

EDITORIAL

In the Name of the Father

From March 29 to April 1 2007, an interesting research workshop on ‘**Psychoanalysis and Theology**’ took place in Lago Maggiore, Italy. The workshop was organized by the European Research Network ‘Science-Religion Interaction in the 21st Century’, which aspires to bring innovative contributions to important issues interfacing Science – Philosophy – Religion.

Psychoanalysis is considered as part of this huge effort of analysis and analyzing, initiated in the 17th century. This time though, the object of analysis is the innermost core of the human being, the human psyche, the human soul. The end product of this approach is not another analytical language, but a very personal language, which tries to accommodate the irrational and the ineffable of the human experience. To that respect, the personalized psychoanalytic language goes in parallel, with another personal approach, the theological approach, which is founded on experienced truth. Rather than delving into an abstract argument, the connections or non-connections between Science-Psychoanalysis-Theology, the participants opted for a pragmatic approach: to study specific issues, which could serve as Ariadne’s thread in exploring the interface of Psychoanalysis and Theology. Two of the participants, Dr. Meletis Meletiadis (Hellenic National Health System) and father Giulio Maspero (Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome) focused on the figure of Father in Psychoanalysis-Philosophy-Theology. The presentations and the ensuing intense discussion helped in underlining the different aspects of the figure of the father, notably:

- the father as a source of authority, law, ethics, providing structure and patterns to previously undifferentiated relations, thus allowing the formation of groups with internal cohesion, paving that way the emergence of civilisation;
- the importance of the father in constituting and founding the human being - ‘The man is essentially a son’;
- how the disruption of this relationship (father-son) leads to psychopathologies (case studies: *Oedipus*, the king of Thebes, *Telemachus*, the son of Ulysses);
- the relation Father-Son within Trinity, where now the relation is founded in love-agape, a relation which brings close will and reason, freedom and obedience

Dr. Meletiadis pointed out the triple dimension of the father, as a personal experience, as the foundation and tissue of our social structure and as the revelation of the divine mystery. He analyzed two classical stories, which are part of our Western culture. The first case is Telemachus, the son of Ulysses.

Telemachus, member of a ‘mono-nuclear’ incomplete family, is trying to become an adult in the absence of his father. Mentor, a friend of his father, incites Telemachus to act reflectively and carefully, to travel and meet other kings, to win the general recognition as heir of the name he bears. It is evident, following the anthropological and psychoanalytic language, that Telemachus’s journey is an initiation from adolescence to maturity, from passive attitude to undertaking of responsibilities. Homer clearly indicates that this transition takes place in the absence of the father, but well within his reputation, his name, his spirit. At the end Telemachus is prepared to meet the father and the final encounter Telemachus – Ulysses has some elements belonging to a theophany. The second case is Oedipus, the king of Thebes. Oedipus answered the riddle ‘what is a man’, posed by the Sphinx, by using reason. However his tragic life was marked by passions and crimes because of the absence of father as a point of reference and spiritual guide.

Father Maspero in his presentation draws from the Patristic theology, whose nexus is the Divine Filiation. The Father-Son relation is an eternal one, the Father eternally fathers the Son. The relational existence of God, involving logos, agape and will, influences anthropology. Human reason and human will are usually in conflict and it is urgent to establish a new equilibrium based on the ‘will to meaning’, rather than the will of power. The divine archetype might be a source of inspiration for a novel dynamic epistemology. The Cartesian epistemology is based on a neat separation of object and subject, while we may advance an epistemology where the object and the subject share a relational and communal nature.

In an era of the ‘decline of the father’, the workshop addressed the multiple aspects and the multiple roles assumed by the father, and the different calls or invitations to his direction. In the name of the father we establish our own personal existence. In the name of the father we organize our social structures. In the name of the father we approach the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The workshop took place at the magnificent Villa San Remigio, overlooking Lago Maggiore, which was graciously offered by the ‘Provincia Verbano Cusio Ossola’ (province authority), and we thank them for that. The entire project is supported by the Templeton Foundation. We are grateful to the Templeton Foundation for all the support and encouragement we received.

Professor Argyris Nicolaidis

Argyris Nicolaidis is editor of European Journal of Science & Theology and professor of Theoretical Physics at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He is also coordinator of the European Research Network ‘Science-Religion Interaction in the 21st Century’.