

Justice and Spirituality

International Scientific Conference

Ljubljana, May 23, 2026



Organization

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Faculty of Theology

JUSTICE AND SPIRITUALITY

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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: Religion, ethics, education, and challenges of modern society; J6-60105: Theology and Digitalization: Anthropological and Ethical Challenges)

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Editor:

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Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Faculty of Theology

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Ivan Platovnjak

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PROGRAM

On-line: <https://uni-lj-si.zoom.us/j/95332161710>

14:30-14:35 Welcome speech by Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ljubljana
Tadej Stegu, PhD, Assist. Prof.
President of the Organizing Committee **Ivan Platovnjak**, PhD, Assoc. Prof.

(Chairperson: Ivan Platovnjak)

Lectures

- 14:35-14:50 **Tone Svetelj** (USA): *The Soul in Right Order: Plato's Justice as Spiritual Harmony*
- 14:50-15:05 **Erika Prijatelj** (Slovenia, USA): *Justice and Mental Health: A Christian Response to Human Suffering*
- 15:05-15:20 **Đurica Pardon** (Croatia): *Is There Any Hope for Justice on Earth? Prophetic Vision and the Legislative Systematization of Justice in Leviticus 25*
- 15:20-15:30 **Marija Džinić** (Croatia): *Elements of Spiritual Seeking in a Secularized Culture*
- 15:35-16:00 **Discussion and Break**

(Chairperson: Tone Svetelj)

Lectures

- 16:00-16:15 **Wiesław Łużyński** (Poland): *Reason and Faith in the Service of Justice: The Perspective of Benedict XVI*
- 16:15-16:30 **Vassilios Bebis** (USA): *Justice, Spirituality, and the Witness of Christian Leaders under the Greek Military Junta (1967–1974)*
- 16:30-16:45 **Vicente Chong** (USA): *An Appraisal of the Spirituality of Liberation*
- 16:45-17:00 **Predrag Dedeić** (Serbia): *The Search for Justice: the Spiritualization of Law*
- 17:00-17:30 **Discussion and Break**

(Chairperson: Erika Prijatelj)

Lectures

- 17:30-17:45 **Jagadeeswaraiyah Murala** (India): *The Concept of Justice in Darśanas (Systems of Philosophy): A Critical and Comparative Study*
- 17:45-18:00 **Ahmet Türkan** (Turkey): *The Concept of Justice and its Spiritual Dimension in Islamic Thought*
- 18:00-18:15 **Ivan Platovnjak** (Slovenia): *Christian Spirituality as a Path to the Holistic Realization of Justice*
- 18:15-18:35 **Discussion & Conclusion**

INTRODUCTION

The International Scientific Conference Justice and Spirituality arises from the recognition that contemporary global realities increasingly require an interdisciplinary and integrative approach to the questions of justice, human dignity, responsibility, and spirituality. In a world marked by social inequalities, armed conflicts, ecological crises, forced migration, psychological distress, and growing fragmentation of human relationships, justice can no longer be understood solely within legal, political, or economic categories. It also represents a profound anthropological, ethical, cultural, and spiritual challenge.

The conference seeks to provide an academic and dialogical space for critical reflection on the relationship between justice and spirituality in contemporary society. It brings together thirteen scholars and researchers from different countries, universities, faculties, and academic institutions, representing diverse scientific disciplines and methodological approaches. Participants include theologians, philosophers, biblical scholars, scholars of religion, social scientists, psychotherapists, and researchers from different religious and cultural backgrounds. The conference intentionally encourages interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange, recognizing that the complexity of contemporary challenges requires collaboration across academic fields and traditions.

The diversity of perspectives represented at the conference reflects its central aim: to deepen scholarly reflection on the ways spirituality shapes ethical responsibility, social engagement, human solidarity, and processes of personal and communal transformation. The conference also explores how various religious, philosophical, and humanistic traditions understand justice, suffering, reconciliation, compassion, and hope within contemporary global contexts.

