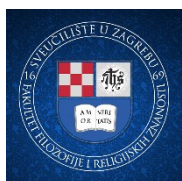


Univerza v Ljubljani
Teološka fakulteta



Uniwersytet Papieski
Jana Pawła II
w Krakowie

WATCHING AND SPIRITUALITY

International Scientific Conference

Ljubljana, May 27th, 2023



Organization

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Faculty of Theology

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On-line

Program and abstracts

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University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

(Institute of Moral Theology and Spiritual Questions of Modern Culture; P6-0269: Religija, etika, edukacija in izzivi sodobne družbe)

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Editor:

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Ivan Platovnjak

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PROGRAM

On-line: <https://uni-lj-si.zoom.us/j/99771698778>; ID: 997 7169 8778

14:30-14:40 Welcome speeches

Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ljubljana Janez Vodičar, PhD, Prof.

Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Zagreb Ivan Šestak, PhD, Prof.

Dean of the Faculty of Theology at The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow Jan Dziedzic, PhD, Prof.

President of the Organizing Committee Ivan Platovnjak, PhD, Asst. Prof.

Member of the Organizing Committee Erika Prijatelj PhD, Asst. Prof.

(Chairperson: Erika Prijatelj)

Lectures

14:40-14:55 **Tone Svetelj** (USA): *Theôria – Vision as the Supreme Form of Wisdom*

14:55-15:10 **Antun Volenik** (Croatia): *Introspection and Experience of the Environment*

15:10-15:25 **Ines Skelac** (Croatia): *What can be seen*

15:25-15:40 **Dan Đaković** (Croatia): *I can't watch it!*

15:40-16:15 Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Ines Skelac)

Lectures

16:15-16:30 **Erika Prijatelj** (Slovenia, USA): *Eye-Gazing and Christianity*

16:30-16:45 **Ivan Platovnjak** (Slovenia): *Watching in the Same Way as Jesus*

16:45-17:00 **Wojciech Zyzak** (Poland): *The Theory of Spiritual Senses – Sight*

17:00-17:15 **Vassilios Bebis** (Greece, USA): *How Icons Teach and Inspire in the Orthodox Christian Tradition*

17:15-17:45 Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Tone Svetelj)

Lectures

17:45-18:00 **Stanislaus Alla** (India): *Seeing and Seers in Hindu Spirituality*

18:00-18:15 **Ahmet Türkan** (Turkey): *Watching and Spirituality in Islamic Thought*

18:15-18:30 **Mikolaj Martinjak** (Croatia): *Seeing God's Light - Spiritual Exercises and Palamas*

18:30-18:45 **Luka Janež** (Croatia): *Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises between Spirituality and Phenomenology*

18:45-19:00 Discussion

19:05 Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

Man is a creature that watches. Our highly developed visual system enables us to observe our surroundings and learn about it. We are able to receive and understand information about everything around us. This is crucial for our survival, for building and developing various relationships, and for gaining a deeper insight into things.

In general, the meaning of the word "watch" is broad, multi-faceted and can vary depending on the context, in which it is used. Watching can be passive, such as simply looking at the things around you, or it can be an active and purposeful observation that enables you to gain a deeper understanding of yourself or your surroundings.

The relationship between watching and spirituality can take different forms depending on how a person perceives spirituality and in which religion or system of thought spirituality is lived. Certainly, watching can be an important tool in spirituality, because it can help you develop a deeper relationship with yourself and others, a greater self-awareness, and the ability to live in the present moment and connect with the Absolute.

This international scientific conference explores the role and place of watching in spirituality, both broadly and narrowly. Research will be conducted from the perspectives of, among others, philosophy, anthropology, psychology/psychiatry, exegesis, theology, ethics and religious studies.

ABSTRACTS

Tone Svetelj, PhD, Prof., Hellenic College; Boston College, USA, tsvetelj@hchc.edu

Theôria – Vision as the Supreme Form of Wisdom

Abstract: Vision in the modern world is primarily based on the “distance of the spectator,” allowing the spectator to stand over against the object in a neutral and undistorted fashion. By reifying the object of their vision, the spectator believes to reach the so-called objective truth. Such understanding would be inexplicable to the ancient Greek philosophers in their attempts to see/watch/contemplate the supreme form of wisdom by practicing theoretical philosophy. By contemplating supreme forms, they believed that they are able to see the world surrounding them properly. The key word of their endeavor is theôria, which describes not only a detached activity of contemplation of the theorist, but also includes the only proper grounding for a socio-political engagement.

