

**International Scientific Conference**

# **BREATHING AND SPIRITUALITY**

Ljubljana, December, 11<sup>th</sup> 2021



## **Organization**

Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana

(Institute of Moral Theology and Spiritual Questions of Modern Culture;

Research program P6—0269 Ethical-Religious Grounds and Perspectives of the Society and the Religious Studies in Context of Education and Violence)

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**Program and abstracts**

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Editors:

Ivan Platovnjak, Erika Prijatelj

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## PROGRAM

**Saturday, December, 11<sup>th</sup> 2021**

On-line: <https://uni-lj-si.zoom.us/j/92818496200>; Meeting ID: 928 1849 6200

### **14:30-14:35 Welcome speeches**

Dean of the Faculty of Theology Prof. Dr. Janez Vodičar

President of the Program Committee Assist. Prof. Dr. Ivan Platovnjak

President of the Organizing committee Assist. Prof. Dr. Erika Prijatelj

*(Chairperson: Tone Svetelj)*

### *Lectures*

**14:35-14:50 Đurica Pardon** (Croatia): *“For your Immortal Spirit is in all Things.” (Wisdom 12,1)*

**14:50-15:05 Vassilios Bebis** (USA, Greece): *The Plerotic and Kenotic Characteristics of the Eastern Orthodox Breath Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ our God, have Mercy on me a Sinner.”*

**15:05-15:20 Ivan Platovnjak** (Slovenia): *Prayer as Breathing*

**15:20-15:45** Discussion and Break

*(Chairperson: Erika Prijatelj)*

### *Lectures*

**15:45-16:00 Wojciech Zyzak** (Poland): *Centering Prayer and the Breath*

**16:00-16:15 Stanislaus Alla** (India): *Yogic Breathing Bridges Health and Holiness*

**16:15-16:30 Ahmet Türkan** (Turkey): *Breathing and Spirituality in the Islamic Tradition*

**16:30-17:00** Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Ivan Platovnjak)

*Lectures*

**17.00-17.15 Tone Svetelj** (USA): *You Cannot Read until you Learn to Breathe*

**17.15-17.30 Erika Zelko** (Austria): *Why I Take a Deep Breath Before Speaking with the Patient?*

**17.30-17.45 Erika Prijatelj** (Slovenia, USA):

**17.45-18.05** Discussion

**18.05** Conclusion

## **INTRODUCTION**

People are breathing beings. Without breathing, we cannot live. Breathing makes all other activities possible. Breathing is a miracle, a wonderful gift that is often not realised or reflected upon. In this international scientific conference, we will focus on the basic human activity of breathing. We will approach this topic from different perspectives: philosophical, anthropological, psychological, psychiatric, medical, exegetical, theological, ethical and from a religious studies point of view, etc.

Through our research, we aim to contribute to a deeper awareness of the importance of breathing, and in particular of its impact on the spiritual dimension of human life. We propose that a deeper awareness of the value of breathing and living in accordance with it can become a source of a deeper and a more integrated spiritual life and action in our everyday existence.

## ABSTRACTS

Assist. Prof. Dr. Đurica Pardon, Catholic University of Croatia, Croatia,  
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### **“For your Immortal Spirit is in all Things.” (Wisdom 12,1)**

All creatures breathe and move. Breathing is the basic activity of every being and every creature. Breathing is a very powerful biblical image. All that exists is created by the power and force of God’s spirit (*ruach*). The book of Genesis describes God breathing the breath of life (*nešamah*) into the dust (afar) of the land (*adamah*) and forming a living soul (*nefesh hayya*). Even human beings are made of two elements, the dust of the land and the breath (Spirit) of God. Biblical writers view a human being as a whole and describe it as „flesh in which is the life-giving breath“ along with animals and other breathing creatures. Biblical wisdom suggests that the immortal Spirit of God is in all things. Hebrew words used within the context of creation shall be analyzed and their meaning compared in order to attain biblical and theological awareness about the basic human activity of breathing. By raising awareness of the act of breathing humans can come to an awareness of life itself and experience the presence of God's Spirit working in and through themselves. The awareness of breathing can also bring the experience of life as a shared existence in which the breath of God's Spirit is flowing „through in“ and „through out“, inhales and exhales, continually inspiring and renewing created world.

**Key Words:** Breath, Breathing, Creation, Biblical Theology, Spirit of God

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### **The Plerotic and Kenotic Characteristics of the Eastern Orthodox Breath Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ our God, have Mercy on me a Sinner.”**

The Eastern Orthodox Breath Prayer (“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me sinner”) originated with the Desert Fathers of the Church as a way to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) contemplating the salvific presence of God. This study attempts a theological approach to the prayer, demonstrating its Plerotic characteristics (in the way it invokes the name of God asking for help) and its Kenotic characteristics (in the way it echoes the petition made by the tax collector in Luke 18:13), contributing in patristic dogmatics.

**Key Words:** Breath Prayer, Kenosis, Patristics, Plerosis



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### **Prayer as Breathing**

Years ago, when I was lecturing at the Faculty of Theology on the importance of breathing in prayer and Christian spirituality, one of the students warned me not to confuse Christianity with Hinduism or Yoga and Buddhism. I replied, a little jokingly, "If you can pray and live spirituality without breathing, go ahead, but I can't do it." Although there is not much emphasis on the importance of breathing in the tradition of the Catholic Church, it is always unconsciously present and plays an important role. In this lecture I want to show how, on the basis of Scripture and some spiritual teachers, we can understand prayer as breathing, or how an awareness of breathing can help us to pray and to live our Christian spirituality more deeply.

