

Editorial

Spiritualities. Forever longing, forging new paths?

ENGLISH



This issue of *LIMINA – Theological Perspectives from Graz* dives into the complex worlds of spiritualities. The inspiration for exploring this wide-ranging subject arose from the observation that our longing for inner and external peace, for social justice and a good life for all, and for purpose and happiness can motivate vastly different actions in humanity's and individual's search for it. Primarily, this searching translates into sets of values and beliefs that are often tied to religious ideas and practices, or represent a religious expression in themselves.

Spirituality, however, is not to be equated with practicing a religion. Rather than being connected to religious faith, spirituality is increasingly born of a personal choice for a particular view on life, a personal path towards understanding and meaning. These newly emerging approaches to spirituality echo the mounting crises of our times and reflect social and political movements. Such influences are evident in various forms of spirituality that focus on the environment, nature and creation, or promote socially sensitive welfare, kinship and universal connectedness.

The growing popularity of the term spirituality along with a continuously expanding offering of spiritual concepts, guides and practices raise questions within religious studies, theology and philosophy about an epochal shift in the relationship and interplay between worldviews, religious beliefs, denominational faith and different spiritualities.

The selected articles in this issue reflect on current social and/or religious trends in analysing concrete phenomena and different representations of spirituality as well as discussing valances, transformations and signs of crisis that emerge in or through spiritual practices.

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Andreas Rauhut examines the spiritual content of popular strategies for the prevention of and coping with sociologically diagnosed states of exhaustion in Western societies from a Christian–theological perspective. He identifies forms and practices of Christian spirituality that show potential for addressing these states of exhaustion.

Mattia Vicentini draws our attention to the material and public dimensions of spirituality and does so through an innovative approach: In applying Pierre Bourdieu’s three instruments of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* he reveals the performative and relational potential of objects, people and acts, through which forms of spirituality can emerge. Thus, spirituality can be understood as a continuously changing practice that can be described through a theory of action rooted in recognition and open towards the Biblical narrative we call salvation history.

Johann Platzer explores the concepts of *Spiritual Care* and *Palliative Care* in their potential for integrating relational and communal aspects of denominational healthcare chaplaincy and proposes *Spiritual Care* as an umbrella term for new and necessary approaches in his article “*Spiritual Care – opportunities and challenges for pastoral care*”. The three models Platzer presents not only aim to improve the healthcare system but serve as a call for social action and offer an integrative and widely applicable concept. He reflects on a particular example of pastoral *Spiritual Care* rooted in the core purpose of the Christian mission – to heal – and traces its theological basis. However, for this approach to caring for the suffering to effect its full healing potential requires more advocacy and support.

Brigitte Enzner-Probst looks at the transformation *from a spirituality of creation to a holistic cosmic spirituality*. She follows concepts in philosophy, aesthetics and pedagogy that highlight a fundamental and all-encompassing relationship between all of creation in order to find new paths opening up new liturgical horizons. These new liturgies invite us to join in cosmic worship as well as to share the loss and pain inherent in creation.

Rowena Roppelt investigates the role of liturgical worship in promoting an ecological conversion as envisioned by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato sí*. The discussion focuses on how liturgical worship helps participants to recognise their place within a transcendental horizon of meaning, to recover a sense of the rhythms of the natural world, to learn to perceive nature as a gift, and to develop a Christian anthropology and spirituality which understands human beings as part of creation. Presenting two case studies – a Eucharistic prayer by Anglican Bishop Donald Philips and the poetic *Mass for the Earth* by Antjie Krog – the article illustrates how liturgi-

cal prayer can deepen an awareness of creation and inspire a commitment to environmental protection.

Nikita Semenikhin and *Lennart Luhmann* reflect on their observations that icons of Eastern Christianity are experiencing a resurgence in the West. The Western interpretation of icons and their spiritual meaning holds multi-layered questions as their original liturgical role has been lost throughout history and Western and Eastern religious art have developed along divergent paths. The Western tradition has moved towards abstract representations, even aniconism, making the resurgence of icons particularly noteworthy and posing theological questions within the wider context of the *iconic turn*, which is still relevant today.

Deborah Sutera addresses one of the main paradoxes in theology: the suffering righteous and God's mercy, which still forms a central and indisputable pillar in Abrahamic religions. She explores the subject on the example of two people who faced the same questions in their lives and reflected on them in seminal texts: John of the Cross (1542–1591) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945). John of the Cross uses the metaphor of the “dark night of the soul” to illustrate the absence of God, which yet can lead us to a place of intense (mystical) encounters with God. Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, describes God as “powerless”. According to him, God does not save us but is closest to us in times of and through suffering. Sutera weaves these experiences of encounters with God into promising pathways for spiritual possibility.

The final article in this issue opens “New doors to spirituality through consumerism. Of shower gels and mysticism”. *Isabelle Jonveaux*, a sociologist of religion, looks at the rising trend of using spiritual or mystical concepts and images in the marketing of everyday consumer products. These references, however, are not based in a Christian or European context. As an example, she analyses the spiritual content on the product packaging of shower gels available in Austria, as well as the needs consumers hope to fulfil with these products. This further raises questions as to the relationship between spirituality and consumerism in today's society.

All discussions in this issue, individually and collectively, demonstrate that spirituality holds great value and manifests itself in many different ways, particularly in this era of exponential possibility. Spirituality can serve as an anchor that (re)grounds people in their existence within their specific contexts and thus plays an important role in offering direction and reassurance.

This presents a challenge for existing models of interpreting the world that fundamentally incorporate spiritual approaches and practices or at least offer such possibilities. Currently, there is a significant shift – individually as well as interpersonally – away from traditional forms of religious practices (in churches, faith communities, etc.), creating a gap that is difficult to fill or replace: their vital role in guiding people through life, along significant milestones. This loss of orientation can pose significant dangers in individualised and fragmented societies. How can we address this? Would better mutual spiritual understanding not offer a stronger basis for solving the pressing challenges of our times?

We hope that this issue of [LIMINA](#) may serve as a source of inspiration for supra-individual spiritual possibilities that foster conviviality between all living beings and encourage people to take care of creation.

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