Keywords: Theôria, Vision, Engagement, Wisdom

Antun Volenik, PhD, Asst. Prof., Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Zagreb, Croatia, antun.volenik@ffrz.unizg.hr

Introspection and Experience of the Environment

Abstract: L'ordre de la pensée est de commencer par soi" (Bl. Pascal, Pensées, 210) Human being is the only creature who can reflect on himself – a man can look into himself. Human personality exists in what we call the ego (I in English, moi in French, ja in Croatian, jaz in Slovenian), but the way a human looks at himself and how the human perceives the way that others look at them is built on what we call the self. In this paper, self will be analyzed from three perspectives: descriptive [self-concept, how I am), content (self-system, what I am), and axiological [self-esteem, how I evaluate myself). Due to one's own subjectivity, observation itself can turn into complacency and self-deception. In order to avoid this, various methods are used: introspection, experience, observation of oneself and others, collection of facts, testing, surveying, and experimentation related to typing and evaluation. Some of these methods will be presented here as well. Concepts, such as self-consistency, self-realization and self-regulation, will also be analyzed and presented.

Keywords: Introspection, Self, Self-concept, Self-esteem

Ines Skelac, PhD, Asst. Prof., Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Zagreb, Croatia, ines.skelac@ffrz.unizg.hr

What can be seen

Abstract: In Christianity, we believe in God without seeing him. This belief is rooted in faith and, from a Christian perspective, what can be seen is not limited to what we can observe through our senses. According to Buber, God can only be encountered in the I-Thou relation, where two individuals engage with one another genuinely and authentically and, in doing so, we come closer to experiencing the divine presence that exists within all human beings. Levinas argued that the face of the other is an ethical phenomenon that demands our attention

and respect. The face of the other is a symbolic representation of the other person as a unique individual. Therefore, seeing the face of the other means recognizing their humanity and treating them with respect and dignity. This talk aims to investigate the relationship between belief in the unseen and the importance of authentic relationships with others in various philosophical and religious traditions.

Keywords: Authenticity, Buber, I-Thou Relation, Levinas

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I can't watch it!

There can be no progress in knowledge, wisdom and spirituality without long-term watching. We distinguish between external and internal watching – that is watching with eyes open and closed eyes. Although at the beginning of Metaphysics Aristotle claims that we choose seeing (watching) over everything else, it is clear that there are things that we cannot or do not want to see. Neither with eyes open nor closed. Watching a loved one in pain seems to be the hardest thing in the world, especially when we can't help them. In such a moment we would rather choose the suffering we have to watch than watching without being able to help. Our eyes do not like to see even the suffering of people who are not close to us. Is what looks like a passive watching of suffering actually the climax of activity? What could the West learn from the East in this sense? We can also think here of Our Lady on Golgotha. There, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we can see the peaks of wisdom, suffering and spirituality.

Keywords: Helpless or passive watching, Pain, Wisdom, Mary on Golgotha, Activism as an escape from watching suffering

Erika Prijatelj, PhD, Asst. Prof., Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Hellenic College, Boston College, USA, erika_prijatelj@hotmail.com

Eye-Gazing and Christianity

Abstract: Over the course of history, eye-gazing has been a sacred way of communicating within certain civilizations. It is through the eyes that one can break down the barriers that tend to separate one person from another. This way, each person is drawn even closer to the other and into a shared awareness that unites the personal and Divine selves. When eye-gazing between two people is initiated and maintained, an invisible connection is established. Moreover, mutual eye-gazing is a kind of mirroring that reflects back the vital ground of Being. The direct contact with one's personal and Divine self facilitated through mutual eye-gazing is a part of various spiritual traditions, including ancient Christianity. However, it is rarely a part of today's Christian tradition. In this presentation, we will explore the evidence of eye-gazing within the Christian Bible as allusions to a mystical communing and healing. We will also touch upon Christian mysticism with a focus on looking beyond the senses and intellect, while shedding light on the unity of Innate Presence.

Keywords: Eye-gazing, Christianity, Innate Presence, Bible, Mysticism

Ivan Platovnjak, PhD, Asst. Prof., Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
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Watching in the Same Way as Jesus

Abstract: Pope Francis emphasizes that "faith does not simply look at Jesus, but looks from Jesus' point of view and sees with his eyes: faith is a sharing in his way of looking." ("Light of Faith" 18) We Christians are thus called to enter into Jesus' way of watching and seeing. This happens ontologically in baptism when we are born again in Jesus Christ and become partakers of his divine nature and the capacities he had as a true human being. Surely, all this is between the already and the not yet. In baptism, there is a beginning that enables us, in the power of the Holy Spirit given to us together with the Father, to become more and more like him and to live our lives in his way. As his disciples, we learn to do this throughout our lives. This also enables us to live our faith and thus our spirituality in an integral way. In this talk, we want to answer the questions: what is Jesus' way of watching? How can we as disciples learn his way of watching?

