirituality is not merely an abstract concept, but a lived reality deeply rooted in the practice of caring for the Country. By engaging in contemplative traditions like *dadirri*, individuals can access transformative moments that enrich their spiritual lives and foster a greater appreciation for the natural world. This understanding encourages a more sustainable and respectful relationship with the environment, emphasizing that spiritual growth is intrinsically linked to our interactions with the land and its ecosystems. Ultimately, recognizing the significance of peak experiences within Aboriginal spirituality offers valuable insights for broader discussions on environmental stewardship and cultural resilience.

This explanation emphasizes that spirituality cannot be achieved directly, including through rituals or physical objects alone, but is rather the result of fulfilling deep psychological needs and holistic personal development. By not linking spirituality to an individual's mental condition or motivations, McGuire fails to recognize the diversity of human needs that influence how they reach a higher level of spirituality. Therefore, McGuire's approach could be enriched by integrating a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between basic needs and spiritual experiences, acknowledging that the path to spirituality varies significantly based on individual contexts and motivations.

Fourthly, McGuire's work is problematic because she neglects the concept of "spirit" behind materiality. Spirituality, particularly in the context of Spiritualism, encompasses broader and more dynamic aspects of existence that go beyond the physical realm. This suggests that material objects are not necessarily linked to how individuals can achieve spiritual experiences. As explained by Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2019, "spirit" represents a form of existence that transcends materiality, focusing on communication with the deceased and the influence of spiritual entities in everyday life (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2019, 1117). The Spirit concept refers to the intangible, transcendent element that connects material objects to spiritual experiences. Therefore, it can be understood that the human body possesses not only physical attributes like heat, color, and weight but also a consciousness or spiritual phenomenon (Trisakti 1997, 69–70).

McGuire's concept of materiality emphasizes the significant role of physical practices and rituals in fostering spiritual growth, as seen in her examples of Native American traditions. Practices such as drumming, dancing, and rituals like vision quests involve deep bodily engagement, which she argues is integral to achieving spiritual development (McGuire 2007, 189). These actions are not merely symbolic but serve as active components of the spiritual journey. However, her explanation remains limited because it does not adequately clarify how these material elements operate as conduits for spiritual power. Specifically, she does

not explain whether spiritual significance arises intrinsically from the material objects themselves or depends solely on cultural interpretation and individual intention. As Teilhard explained, every material entity has an inherent spiritual dimension, and understanding human behavior necessitates recognizing the spiritual aspect alongside external appearances. For Teilhard, consciousness, inner nature, and intensity are synonymous with spirituality. This perspective highlights that spirituality is a pervasive dimension across the cosmos, becoming more evident as one ascends through different levels of existence, from inanimate matter to complex life forms capable of reflection and deeper awareness (Trisakti 1997, 69–70).

McGuire's explanation lacks detail and raises questions about the universality of materiality's role in spiritual practices across diverse traditions. Without a robust explanation of how spirit interacts with materiality, the connection remains vague or incomplete. Therefore, McGuire's concept of materiality falls short in its explanation of how physical rituals and practices contribute to spiritual growth. While she demonstrates that bodily engagement in rituals, like those in Native American traditions, plays a vital role in spirituality, she does not clarify how these material elements serve as conduits for spiritual power. McGuire's failure to explore whether the spiritual significance of material practices comes from the material objects themselves or from the cultural interpretation and intention weakens her argument.

Fifthly, McGuire, in some respects, uses her personal experiences as a basis for discussing spirituality, which, while offering important insights, remains limited to a subjective perspective. McGuire's personal experience of how the body engages in spiritual practice provides a concrete illustration of how the relationship between spirituality and materiality can manifest. For instance, he recounts as a Quaker practicing her mystical experience through silence, he finds it difficult to understand physical aspects of spiritual experience but recognizes some moments where he could envision it physically (McGuire 2008, 101–2). While this narrative about her experience is important, it also raises questions about the extent to which her personal experiences are relevant and generalizable. Using individual experiences as the basis for arguments might not reflect the realities or spiritual experiences of a diverse range of individuals, especially those from different cultural, religious, or spiritual traditions. This indicates that spirituality is highly varied and dependent on social context and individual uniqueness, making it simplistic to reduce it to the experience of one person.

