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THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN CRACOW

The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies (OBI – Ośrodek Badań Interdyscyplinarnych – in Polish) is a research and educational institution at the Department of Philosophy of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow¹. The main domains of the research are: philosophy of science, history of science, and problems of the interrelation of philosophy, theology and sciences. To promote and encourage the research which the Center organizes, the Center sponsors local and international scientific meetings, often with the international collaboration with similar institutions as The European Society for the Study of Science and Theology, The Vatican Observatory, and The Pachart Foundation.

With respect to its educational orientation the goal is to prepare specialists by means of lectures, seminars, collective collaboration with young scientists and other academic activity.

History

The Center was founded during difficult times in Poland. One of the enlightened activities was that of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, Archbishop of Cracow, whose residence was opened to profound discussions with many scholars. In 1978, after the Cardinal's election to the pontificate, Rev. Michael Heller and Rev. Joseph Życiński, future Archbishop of Lublin, wanted to continue similar activities and they organized the Interdisciplinary Series of Lectures and Seminars.

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¹ The article is based on <http://www.opoka.org.pl/>.

The initial meetings, after the foundation of Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow, were organized in an old and ruined Augustinian abbey (Augustiańska Street, 17) where each month on the first Friday after the 15th, at 15:15, the Science and Religion Interdisciplinary Series of Lectures and Seminars were convened. Despite being the times of Marshal Law in Poland, over 100 persons participated at the meetings. During these times the future shape of the Center's activity started to be formed. After a break of one year in holding these meetings, in 1992 with a new situation in Poland these Interdisciplinary Series of Lectures and Seminars started to be organized again together with the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. Between 1983-85 a similar organization of „artists” was formed, taking as an example that of the „scientists”.

The meetings with the former Cardinal Wojtyła, who had become Pope John Paul II, did not stop. There was organized in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, in Pope's residence, interdisciplinary conferences on „Science – Religion – History”. After the letter of John Paul II to the Rev. George V. Coyne, S.J., the Director of the Vatican Observatory, since 1990 several lectures were organized around the interdisciplinary connections between science, philosophy and theology. In that letter the pope encouraged the promotion of this unity.

After the fall of communism in Poland, in 1995-96 The Open Seminars were organized. Since that time there were also developments in the educational activity within the resources of the Academy. In 1998 student workshops started to be organized.

The Series of Lectures and Seminars

As was mention above, The Series of Lectures and Seminars were the starting point of the Center's activities. We choose a sample of them to give the flavor of the Center. The first was organized on the 27th of October, 1978. At this meeting J. Życiński talked about „Contemporary tendencies in the philosophy of science” and M. Heller about „The problem of extrapolation in cosmology”. Here is a list of some selected, more interesting subjects discussed during proceedings:

- S. Amsterdamski, „Does there exist a criterion for choosing a theory” (1980)
- Z. Chyliński, „Basic theoretical models in physics and their manner of operating” (1979); „Existence and observation in physics” (1983)
- J. Dougherty, „Problem of potentiality in classical and contemporary philosophy” (1980); „Substance as Controlling” (1984)
- R. Duda, „The evolution of the term «proof» in mathematics” (1988)

- A. Fuliński, „Time and irreversibility” (1984)
- Z. Grabowski, „Theories of quantum measurement – search in physics for a philosophy” (1986)
- W. Greenberg, „Kripke on Contingent Identity” (1984)
- M. Heller, „Thermodynamical evolution of the Universe” (1978); „Space–Time models”, „Why does the Universe have a history?” (1979); „Topology and philosophy of time”, „Universe as an art piece”, „Nonlinear development of science” (1983); „Eschatology of the Universe” (1984); „Philosophy of cosmology” (1987); „Platonism, not materialism” (1990, with Życiński); „Penrose’s philosophy of cosmology” (1991)
- K. Haman, „Objectivity of research in micro-physics” (1980)
- S. Krajewski, „Theory of mechanics and Gödel’s theorem” (1984)
- W. Krajewski, „Materialism or Platonism?” (1990)
- M.A. MacCallum, „Cosmology as a science” (1984)
- K. Maurin, „Problem of duality in mathematics, physics and philosophy”, „Remarks on the theory of symbols” (1983)
- L. Michel, „Problem of symmetry breaking”
- Ch.W. Misner, „Material and immaterial factors in cosmology” (1983)
- A. Plantinga, „God and evil” (1989);
- J. Rayski, „Einsteinian and post–Einsteinian unification theories” (1979); „Emergence of quantum mechanics” (1983); „Philosophical aspects of relativistic theory” (1984)
- J. Salij, „Problem of creation in St. Thomas” (1990)
- E. Skarżyński – „Mach’s principle and the unity of the cosmos”
- L. Sokołowski, „Hegel, «truth» of history and a question about rationality” (1988)
- A. Staruszkiewicz – „The interpretation of Einstein’s words: God is inventive...” (1978); „Remarks on the notion of existence” (1979); „Will there be an end of physics?” (1987)
- B. Średniawa, „Development of research in Cracow on the theory of relativity” (1979)
- J. Tischner, „Affairs concerning faith and reason” (1980)
- C.F. von Weizsäcker, „Greek philosophy and contemporary physics” (1979)
- J. Urbaniec, „Indeterministic basis of determinism” (1984)
- J. Woleński, „Mathematics and philosophy” (1983); „A note on induction” (1986)
- Woźniakowski, „The power of metaphor in metaphysics, physics and politics” (1992)
- K. Zalewski, „Physics for poets – philosophical implications of quantum mechanics” (1983), „Would Plato be content with contemporary particle physics?” (1984)