Particular attention is given to the relationship between inner spiritual transformation and social or structural justice. The conference addresses questions concerning the role of spirituality in promoting peace, human dignity, ecological responsibility, accompaniment, and care for vulnerable persons and communities. It also examines the contribution of spirituality and justice within pastoral practice, psychotherapy, education, interreligious dialogue, and broader societal processes.

Beyond the presentation of current research and theoretical perspectives, the conference aims to foster meaningful academic dialogue and international cooperation among scholars working in related fields. By bringing together researchers from diverse contexts and traditions, the conference contributes to the ongoing development of interdisciplinary reflection on justice and spirituality as essential dimensions of human and social life.

ABSTRACTS

Tone Svetelj, PhD, Assist. Prof. of Philosophy and Theology, Hellenic College; Boston College, USA, tsvetelj@hchc.edu

The Soul in Right Order: Plato's Justice as Spiritual Harmony

This presentation examines Plato's claim, developed in *The Republic*, that justice is primordially a condition of the soul rather than a feature of social arrangements. Through the tripartite soul, divided in logos, thymos, and epithymia, justice emerges as inner harmony — the condition in which reason, oriented toward the transcendent Form of the Good, governs spirit and appetite in right proportion. Injustice is psychic disorder: the tyranny of appetite over reason, producing a soul outwardly powerful yet inwardly enslaved. Crucially, reason at its highest participates in a transcendent order beyond human convention, making justice an irreducibly spiritual category. The periagoge — the soul's turning toward truth in the allegory of the Cave — is simultaneously a moral, intellectual, and spiritual conversion, suggesting that justice and enlightenment are two faces of the same transformation.

Keywords: justice, spiritual harmony, Form of the Good, tripartite soul

Erika Prijatelj, PhD, Assist. Prof., Hellenic College, USA; Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, Erika.Prijatelj@teof.uni-lj.si

Justice and Mental Health: A Christian Response to Human Suffering

The presentation begins with a pressing question: Can a society be considered just when mental suffering is widespread yet unevenly treated? According to the World Health Organization (2025), over one billion people live with a mental health condition, while the majority remain without adequate care. This presentation explores mental health through a Christian lens grounded in human dignity, compassion, and justice. It examines how stigma, exclusion, and structural inequality intensify suffering and argues that Christian communities are called to respond through empathy, solidarity, and accessible care that affirms the inherent worth of every person.

Keywords: Justice, Mental Health, Christian Ethics, Human Dignity, Stigma, Compassion

Durica Pardon, PhD, Assist. Prof., Catholic University of Croatia, Croatia.
durica.pardon@unicath.hr;

Is There Any Hope for Justice on Earth? Prophetic Vision and the Legislative Systematization of Justice in Leviticus 25

In this paper the biblical theology of justice in Leviticus 25 is examined. In this investigation the Jubilee legislation on the land restoration, debt release, and social reconstitution, were read alongside the prophetic traditions of Jeremiah and Hosea. The prophets diagnose the same disorders the Jubilee seeks to remedy: exploitation, covenantal betrayal, and the degradation of land and community alike. Yet the apparent absence of clear historical evidence that the Jubilee was ever observed in full raises the question of whether it functions as genuine socio-legal prescription or as theological aspiration cast in legislative form. This study argues that both traditions share a common understanding of justice as an integrated socio-spiritual order under God. The paper concludes by asking whether the Jubilee paradigm can be used as a blueprint for modern ecological theology and policy, or a persistent prophetic interrogation of every social arrangement that treats land as mere commodity should be used instead in making contemporary reflections on justice and ecological fragility.

