

Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue: Philosophy, Spirituality, and the Meaning of Life

The idea for this special issue originated from the Global Philosophy of Religion Project 2 (GPR-2) conference held in Manila from December 1 to 3, 2025, at which the editorial team served as both speakers and organizers at this event, which was facilitated by the Birmingham Centre for Philosophy of Religion through the John Templeton Foundation.

Aiming to integrate diverse perspectives into enduring questions about spiritual existence, the Manila leg of the conference specifically focused on addressing modern dilemmas while exploring the essence of a meaningful life and the characteristics of spiritual reality. Expanding upon these inquiries, the contributions in this special issue offer diverse philosophical, cultural, and contemporary lenses on the human condition. They challenge constructions of purpose, mortality, technology, and connections in an increasingly complex world.

The first article, "The Meaning of Life After Savagery: Gaza/Palestine as a Decolonial Categorical Imperative," by Hadje Cresencio Sadjé, engages with Hamid Dabashi's book, *After Savagery: Gaza, Genocide, and the Illusion of Western Civilization* (2025). Sadjé argues that the ongoing genocide in Gaza represents an epistemic and moral rupture. He advocates for decolonizing thought, fostering planetary solidarity, and liberating memory, thereby paving the way for a post-Western consciousness. Thus, the meaning of life after savagery should be reconstructed from this imperative, with Gaza as its essential starting point.

In the second article by Wilson Miasco, "Aristotle's Concept of Nicomachean Ethics: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Friendship in Society," he explores the role of friendship within Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. He argues that friendship serves not only as a measure of individual integrity but also as a significant political force. It reinforces communal bonds and fosters collective harmony, which are essential for a thriving society. Thus, friendships bring meaning and purpose to our lives through empathy, collaboration, and a sense of belonging.

Alvin Servaña's article, "Mortality as Jest: A Philosophical Meditation on Death's Paradoxical Nature as a Democratizing Power," tackles ancient existential questions, such as what it means to exist knowing that existence will ultimately end, how we can live authentically in the face of inevitable termination, and why the awareness of death can both paralyze and liberate us. Servaña suggests that mortality functions as a kind of cosmic joke, not in a way that renders life false or meaningless, but similarly to how jokes subvert expectations, revealing hidden truths through unexpected juxtapositions and prompting us to laugh even when we would rather cry.

In the essay "Perfecting Judgment or Releasing It: Two Paths to Transcendence in Stoic Philosophy and Zhuangzi's Daoist Account," Imi P. Y. Lo explores two

fundamental questions: What makes human life meaningful, and how can an individual transcend ordinary existence to realize the highest capacities of human nature? By examining the philosophies of Zhuangzi and Epictetus, Lo addresses these timeless questions, demonstrating that while their views on a meaningful life may seem to differ, both approaches ultimately contribute to human flourishing.

“The Impact of Using AI Chatbots on Teenagers,” written by Weerawut Rainmanee, examines the role of AI chatbots in education and their growing adoption among teenagers. Rainmanee argues that AI influences self-development in various aspects of their lives. As a result, the new generation may experience a fully integrated life cycle with AI. This integration is shaping their perspective of the world.

Nicos Kaloyirou’s “The Metaphysics of Mercy: Arthur Schopenhauer’s Transposition of Will, Law, and Grace as the Ontological Floor for Modern Theology and Science” interprets the central message of Arthur Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* and argues that the work is a kind of translation of the Christian narrative, where the Will is seen to be the “Original Sin” and the Law as the principle whereby individuals are identified. In his interpretation, Grace becomes the means for one to escape the Will. Thus, Kaloyirou provides an interesting link between metaphysics and spirituality.

Next paper in the issue is “Spiritual Relativism and Reflexive Meaning-Making among Filipino Youth” by Miguel Baluyut. Employing the technique of interviewing, Baluyut found that for the youths of the Philippines, their horizons are defined and broadened by the digital media, and truth is understood to be contextual. The author also found that rather than being purely materialistic, Filipino youth are spiritual in the hermeneutic sense, “where faith becomes participation in meaning rather than possession of truth.” The paper then affords us a glimpse into the lifeworld of today’s youth, whose lives are saturated with the digital media, yet remain dynamically faithful.

This collection encourages readers to engage in cross-cultural discussions about living meaningfully in today’s world. We hope that this compilation not only enhances academic discourse but also serves as a helpful guide for addressing the fundamental questions of modern life.

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