

International Scientific Conference

SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH



Ljubljana, May 22nd 2021

Organization

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology,

(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, May 22nd

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 Erika Prijatelj (Slovenia, USA): *Health and Spirituality on an Individual and Societal Level*

14.50-15.05 Ivan Platovnjak (Slovenia): *Impact of Spirituality of Goodness on Health*

15.05-15.20 Elzbieta Osewska (Poland): *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Changes of Contemporary Spirituality*

15.20-15.35 Vassilios Bebis (USA, Greece): *The Concept of Spiritual Health in the Theology of St. Irenaeus of Lyons*

15.35-15.50 Berenika Serczyńska, Lluís Oviedo and Piotr Roszak (Poland, Italy, Spain): *How did People more Related to the Church Live the Pandemic? Clues from an International Survey*

15.50-16.15 Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Elzbieta Osewska)

Lectures

16.15-16.30 Erika Zelko (Slovenia): *Do we Need Spirituality in Modern Medicine?*

16.30-16.45 Klára Maliňáková (Czech Republic): *Religiosity, Spirituality and Health in a Secular Country: Their Associations and Measurement Problems*

16.45-17.00 Borut Škodlar (Slovenia): *Spiritual Quests and Mental Health*

17.00-17.15 Tone Svetelj (USA): *Alternative Medicine as a Toolkit for Secular Health-Care*

17.15-17.35 Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Erika Prijatelj)

Lectures

17.35-17.50 Stanislaus Alla (India): *Health and Spiritual Well-being: a Hindu Perspective*

17.50-18.05 Dominik Opatrný (Czech Republic): *There were Many Widows in Israel, yet Elijah was Sent to None of Them: The Problem of Unanswered Prayers*

18.05-18.20 Ahmet Türkan (Turkey): *Spiritual Approach to Health: Health Recommendations in Basic Sources of Islam*

18.20-18.35 Saša Horvat and Tanja Horvat (Croatia): *The Religious Experience of People on the Autism Spectrum Disorder: Challenges and Benefits*

18.35-18.55 Discussion

18.55 Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

Although there is significant research on the positive impact of spirituality on health, WHO still does not include spiritual health along with physical, mental and social well-being in its definition of health. As early as 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment & Development recognised the right of individuals to “healthy physical, mental and spiritual development” (Agenda 21, see 21. 6.3). Similarly, in 1995, all Countries of the European Union signed the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Progress, committing, on point 3, to respond more effectively *to* the spiritual needs of individuals, their families and communities living in different countries and regions (Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development 1995). With the exception of palliative care, spiritual support is almost completely overlooked in discussions of public health and health promotion in Europe. This is the situation whether it is a discussion among public health professionals or a public policy debate.

In the setting of an international scientific conference organized by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Ljubljana, we want to confirm the thesis that spirituality and spiritual health have a positive impact on human health and well-being. We want to confirm this thesis from various perspectives including: philosophy, anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, exegesis, theology, ethics, and religiology.

Through our research, we want to show how important it is to include spiritual health in the definition of health and to emphasize the importance of spirituality in promoting and working for human holistic health.

ABSTRACTS

Assist. Prof. Dr. Erika Prijatelj, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Boston College; Hellenic College, USA

Health and Spirituality on an Individual and Societal Level

Health or disease embrace the whole person: body, psyche and spirit. This study supports the position that these three human dimensions are deeply interconnected and important for the health of each individual. The same dimensions are relevant and also need to be present on a societal level. An organism, an institution, a society, a religion or a culture is healthy when each part is harmoniously integrated into the whole. A healthy organism finds the accurate balance between its physical health, emotional health, mental health, financial means, educational achievements, employment, wholesome relationships and spiritual well-being. For instance, Chinese philosophy and medicine recognize the balance between Yin and Yang forces. We claim that healthy persons or institutions develop when such a balance is attained and that disease is an expression of imbalance.

Key Words: Balance, Imbalance, Whole Person, Society, Polarities, Integration

Assist. Prof. Dr. Ivan Platovnjak, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Impact of Spirituality of Goodness on Health

Today, many people seek healing in spirituality. Such a search for healing was confirmed as meaningful by Pope Francis who highlights that the search is simply that: in the Catholic Church, every person finds a spirituality that can provide healing (EG 89). In these times, many experts discuss and examine the impact of spirituality on health. It is no longer arguable to claim that spirituality has a positive effect on a person's health. The first part of this lecture will briefly present the definition of health and spirituality. The second part will show how, according to the great Slovene philosopher and psychologist, Anton Trstenjak, goodness and, consequently, the spirituality of goodness or living goodness can have a positive effect on health.