Keywords: Leviticus, Hosea, Jeremiah, prophecy, social justice, ecological spirituality

Marija Džinić, PhD, Assist. Prof., Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Zagreb, Croatia. m.dzinic@ffrz.unizg.hr

Elements of Spiritual Seeking in a Secularized Culture

The lecture offers an overview of the dynamics of spirituality and spiritual seeking in contemporary culture from a Christian perspective. Today, there is an increasing emphasis on so-called “spiritual seekers.” In an attempt to define this category more concretely, the lecture draws on data from the European Values Study (2017/2018) and identifies three groups of spiritual “seekers”: those who believe in a personal God and are spiritually open to the transcendent; religiously creative individuals; and those shaped by an atheized and secularized world.

Thus, we can speak of traditional believers on the one hand, and secularized or atheized individuals on the other. Between these two poles lies a growing field of contemporary spiritual “seekers,” whose inner motivations for spiritual searching are diverse.

Within this broader context, the lecture will also reflect on the canon-law dimension of the life of faith and its repercussions both for believers themselves and especially for the aforementioned contemporary spiritual “seekers.” The obligation to apply justice—specifically in

judicial procedures concerning the declaration of the nullity of marriage—and to act according to the principle of *aequitas canonica* are real factors in the development of spirituality.

Keywords: justice, European Values Studies, spiritual seekers, justice in the process of declaring the nullity of marriage

Wiesław Łużyński, PhD, Assist. Prof., Faculty of Theology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. wieslaw.luzynski@umk.pl

Reason and Faith in the Service of Justice: The Perspective of Benedict XVI

The lecture will first present justice as a fundamental political virtue. Without it, states would become like a vast band of thieves. Maintaining the autonomy between state and church is a fundamental part of the structure of Christianity. Achieving a just social order is the direct task of the state and politics. The Church, on the other hand, contributes to this goal indirectly by enlightening the mind and awakening spiritual strength so that justice may be recognized and properly implemented. Recognizing justice is the task of reason. However, faith is also an important source of rationality. Its postulates should always be heeded.

Keywords: justice, faith, reason, politics, state, Church

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

Justice, Spirituality, and the Witness of Christian Leaders under the Greek Military Junta (1967–1974)

This presentation examines the persecution of Christian leaders in Greece during the military dictatorship (1967–1974) and reflects on its significance for the relationship between spirituality and justice. During this period, several hierarchs, clergy, theologians, and lay Christian figures, faced removal from office, censorship, exile, and even death because they refused to compromise their conscience. Their witness illustrates how Orthodox spirituality, grounded in the dignity of the human person, the prophetic tradition, and the freedom of conscience, can inspire resistance to injustice. By revisiting these cases, the presentation argues that authentic spirituality nurtures ethical responsibility and solidarity, demonstrating that the pursuit of justice is not only a political or legal task but also a profoundly spiritual vocation.

Keywords: Spirituality, Justice, Conscience, Human Dignity

Vicente Chong, PhD, Assist. Prof., Boston College, Clough School of Theology and Ministry, USA. vicente.chong@bc.edu

An Appraisal of the Spirituality of Liberation

This paper examines the spirituality of liberation, which sustains the praxis of people engaged in liberation movements pursuing social justice. Drawing on the work of prominent liberation theologians in Latin America, such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino, this study first elucidates the definition of spirituality as articulated by these scholars. Subsequently, it explores some important aspects of the spirituality of liberation, including its emphasis on the relationship with the poor, the integration of contemplative prayer and transformative action, and the pursuit of justice and reconciliation. The paper concludes with a critical appraisal, offering personal reflections and questions regarding the contemporary significance and applicability of this spirituality.

Keywords: Liberation, the Poor, Prayer, Praxis, Justice, Reconciliation

Predrag Dedeić, PhD, Assist. Prof., The Faculty of Business Studies and Law, University Union Nikola Tesla, Belgrade, Serbia. predrag.dedeic@yahoo.com

The Search for Justice: the Spiritualization of Law

The meaning of law is in truth and justice. Otherwise, there is a crisis of law, its purpose and values. Ineffective and illegitimate legal system creates an atmosphere of fear and retaliation, and human rights and dignity are threatened. The connection of justice and spirituality manifests as an innate need for wholeness, love, kindness and compassion. Spiritual ideas have always been the driver of social change. The spiritualization of law would restore sense and hope to law that the spirit of truth and justice has not been lost forever, and connect it with universal (divine) law and order. It is the path of solidarity, ethics, commitment and meaning in personal and professional life. Thus, right, obligation, responsibility, and even punishment, acquire their true meaning in the light of truth and justice, love, community and human dignity.