**Key Words:** Christian spirituality, breath, prayer, Catholic Church

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### **Centering Prayer and the Breath**

Centering Prayer is a method of meditation used by Christians that places a strong emphasis on interior silence. The modern Centering Prayer movement in Christianity can be traced to several books published by three Trappist monks: William Meninger, Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating. According to Keating, in the discussion of centering prayer, it is not essential to explore methods that help to calm the body, mind and nervous system, such as breathing, yoga, and jogging. Such methods are fine for relaxation, but what we are concerned with is the faith relationship. For Basil Pennington Centering Prayer is a very simple and pure method. In its actual practice „we completely disregard the breath”. But „it is possible to turn our attention to it for a few moments when preparing to enter into our Prayer”. He explains exactly how to do it.

**Key Words:** Centering Prayer, Breath, Keating, Pennington

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### **Yogic Breathing Bridges Health and Holiness**

The “art and science” of breathing in India has never been seen as if it were another simple bodily function. Pranayama, Yogic/mindful breathing offered people several physical, mental and spiritual benefits. Down the ages, yogic breathing has been enabling practitioners with the gift of self-discipline and the ability to be attentive and focused. One can see it overlap with several Buddhist practices such as “mindful walking”. Spiritually, it facilitated people to be attentive and sensitive to others. In this “dance”, the human soul strives to free itself from bondage and merge with the Lord. Yogic postures and practices played a crucial role in enhancing people’s health and wellbeing. Some hesitate to appreciate and practice yogic breathing partly due to a false understanding that it is inseparably intertwined with Hindu rituals. However, many spiritual teachers try to clarify and suggest that anyone can practice and benefit.

**Key Words:** Pranayama, Yoga, Mindful Walking

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### **Breathing and Spirituality in the Islamic Tradition**

In the Qur'an, it is mentioned that God created Adam from clay and blew his soul into him. The hadiths usually contain information about what a person will do with his last breath at the time of his/her death. The subject of breathing is mostly mentioned in Sufism and Literature in Islam. A field called "breath" has also emerged in literature. It was recommended by the Prophet Muhammad to read some verses of the Qur'an in case of any spiritual discomfort. A Muslim person reads these related verses and blows with his breath to himself or someone else. On the other hand, the event of Jesus resurrecting a dead person is also mentioned in the Qur'an. A concept called "Jesus' breath" has developed in Sufism as a reference to Jesus' resurrection of the dead. In this study, the subject of breathing in the Qur'an and hadiths, which are the two main sources of Islam, will be examined; In addition, the subject of breathing will be discussed in detail in the tradition of Sufism and literature.

**Key Words:** Breathing, Hadith, Islam, Quran, Spirituality, Sufism

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### **You Cannot Read until you Learn to Breathe**

Breath is the first aspect of the body to be affected by feeling. The aim of pranayama is to help us transcend the fluctuations and addictions of our mind in a given situation. Through watching and listening to our breath, retaining and expelling breath, the fluctuation of our mind appeases and consciousness becomes calm and centered. A calm mind leads to self-discovery, when an intellect sweetened by the syrup of the heart encounters the enduring thoughts; intelligence divorced from the softness of the heart's emotions amounts to brutality and villainy. True intelligence resides in the cave of the heart.

**Key Words:** Breath, Heart, Pranayama, Self-discovery, Yoga

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### **Why I Take a Deep Breath Before Speaking with the Patient?**

Despite the achievements of modern medicine, many diseases continue to evade cure. Chronic progressive diseases, such as cancer, often cause disability, suffering and death. Relief of suffering is the cardinal goal of palliative medicine and the patients' most important expectation. To improve the quality of life of patients who face problems associated with life-threatening diseases and their families, we must not only treat the pain but also assess and identify other problems — physical, psychosocial, and spiritual — in the early stages. That means, we should communicate well but it is not always easy.

**Key Words:** Bad News, Breath, Family Physician, Integrity, Patient, Spirituality

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## **The Relevance of Breath to Heart Intelligence**

Western society recognizes that our lives keep speeding up. We perceive that we have to do more in less time and that more things are pulling us in different directions. The increasing complexity we experience in modern life has not only a downside, but it is also an outward reflection of the speed of change. Faster change and growth seem to be the evolutionary imperatives of our times. One of the most important aspects of the changes taking place is the emergence of a more heart-based awareness or heart intelligence. Even though heart intelligence recognizes and highly values positive emotional states such as gratitude, care, compassion and love, it is not a synonym for emotional intelligence. To properly understand heart intelligence, an in-depth research has been conducted on heart-focused breathing techniques and on the physiology of heart-brain communication in connection with breathing. The presentation aims to present and analyze important data collected by the HeartMath Institute, USA and other relevant contributors in this field of breathing, inner coherence and Heart Intelligence.

**Key Words:** Breathing, Coherence, Heart Intelligence, Intuition, Nervous System

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