Key Words: Spirituality, Health, Spirituality of Goodness, Anton Trstenjak, God, Man

Prof. Dr. Elzbieta Osewska, University of Applied Sciences in Tarnów, Poland

Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Changes of Contemporary Spirituality

Slavic Pope John Paul II supported the critical appraisal of the influence of culture on the spirituality of contemporary people, especially the young generation. This presentation responds to his teaching in documents and speeches in order to develop an interpretation of how, why and to what extent contemporary spirituality has changed. Many parents, teachers and educators are perplexed and do not know how to react to present changes. That is why, an interpretation of change in spirituality in Europe in terms of change in cultural meanings will be developed for the purpose of understanding contemporary spiritualities. From the theological perspective it is also important to discern the signs of the times and respond to them.

Key Words: John Paul II, Changes in Spirituality, Cultural Meanings

Prof. Ddr. Vassilios Bebis, Graduate Theological Foundation, Oklahoma City, OK, Eastern Orthodox and Ecumenical Theology, USA

The Concept of Spiritual Health in the Theology of St. Irenaeus of Lyons

There is general agreement among scientists regarding the definition of a person's physical and mental health but not about a person's spiritual health since different beliefs produce different meanings. This study presents the concept of spiritual health in the Irenaeus theology. For St. Irenaeus, a complete, healthy person is in communion with the Holy Spirit (a Pneumatic person). People can become Pneumatics by Christ's grace. The Pneumatics by Christ's grace belong to the "body of Christ," the Church. They remain spiritually healthy through participation in the Church's Sacrament. The Church sacraments offer them healing through the remission of sins and the moral principles they need to grow in their spiritual life. This definition of spiritual health necessitates clergy involvement in health care, especially as a ministry to baptized Christians.

Key Words: God, Spirit, Healing, Pneumatics, Irenaeus

PhD student Berenika Seryczyńska, Nicolaus Copernicus University Torun, Poland; Prof. Dr. Lluís Oviedo, Pontifical University Antonianum in Roma, Italy; Prof. Dr. Piotr Roszak, Nicolaus Copernicus University Torun, Poland; Faculty of Theology, University of Navarra, Spain

How did People more Related to the Church Live the Pandemic? Clues from an International Survey

Church attendance is the variable that more clearly than others helps to assess religious commitment and how important religious faith is for one's own life. This variable clearly correlates with many factors that measure levels of religiosity and spiritual sensitivity.

The extensive survey our team undertook in the middle of the pandemic in four European countries collected data that allow for a better assessment as to what extent this religious commitment is related to the way people found meaning in this time of crisis and to other significant variables. Our impression is that religious faith linked to church engagement is linked to better coping strategies. This probably depends upon the 'religious' or 'spiritual capital' people manage to gather.

Key Words: Religious, Capital, Spiritual, Coping, Meaning

Assist. Prof. Dr. Erika Zelko, Faculty of Medicine University of Maribor, Slovenia

Do we Need Spirituality in Modern Medicine?

The first medicine men were priests, who practiced healing and care for the physical, religious, and magical needs of the tribe. The separation between priests and physicians appears around 900 BC. During the following years, science became a more important part in medicine. Today,

in the post-genomic era, medicine has gained great benefits from new scientific and technological achievements. The therapeutic and diagnostic approaches, assure cures not previously possible. Considering these great achievements in medicine, we know that diseases do not only induce bodily changes in sufferers, but affect their emotional state and social interactions. Illness, especially when serious and in the presence of a poor prognosis, raises questions around the meaning of life, affections, suffering and death. Mainly these were the reasons that spirituality in medicine became more and more interesting for the researchers since the late sixties.

Key Words: Spirituality, Modern Medicine, Suffering, Science

Dr. Klára Maliňáková, Olomouc University Social Health Institute, Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic,

Religiosity, Spirituality and Health in a Secular Country: Their Associations and Measurement Problems

Religiosity (R) and spirituality (S) are often positively associated with health. However, this applies mostly for religious countries and some authors even report the opposite for secular countries. The Czech Republic belongs to the countries with the highest percentage of religiously unaffiliated people in the world. Therefore, this contribution aims to summarise the results of our local quantitative research in the area of R/S.

Our findings highlight the need to use an adequate R/S assessment. They show that though religious respondents represent only a minority of the population, a shift towards religiosity could be expected in a substantial portion of non-religious respondents in problematic times. Moreover, the use of different research tools may contribute to the heterogeneity of research findings in the area of R/S and health.

