



**In defence of the *Kingdom of the Spirit*
En defensa del *Regne de l'Esperit*
En defensa del *Reino del Espíritu*
Em defesa do *Reino do Espírito***

Humberto Schubert COELHO¹

For thousands of years, the transcendent dimension of life was referred as another “world”, “kingdom” or “realm”. In Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt, as in Greece, the metaphysical depictions of transcendent realities were preceded by poetic and visionary conceptions of an expanded and more intense version of the physical reality we perceive. As the flourishing interdisciplinary research on spirituality has been revealing, spiritual imagery in all cultures conceive spiritual dimensions or “places” beyond those we are bound to. A subject of both metaphysics and theology, spiritual dimensions are, therefore, a first and important part of human understanding on transcendence.

The second fundamental part constitutes the transcendent character of subjectivity: the realm of freedom and ideal, distinct but not in contradiction to the artistic and mystic imagery of a spiritual world – which, often, is a projection of what the artist and the prophet sees and understands in this world to its living, greater and idealized version in the other.

Even if we remain sceptical about the ontological reality of the spiritual world(s), its relevance for the human mind and the human society is a central concern of the academic research on human nature and the kind of society they inevitably build.

¹ Adjunct professor of [Department of Philosophy](#) and [Postgraduate Program in Philosophy](#) at [Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora \(UFJF, Brazil\)](#).



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Jun-Dic 2024
ISSN 1676-5818

In the recent book *To shape a new world*, on the philosophical orientation of Martin Luther King Jr., philosophers argue that this great social activist extracted his power from a solid idealistic philosophy. Without the religious boost to the virtues of hope, tolerance, love, serenity, resilience and courage, virtues we all know that relied on King's Christian faith, he would never succeed in such a scale. But the philosophical worldview that cemented his religious convictions is never at the centre of the debate on pastor King's character and strengths.

The reality, however, is that he would be a shadow of his actual stature if not for the ancient, medieval, and early modern echoes in his spirit. Echoes of Socrates and Cicero, of Augustine and Aquinas, and, of course, Martin Luther, Kant, and Hegel. In Martin Luther King Jr's mind, the voices of the philosophers and the great writers were as important as those of the theologians, and following Christ was not in contradiction with being a friend to Heschel and Thich Nhat Hanh, or an admirer of Gandhi and Socrates.

As he understood it, the highest philosophy was an apology to human limitless capacities as much as Christian theology itself, because the rational support to an optimistic worldview was essential to foster the epic degree of conviction demanded by the daily and the ultimate efforts to change the world.

An adamant and almost naïve sense of duty is the quintessential trait of the hero, and if our world is to be improved and ameliorated in the same pace of the greatest spiritual works of Classical Athens, the Jerusalem of the Apostles, if we do hope to create beauties comparable or even greater than the beauty of the gothic cathedrals, we should again invest all the energies of our civilization in the part of our nature we only envision through poetry, ideal and hope. Before the wellbeing we seek in the practical life, we must again build a kingdom of the spirit first.



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In this issue (39) of [Mirabilia Journal](#), you will see academic attempts to address, analyse and develop intellectual marvels of the Western tradition, in the hope that the current nihilistic and dehumanizing trends of contemporary academia will not prevent some to appreciate the beauties of the echoes of our greatest minds.

[Mirabilia Journal](#) belongs to the prestigious [Institut d'Estudis Medievals \(IEM\)](#) of the [Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona \(UAB\)](#) and has an international editorial team, including the Brazilian scholar Prof. Dr. [Ricardo da Costa \(UFES; RABL\)](#), who kindly asked me to organize the present issue, which counts with contributions from Spain, Israel, Portugal, Brazil and Italy.

The first text, by **Fabio Fortes (UFJF)** and me, will present some key philosophical aspects of the Greek conception of daimon, made famous by Socrates as his “guardian spirit” or mentor. The concept refers not only to an objective/ontological influence of the spiritual realm as a sophisticated notion of an “inner voice”, especially active in moral conscience.

Along with many others in this issue, **Armando dos Santos (UniTALO)** and [Ricardo da Costa \(UFES; RABL\)](#) text focuses on the role of art in drawing the spiritual realm to common experiences. Analysing the figures of the *Good Shepherd*, dos Santos and da Costa stresses the peculiar anthropological relevance of such symbols.

In the third text, **Manuel Ortuño Arregui (Instituto Teológico Cor Christi)** shows how the early Christians transposed their philosophical and religious principles of purification and penitence to medicine, correlating the medical seeking for wellbeing and the Christian notion of a medicine of the soul.

The next text, from **Luiz Cláudio Luciano França Gonçalves (UESB)**, highlights Augustine of Hippo’s proposal of the liberal arts as a bridge between



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the natural world and the transcendent one, stressing the capital role of music in human flourishing.

Erini Artemi ([Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#)) wrote our fifth text, on the transcendent character of the notions of war and peace in Christian theology, emphasizing the necessity of overcoming the inner struggles and the empire of passion and sin in human nature to achieve true spiritual peace.

Writing on the musical revolution led by Hildegard von Bingen, **Antonio Celso Ribeiro** ([UFES](#)) presents the many different aspects of musical, from the mundane to the celestial one.

Noeli Rossatto ([UFSM](#)) address the very concept of a kingdom of the spirit in Joachim de Fiore's work, and its heavy influence on Portuguese and Brazilian cultures.

The notion of *Excessus* in Thomas Aquinas is the centre of **Luis Carlos Silva de Sousa's** ([UNILAB](#)) article on the radical transcendence of the concept of God. The author shows how the negative way of Pseudo-Dionysius influence Aquina's concept of God.

Leandro Bertoncello stresses the transcendent character of the Neoplatonic concept of the One, and how Meister Eckhart's Christian reception of it distinguishes God's ultimate nature from being.

In the tenth text, by **Marica Castigliolo** ([Associazione culturale la prima radice](#)) Nicholas of Cusa and Johannes Wenck dispute on divine essence will pinpoint the transition from medieval to modern conceptions of transcendence.

Samuel Dimas's ([Universidade Católica Portuguesa](#)) text on globalization will distinguish this notion from the notion of a homogeneous world order centred



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on a single culture, emphasizing how the expanded and inclusive versions of globalization have to rely heavily on concepts of transcendence.

Along with this thematic issue, the reader will find other independent contributions and reviews.