

EDITORIAL

Spiritual Practice within Conflict and Peace. Rethinking Geopolitical Philosophy

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Issue 10 of MEΘEXIS Journal brings together research papers on the role of spiritual practice in conflict and peace and its significance for geopolitics. Rethinking geopolitics through spiritual practice means moving beyond secular power structures to embrace deeper human values, consciousness, and ethics. This approach draws on spiritual traditions and practices to foster compassionate understanding and inner change. It questions traditional political frameworks by focusing on shared humanity and spiritual development as paths to sustainable, just peace, rather than merely ending war. Spirituality can both generate conflict and foster peace, and it calls for spiritual leaders and practices that build trust, turn conflicts into opportunities for justice, and form global communities grounded in a common moral vision.

The Issue explores how spiritual practice can play a critical role in conflicts and peace, underscoring its importance for geopolitics. In *Bergson's Concept of Free Will: The Problem of Moral Responsibility*, **Amjad Ali** analyzes Bergson's metaphysical view of

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free will and morality, suggesting that freedom develops over time and can be grasped through metaphysical intuition. Some scholars argue that free will does not exist because we live in a causally determined universe, while others believe humans are autonomous moral agents capable of free choice and acting otherwise. This raises a key philosophical question: do humans genuinely have free will, or are their actions dictated by external causes? Voluntarist philosophers, especially Henri Bergson, approach this issue in distinctive ways. Bergson's metaphysics of free will is grounded in his concept of duration, which defines free will in terms of possibilities and inner qualitative experience. For Bergson, freedom naturally arises within duration and is accessible via metaphysical intuition. By contrast, traditional and libertarian perspectives focus on moral responsibility within social, moral, and legal contexts. Amjad notes that Bergson's metaphysical concept of free will faces challenges from perspectives that emphasize moral responsibility in contemporary society. In *Spiritual Practice as Reorientation: Digital Polarization and JustPeace*, **Ahmet Taşkin** explores how spiritual practices can support conflict transformation amid modern digital, moral, and relational polarization. Practices such as silence, listening for understanding, and speaking the truth in love help reshape how people attend to, perceive, speak, and relate during conflicts. Although these practices are well established in conflict transformation and peace studies, this paper applies them to the micro-level of everyday digital interactions, where ordinary reactions, judgments, and attentiveness can either harm or support others. The study further expands this reorientation through moral imagination and the fostering of public trust. Ahmet argues that many conflicts today are not only struggles over power, resources, security, or political authority but also crises of shared reality. Spiritual practice does not eliminate conflict or guarantee peace, but it can reorient individuals and communities to live with conflict differently, so that harm can be named, accountability can be faced, and relationships can be restored. **Oana Cogeanu-Haraga's** paper, *Spiritual Geographies: Pilgrimage, Sacred Space and Geopolitical Meaning*, examines pilgrimage as a spiritual act carried out within complex, layered geopolitical landscapes shaped by diverse historical and ideological influences. Drawing from a

diachronic analysis of three notable travelogues from different historical periods, the paper shows that, over time and across different political contexts, pilgrimage functions as a performative practice that continuously transforms space into meaning. Pilgrimage continues because sacred sites and routes are constantly reinterpreted, not because they stay unchanged. Sacred space is a dynamic concept shaped by the interaction between individuals and the environment and influenced by ideological views. Additionally, pilgrimage balances the idea of sacred space with evolving political circumstances. Spiritual geography endures because it can be redefined in different ideological contexts. Routes of pilgrimage persist through empires, divisions, and religious, cultural, and secular contexts because they adapt to new meanings as geopolitical spaces are symbolically transformed. *Unrecognized, Unheard, Unengaged: The Relational Crisis Behind Church Conflicts*, a research paper by **Festus Adegboyega**, explores how strengthening interpersonal relationships, recognizing congregants, fostering informal networks, addressing core feelings, and listening to their opinions can improve church effectiveness and reduce conflicts. In many African churches, activities such as shared meals, prayer groups, visitation, naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals are more than cultural traditions; they are relational spaces where trust is cultivated. The emotional bonds tied to these activities can also be sources of conflict. Many pastors have faced accusations of failing in their ministry because they neglected one or more of these pastoral roles. The article combines insights from organizational psychology and biblical theology to demonstrate that emotional recognition, active listening, engagement, and relational bonds are grounded both in social science and Christian principles. Using both exploratory and analytical approaches, Adegboyega examines causes of church conflicts and suggests potential remedies. He concludes that conflicts cannot be resolved solely through doctrinal clarity or administrative changes; at their core, many are relational. When individuals feel unrecognized, unheard, and unengaged, their emotional wounds can surface as organizational crises. Building relationships through appreciation, listening, participation, and fellowship is vital for maintaining unity and peace. A church that nurtures these qualities not only