Keywords: law, justice, spirituality, meaning of life

Jagadeeswaraiah Murala, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy, Chennai, India. muralajagadish@gamil.com

The Concept of Justice in Darśanas (Systems of Philosophy): A Critical and Comparative Study

Justice occupies a distinctive place in Indian Systems of Philosophy (darśanas); it is a moral, social and metaphysical concept. In Western understanding, justice is often seen from the perspective of legalism, rights and institutional fairness. Indian Systems have a unique conceptualization for it as dharma, karma and cosmic order (ṛta). In this essay an attempt is made to bring out the notion of justice across major Schools of Indian Philosophy; they include both orthodox (āstika) and heterodox (nāstika) Systems. From Orthodox Schools Vedānta, Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā and from Heterodox, Buddhism and Jainism are considered for the present study. A section also is dedicated for the modern reinterpretations, which argues that Indian philosophy offers holistic model for justice. The study highlights the points of agreement and disagreement among the Schools and reflects on their relevance to contemporary debates on Justice.

Keywords: Justice (Comparative Perspective), Dharma, Karma, Ṛta (Cosmic Order), Darśanas (Indian Philosophy)

Ahmet Türkan, PhD, Prof., Necmettin Erbakan University Faculty of Theology, Konya-Turkey. ahmet.turkan@erbakan.edu.tr

The Concept of Justice and its Spiritual Dimension in Islamic Thought

In Islamic thought, “justice” is the fundamental value that regulates a person’s responsibility to Allah (God), to society, and to themselves. Spirituality, on the other hand, expresses the inner dimension of this justice, that is, its establishment in the heart and consciousness. In this sense, justice (adl) is not only a legal principle but also an existential and spiritual balance.

In Islamic thought, justice (adl) and spirituality (Sufi/mystical depth) are not separate but two fundamental principles that complement each other. One builds the social order, the other the inner world of the individual. The Quran and Sunnah aim to establish both an outward and inward balance by addressing these two dimensions together.

In Islam, justice is concerned not only with the external order but also with the inner world. Especially in the Sufi tradition, the middle way “itidal” has been interpreted as justice. Accordingly, a person achieves inner justice when they establish a balance between the powers of anger, lust, and mind.

This study will examine Islam’s perspective on the concept of justice in light of Quranic verses and hadiths; and will evaluate how the spiritual dimension of justice was viewed by classical Islamic thinkers and the Sufi tradition.

Keywords: Islam, justice, spirituality, Sufism, mysticism

Ivan Platovnjak, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.
ivan.platovnjak@teof.uni.lj.si

Christian Spirituality as a Path to the Holistic Realization of Justice

This lecture presents Christian spirituality as a path toward the holistic realization of justice. Justice is understood not only as an external system, but as an inner transformation rooted in a living relationship with God. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, sacramental life, and prayer, the believer is gradually shaped into a person capable of just relationships with God, self, others, and creation. Drawing on Scripture (Ps 1:1–2; Mt 22:37–39), Church teaching (Gaudium et spes; Lumen gentium), and key theological insights, the lecture highlights that justice flows from love and is sustained by grace. It becomes concrete in daily life through self-giving, solidarity, responsibility, and care for the vulnerable and the environment. Christian spirituality thus forms individuals and communities that embody justice as a lived reality.

Keywords: Christian spirituality, justice, transformation, common good, sacramental life, discernment, ecological responsibility



NICOLAUS COPERNICUS
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