Keywords: Watching, Jesus' Way of Watching, Faith, Spirituality, Discipleship

Wojciech Zyzak, PhD, Prof., Faculty of Theology, The Pontifical University of John Paul II Krakow, Poland, wyzak@gmail.com

The Theory of Spiritual Senses – Sight

Abstract: A particular example of spiritual interpretation of the Bible is the doctrine of five spiritual senses, because Christian authors of all ages have used sensory language to express human encounters with the divine. Among the most important senses in these encounters is sight. On the one hand, Anselm of Canterbury, complained in "Proslogion": "Still You hide away, Lord, from my soul in Your light and blessedness, and so it still dwells in its darkness." On the other hand, St. Augustine describes this experience in a positive way in his "Confessions": "Thou didst gleam and shine, and didst chase away my blindness." The purpose of the presentation is to reflect on the meaning of the above and similar texts which suggest a sensory experience of God – the capacity to see Him. In the teaching of St. Augustine, happiness consists in "possessing God", which can be achieved by His vision.

Keywords: Spiritual Sight, Spiritual Senses, Vision

Vassilios Bebis, PhD, Prof., Graduate Theological Foundation; Hellenic College Holy Cross, USA, bebis128@gmail.com

How Icons Teach and Inspire in the Orthodox Christian Tradition

Abstract: Icons are a powerful learning tool in the Orthodox Christian Church, conveying complex theological concepts, providing a means of spiritual connection with the divine, representing the communion of saints, and playing a vital role in worship. As such, icons are integral to the Orthodox Christian faith, reflecting its rich history and tradition.

Keywords: Icons, Spirituality, Learning

Stanislaus Alla, PhD, Assc. Prof., Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, India,
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Seeing and Seers in Hindu Spirituality

Abstract: Within the Hindu Spiritual traditions, both classical as well as popular, ‘seeing’ or ‘darshan’ provides a primary source of divine experience. Millions of Hindu pilgrims long to have a glimpse of God, that is simultaneously considered a sign of blessing and acceptance, reconciliation and reassurance. The perception of the sacred revolves around sacred persons, places and objects where revelation of the human and the divine occurs. In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna manifests himself to Arjuna upon his request, and in that ‘seeing’ of the Lord, Arjuna discovers joy and liberation / mukti. Intense seeing is central to prayer / puja and other rituals. The Vedic texts (literally, the Known) prioritize knowledge and ritual over liberation and devotion, however ‘seeing’ has eventually taken over the Hindu spirituality as the Epics (Mahabharata and Ramayana) and other devotional literature have gained prominence. The presentation ends by identifying the strengths and limitations of ‘seeing’ in Hindu tradition.

Keywords: Hindu Spirituality, Darshan, Mukti, Puja, Bhagavad Gita

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Watching and Spirituality in Islamic Thought

Abstract: People can access information in different ways. One of them is to observe. In Islamic thought, observation in the real sense is not looking at the universe with a mere glance, but reading it in a spiritual sense. In the Qur'an, Allah commands people to look at what is in the heavens and on the earth. On the other hand, looking and seeing are different from each other. In this sense, everyone can look at the universe, but not everyone can learn the underlying secrets and meanings. According to Islam, there are two important concepts about observing. These are 'Basar' and 'Basiret'. 'Basar' is the sight of the eye, 'Basiret' is the sight of the heart. In this study, Watching and Spirituality will be discussed within the framework of the Qur'an and 'hadith', which are the main sources of Islam, and different perspectives on the subject in the Islamic tradition will be compared.

Keywords: Watching, Spirituality, Islamic, Thought, Quran, Hadith

Mikolaj Martinjak, PhD, Assist., Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of
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Seeing God's Light – Spiritual Exercises and Palamas

Abstract: The aim of this presentation is to show similarities between St. Gregory Palamas and St. Ignatius Loyola's views of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Palamas viewed the Transfiguration as a mystical experience that allowed the disciples to see beyond the material world and into the divine realm. Similarly, in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, retreatants are encouraged to use their imagination to enter Gospel scenes, including the Transfiguration, and to contemplate the meaning of these events for their spiritual lives. While their approaches to contemplative prayer differ as well as their traditions (Orthodox and Roman Catholic), they both used similar principles to deepen one's religious experience. Therefore, Palamas uses the

term “uncreated light” while Ignatius uses phrase “the glory of God”, which both serve to describe encountering God in one’s personal life.

Keywords: Transfiguration, Spiritual Exercises, Palamas, Hesychasm, Contemplation

Luka Janeš, PhD, Asst. Prof., Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Zagreb, Croatia, luka.janes@ffrz.unizg.hr

Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises between Spirituality and Phenomenology

Abstract: In this presentation, the psychotherapeutic and phenomenological potential of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises will be indicated, with an emphasis on the spiritual component as an important part within the psychotherapy process. This will be evaluated in the contemporary context of general technicalization of one’s conscience and dominance of the scientific rationality, whereby the thesis is put forward that the intensive growth of technical progress analogically requires the intensive growth of a person's spirituality. In turn, this has various repercussions on the person’s mental health.

The evaluation is focused on psychotherapy practice and enriched with phenomenological elements, which is a significant factor for providing a synthesis between spirituality, philosophy and psychotherapy practical grasp in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Spirituality, Phenomenology, Spiritual Exercises, Psychotherapy, Technicalization

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