Spirituality is a deeply subjective and multidimensional experience, where the paths taken by individuals to attain spiritual consciousness can differ widely. Some may achieve spirituality through physical rituals, such as yoga or meditative movements, as emphasized by McGuire, while

others might find it through inner reflection or profound emotional experiences. For instance, a Christian monk might discover spiritual peace in silent prayer, whereas a tribal pastor in a rural area may associate spirituality with rituals involving nature and ancestors. McGuire's use of personal experience highlights the potential bias in her analysis, as spiritual experiences are not uniform and are deeply influenced by each individual's mental, social, and cultural conditions. As a result, McGuire's arguments could be seen as too limited to fully capture the complexity and diversity of spiritual experiences across various contexts.

To improve her results, McGuire should expand her analysis to incorporate a broader range of perspectives on spiritual experiences, recognizing the diverse influences of cultural, social, and psychological contexts. For instance, integrating research such as Pargament's (2007) work on how religion and spirituality intertwine with individual identity and community practices would provide a more nuanced understanding. It is essential to acknowledge that spirituality is not a monolithic experience but varies significantly among individuals and cultures. Different spiritual pathways often present unique challenges and coping mechanisms (Pargament 2007). Moreover, spirituality can sometimes contribute to psychological distress, such as when individuals experience crises of faith or spiritual disillusionment (Pargament 2007).

A more inclusive approach would not only deepen McGuire's arguments but also account for the dual nature of spirituality as a source of both solace and struggle, reflecting its complex role in human experiences. By addressing these contrasting dimensions, McGuire's work could present a more nuanced and comprehensive view, reflecting the complexities of spiritual experiences across diverse cultural, psychological, and social contexts. This broader approach would enrich her arguments, making them more relevant and reflective of the multifaceted nature of spirituality in human life.

Conclusion

From the description above, McGuire's work in "*Spirituality and Materiality: Why Bodies Matter?*" attempts to challenge traditional views that separate spirituality from materiality. She argues that the body and physical environment play a crucial role in human spiritual experiences, consequently broadening our understanding of how spirituality manifests in everyday life. One of the primary strengths of her work is its strong empirical foundation, utilizing qualitative research methods such as interviews and observations to support the argument that material aspects influence spirituality. Moreover, this work effectively challenges the entrenched dichotomy between mind and body, as well as spirituality and materiality, rendering it relevant across various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and religious studies.

However, several weaknesses in McGuire's work merit critique. Firstly, McGuire fails to provide a clear definition of what spirituality encompasses, which can obscure the validity of her arguments. Without a solid framework or definition, the discussion risks becoming ambiguous, making it difficult for readers to grasp the exact parameters of spirituality McGuire is addressing. Secondly, her generalization that materiality always plays a role in achieving spirituality overlooks various spiritual traditions that find transcendental meaning without the involvement of physical objects or rituals. For instance, many Eastern practices emphasize inner experiences that are more about mental states than about physicality, presenting a more nuanced view of spirituality that McGuire does not engage with adequately. Additionally, the individual psychological aspects—such as trauma, motivation, and levels of self-awareness—do not receive sufficient attention, even though they significantly influence a person's spiritual experience. These psychological factors can shape how spirituality is perceived and pursued, and their omission diminishes the comprehensiveness of McGuire's analysis. Furthermore, her concept of materiality is problematic, as she does not provide a clear explanation of how the substance of materiality leads to spiritual experiences for individuals. In this context, the concept of Spirit needs to be further elaborated. Lastly, the reliance on personal experience in some cases introduces bias, as such experiences cannot accurately represent the diverse ways individuals achieve spirituality in varied contexts. This raises questions about the validity of the conclusions drawn from such a subjective approach.

In short, while McGuire's work presents important insights into the interplay between spirituality and materiality, it is essential to address the outlined limitations to enhance the robustness of the argument. A broader consideration of diverse spiritual perspectives, a more precise definition of spirituality, and a better incorporation of psychological factors would strengthen McGuire's contributions and provide a more nuanced understanding of spirituality concerning materiality. This would not only enrich her arguments but also make her work resonate more deeply within the diverse spectrum of spiritual experiences encountered across cultures and traditions.

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