Key Words: Religiosity, Spirituality, Health, Measurement

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Borut Škodlar MD, University Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana; Medical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Spiritual Quests and Mental Health

Spiritual quests are intricately connected with and related to mental health in its diverse forms and disturbances. They are part of establishing and preserving the psychological balance, which is a central expression of mental health. According to Karl Jaspers, they are conspicuously present in limited situations (Grenzsituationen) when person's existence is threatened in a literal or symbolic way. During a mental health crises or in the process of recovery from them, spiritual sources, strategies and experiences may play an important, sometimes even a life-saving role. Mental health crises can represent a turning point or a conversion experience, from which one's life course can be reoriented towards deeply meaningful and thus spiritual goals. We cannot divide psychological and spiritual growth; the two pathways are essentially one. The insights from research on both sides – psychological and spiritual – are mutually enlightening.

Key Words: Spiritual Quests, Mental Health, Limit Situation, Crisis, Conversion Experience

Prof. Dr. Tone Svetelj, Hellenic College; Boston College, USA

Holistic Healing: Alternative Medicine as a Toolkit for Secular Health-Care

By introducing and allowing complementary and alternative medicine into secular health-care, there seems to be a reconciliation between medicine as a natural science focused on physical healing, and religion/spirituality, focused on the metaphysical and transcendental aspects of human existence. Why are complementary and alternative medicine, in connection with alternative religion, more and more attractive, and what can Christianity learn from this, calls for further exploration.

Key Words: Alternative Medicine, Alternative Religions, Holistic Healing, Secular Health-care

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stanislaus Alla, Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, India,

Health and Spiritual Well-being: a Hindu Perspective

While health and wellbeing are central to Hindu anthropology, Hindu spirituality has a more ambiguous place in promoting one's health. Uniquely, Ayurveda was developed in India, on scientific grounds, to offer healthcare benefits to all. However, if some spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation helped people to recognise the importance of their worth and wellbeing, other rituals and practices made them blind followers and their capacity and agency are largely ignored. Also, spiritual health remains a contentious issue, especially when caste divides people and some stay resigned to the given. Commenting on these concerns, the presentation attempts to highlight the aspects where spiritual and physical health overlap.

Key Words: Ayurveda, Yoga, Caste, Hindu Spirituality, Hindu Anthropology

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Palacký University Olomouc, Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Czech Republic

There were Many Widows in Israel, yet Elijah was Sent to None of Them: The Problem of Unanswered Prayers

The four gospels contain many miracles of healing, and a few more occur both in the Old Testament and in the Acts of the Apostles. These stories help patients to express their faith in Christ and hope for healing. Nevertheless, there are virtually no records of unanswered prayers in the Bible. Where are all the sick that were not healed? Is the Scripture neglecting those who pray, but are not delivered from their suffering? I will approach these questions from the perspective of a New Testament scholar and of a hospital chaplain.

Key Words: New Testament, Miracles, Jesus, Prayer, Suffering

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Türkan, Dumlupınar University Faculty of Divinity, Turkey

Spiritual Approach to Health: Health Recommendations in Basic Sources of Islam

There are many verses about health in the Quran. These verses advise the protection of health both physically and spiritually. Detailed explanations about health can be found in the words of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith). A literature named Medicine of the Prophet (Tıbb an-Nabawi) has emerged in line with the recommendations of the Prophet Muhammad on health. In accord with this literature, the Prophet Muhammad, on the one hand, gave advice on health protection and on the other hand, gave advice on treatment. Epidemic diseases are also included in this topic. The Quarantine method, social distancing, cleaning and spiritual guidance are some of them in the face of epidemic diseases. At the International Scientific Conference, Islam's view of health in line with the Quran and Hadith, which are the main sources of Islam, will be discussed. In addition, the effect of these sources on the coronavirus process will be evaluated.

Key Words: Spirituality, Health, Islam, Qur'an, Hadith, Medicine of the Prophet

Assist. Prof. Dr. Saša Horvat, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities, Croatia; Dipl. Theol. Tanja Horvat, Centre for autism, Rijeka, Croatia

The Religious Experience of People on the Autism Spectrum Disorder: Challenges and Benefits

The positive impact of religious experience and spirituality on human health is a well presented topic in scientific research. However, there is a clear lack of data as to how spirituality affects neurodiverse groups, including a subgroup of people in the autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Certain theories link theory of mind and autism, which claim that autistic experience limits their religious development due to cognitive challenges. However, recent empirical findings show a predisposition of people with ASD toward spiritual experience and developmental ability. This indicates a positive impact of spirituality on people with ASD's health. The aim of this lecture is to present current issues of scientific research regarding the religious experience of people with ASD. Furthermore, it proposes the direction of investigation as to the impact of spirituality on their well-being.

Key Words: Autism, Neurodiversity, Religious Experience, Theory of Mind, Health

Notes