

Critical Review

Contemplative Spirituality and Philosophical Dimensions of Hope

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Dr. Ivan Platovnjak, Dr. Tone Svetelj. *Listening and Dialoguing with the World: A Philosophical and Theological-Spiritual Vision*. Slovenia: University of Ljubljana Press, 2024.²

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In an era of fragmentation, polarization, and a crisis of meaning, *Listening and Dialoguing with the World* presents a bold, integrative vision for navigating contemporary philosophical, spiritual, and ethical dilemmas. This remarkable monograph not only introduces new insights into the intersection of philosophy and theology but also invites readers—whether believers, doubters, or seekers—on a journey toward wholeness guided by dialogue, contemplation, and hope.

At first glance, the book presents both an aesthetic and intellectual invitation. The cover image—a man gazing toward the horizon where earth and heaven meet—is a visual metaphor for the human condition: the traveler whose quest leads to the convergence of reason and faith. This image resonates deeply with the book's central premise: that human beings are not merely rational thinkers or spiritual beings but integrated wholes who seek truth, meaning, and connection.

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² <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-JUGEHX4L>

Structured into eight thematically rich chapters, the book explores a broad intellectual terrain—anatheism, transhumanism, contemplative spirituality, and the philosophical dimensions of hope and time—through the lens of both critical philosophy and Christian thought. Each chapter serves as a ‘station’ in a spiritual-philosophical pilgrimage, raising probing questions about human nature, the divine, and the future of society.

One of the book’s strengths is its fearless engagement with the crisis of Western thought. In the chapter on anatheism, the authors diagnose the decline of traditional religious belief and the emergence of a spirituality separate from institutional religion. Yet, rather than lamenting this shift, they view it as a *kairos* moment—a chance to rediscover Christianity not as dogma or division but as a mature, loving faith grounded in justice and mercy. The call is not to retreat into certainties but to embrace mystery, relationships, and the transcendental dimensions of life.

In contrast, the chapter on transhumanism offers a sobering critique of the technocratic drive to transcend the body’s limitations. While acknowledging the promises of scientific progress, the authors caution against the existential cost of erasing human vulnerability—an essential aspect of empathy, freedom, and spiritual receptivity. Can human transformation occur without grace? Can immortality be achieved through artificial intelligence? These questions are not merely theoretical; they are urgent ethical ones.

At the heart of the book is a radical proposal: active listening as the foundation of authentic dialogue and transformation. Against the backdrop of information overload and ideological division, the authors advocate a contemplative posture marked by humility, compassion, and openness. Listening is not a passive act but an existential stance—one that requires venturing beyond the ego and into the unknown, into silence, where truth can be heard rather than spoken.

The authors further illuminate this listening ethos from a Christian perspective, drawing on Scripture, tradition, and mystical theology. They argue that true contemplation is not escapism but engagement—a means to perceive God in all things: Scripture, nature, and daily life. *Lectio Divina*, mystical prayer, and

Ignatian reflection are presented as spiritual disciplines that train the soul to encounter the sacred in the ordinary.

One of the most compelling chapters addresses 'hope,' particularly in relation to time. Drawing from ancient Greek distinctions between 'chronos' (measured time) and 'kairos' (unique, unrepeatable time, the moment of opportunity), the book frames hope as the ability to fully engage with the present, remaining open to God's promises. Liturgical time, characterized by its cyclical remembrance and eschatological anticipation, becomes a sacred space where the eternal intersects with the temporal—where 'chronos' is transformed by 'kairos.' Hope, therefore, is not mere optimism but a spiritual virtue that emerges in the face of vulnerability and trust in the unseen.

The concluding chapter, 'From Either-Or to Both-And,' proposes a model for integration on all levels: personal, social, political, ecological, and spiritual. In contrast to binary and antagonistic thinking, the authors present a dialogical method that values tension without collapsing differences. They advocate for a synthesis of rational faith, lived experience, and communal participation. This holistic anthropology not only respects the dignity and uniqueness of individuals but also fosters coexistence through compassionate listening and mutual recognition.

Ultimately, *Listening and Dialoguing with the World* is not just a monograph; it serves as a roadmap for a new kind of engagement with the self, others, and the divine. It challenges the supremacy of naive rationalism, questions the utopias of technological salvation, and retrieves the forgotten treasures of Christian wisdom. It resonates with anyone who senses that something vital has been lost in the modern pursuit of progress and autonomy.

This work is intended for philosophers, theologians, educators, spiritual seekers, and anyone eager for a way of thinking—and living—that honors complexity, listens before speaking, and believes that love, justice, and mercy are not only possible but essential. In a fractured world, *Listening and Dialoguing with the World* serves as a vital invitation to integration, wholeness, and hope.