becomes more resilient in the face of conflict but also thrives spiritually. **Nathanael Navarro's** contribution, *Indigenous Communities. (En)Countering the Faces of Oppression*, argues that groups like the Lumads, Kankana-ey, Ibalays, and Aetas need representation in the wider democratization efforts to safeguard their environments and support their livelihoods. Philippine society remains caught in “practical consciousness” and “double consciousness,” where people dismiss the value of indigenous communities' perspectives on consumption and production and hesitate to engage in politicized cultural discussions. The shift from simple practical awareness to a more reflective consciousness involves actively engaging in exchanging ideas to dismantle cultural barriers and misguided social judgments about social groups. Recognizing that indigenous peoples in Philippine society are vital sources of resistance can challenge norms, economic standards, ideologies, and culture shaped by consumerism and individualism. This awareness encourages politicized cultural dialogue to overcome double consciousness, which enforces a supposedly neutral yet oppressive standard of correctness, prosperity, and progress. Protecting our shared home means avoiding othering social groups or seeing them as obstacles and instead acknowledging our capacity for error and correction. Shedding estrangement allows us to embrace others who help reimagine a world committed to just and meaningful growth, despite our finite nature. **K. L. Sharma**, in *Polyphonic Relational and Transformative Epistemology in the Upanishads*, emphasizes that truth is shaped by multiple voices and perspectives, underscoring the importance of dialogue, shared reflection, and community. Their polyphonic weaving of metaphors, prayers, and unity of Self and world resists reduction to a single perspective, offering enduring relevance for education, care practices, and pluralistic knowledge-making. The Upanishads, often seen as mystical writings, also serve as deep epistemological reflections. They emphasize dialogue, relationships, and personal transformation, foreshadowing and enriching modern ideas of relational knowledge and polyphony. In our current diverse and connected world, these texts remain highly relevant. They challenge us to foster classrooms, communities, and care practices where

multiple voices are recognized, appreciated, and interconnected. Thus, the Upanishads act as timeless guides to a polyphonic, relational way of knowing, an approach that is dialogical, inclusive, and transformative. Instead of offering a fixed blueprint for change, they encourage us to humbly, collectively, and attentively restart the conversation.

The second section of the Issue includes papers on *Patristic Research*. **Constantin Preda**, in *Key Aspects of Biblical and Patristic Spirituality*, asserts that biblical and patristic spirituality primarily derives from personal experience, echoing the spiritual journeys of the hagiographers and Fathers. Discussing the Fathers' spirituality or their love for the immutable and eternal beauty described in the *Philokalia* means sharing in the experience of those who "fear God, believe in the incarnation of His Son, and through faith, invite the Holy Spirit into their hearts, thereby earning the title of spiritual fathers." The Church Fathers mark a vital period through their witness to faith, serving as a lasting source of authentic Christian theology. Summarizing their teaching is challenging. Preda emphasizes their dedication to Scripture interpretation, which made them unmatched teachers. It is unnecessary to simply reiterate their exegesis since they lacked the tools modern biblical scholarship provides, nor should we revive the often-abused allegorical method. Nonetheless, a key aspect of their work must be preserved: the central role of the Word of God in deepening Christian understanding and interpreting sacred history. Indeed, the core of patristic theology is the Word of God revealed in Holy Scripture. It's fair to say that the Church Fathers and Writers are true "interpreters of the Word" and "commentators on the holy books." For them, Holy Scripture is not just a reference but the Book of Life, guiding humanity toward the Kingdom of God and full communion with Him. In *Silence of the Mind and Word of Prayer*, **Savu Totu** examines the relationship among actions, words, and silence, as illustrated in Saint Gregory the Theologian's Twelfth Homily. He seeks to comprehend what Saint Gregory describes as 'the silence of the mind,' which he presents as a result of spiritual insight and an aspect of contemplative prayer. Savu emphasizes that to grasp the link between the silence of the mind and the word of prayer, one should begin with a statement from

Saint Gregory the Theologian that thoroughly explains philosophizing through silence. Gregory, a scholar of “external” philosophy who clarified the connection between Greek philosophy and “true philosophy,” Christianity, especially through his famous theological discourses, helps us understand when to speak and, more crucially, when to remain silent before God. Both philosophizing through silence and philosophizing through words serve as gateways to spiritual experience, which “closes” and “opens” only “at the will of the Mind, the Word, and the Spirit, the Godhead of one Essence.”

This section also includes two case studies. **Viktar Niachayeu**, in *Holy Men and Modern Minds: The Transformative Power of Hesychast Spirituality*, evaluates whether hesychasm serves as a psychological approach to finding existential meaning through profound self-transformation. It employs a three-part framework of calling, transition, and perfection, with a focus on the final stage of spiritual achievement. By providing an empirical phenomenological perspective, the research addresses a gap in both the psychology of religion and Orthodox theology. Viktar's paper has three main findings: it confirms the psychological concepts of self-transcendence, covering annihilation, relational, and hypo-egoic states, in a real-world, long-term hesychastic context. It also highlights virtues like love and humility, along with exceptional abilities such as kardiognosis and synergetic perception, as natural results of deep self-transcendence. Additionally, it questions modern self-actualization culture by proposing a model in which ego dissolution (“I am worse than anyone”) serves as a functional tool for spiritual growth. Hesychastic spirituality, rich in metaphors and longing for perfection, guides toward vertical spiritual self-transcendence in the form of theosis, an ontological transformation of human nature. This transformation cultivates extraordinary abilities and profound virtues, ultimately resulting in a superhuman mode of existence grounded in the evangelical ideal of divine likeness.