- J. Życiński – „Paradigm conditions on the conflict between science and faith” (1979); „Paradigm conditions of the Galileo affair” (1982); „Platonism in the philosophy of mathematics” (1983)

When the difficult times in Poland were over the Center developed various kinds of collaboration with other institutions. Since then Interdisciplinary meetings were co-organized with Jagiellonian University. Here some selected items are given:

- M. Heller, „Theories of everything: physics or metaphysics?” (1992)
- A. Łomnicki, „Evolution and human social compartment” (1992)
- A. Pelczar, „Some provocative reflections of a mathematician” (1993)
- A. Staruszkiewicz, „Progress in science? Progress in culture?” (1992, with J.A. Kłoczowski)
- J. Życiński, „Evolution and a genesis of religion” (1992)

This activity became more systematic, and thus the Cracow Methodological Conferences were organized, always with the Jagiellonian University.

- 2nd „Rationalism, falsification, cosmology – Popperian symposium” (11-12 May 1995)
- 3rd „The interplay of scientific and theological world views” (26-30 Mar. 1996, with ESSSAT) and „Boundaries of science” (9-10 May 1996, within AFOS)
- 4th „Sense and nonsense in science and philosophy” (8-9 May 1997, within AFOS)
- 5th „Unity of science – unity of the world?” (6-8 May 1998, within AFOS)
- 6th „Time...” (11-12 May 2000)
- 7th „Necessity and the acausal” (8-9 May 2001)
- 8th „Information and understanding” (14-15 May 2004)
- 9th „Structure and emergence” (16-17 May 2005)

Symposiums

Another very important kind of the activity of the Center is symposiums. They gather scholars from different countries and are focused on a subject related to an historical event.

- „The Galileo Affair: a Meeting of Faith and Science” (24-27 May 1984) in collaboration with the Vatican Observatory
- „Newton and the new direction in science” (25-28 May 1987)
- „Why nature is mathematical?” (12-13 May 1989)
- „Problem of universals and contemporary science” (11-12 May 1990)

- „Science-religion relation in catechesis. Problem of evolution” (8 Feb. 1991)
- „Theology, philosophy and cosmology: in the West and in the East”, (9-11 May 1991)
- „The Universe and philosophy” (7-8 May 1992);
- „Theology and the sciences from antiquity to the Renaissance” (18-19 May 1993)
- „Logic and metaphilosophy” (50th anniversary of death Rev. J. Salamucha) (5-6 May 1994)
- „Theology and the sciences – world view interdependence” (28-29 Apr 1995)

The Center develops an active dialog with religion. The letter of John Paul II to G. Coyne was an occasion to begin this dialogue dedicated to some problems mentioned in the letter, and not only with lectures addressed to students. This was a starting point for so called „Coyne Lectures”. A cycle of such lectures were organized and with a base of international collaboration.

- O. Pedersen, „The Book of Nature: The Birth of Science”, „The Book of Nature: The Impact of Time” (12-18 Oct. 1990)
- R. Sokołowski, „Christian religious language”, „DNA as a code: some philosophical comments”, „Linguistic aspects of the Eucharist” (9-11 May 1991)
- K. Schitz-Moormann, „Creation and evolution: Evolution theory and the faith in creation”, „Possibilities and perspectives of the faith in creation in an evolving world”, „Evolution and Erloesung”, „What does the christian Heilsverkündigung in an evolving world mean?” (1992)
- W.R. Stoeger, „Theology and cosmology: Contemporary physics and the ontological status of the laws of nature”, „The experience of knowing in science and in spirituality”, „God’s action in the world in light of scientific knowledge of reality” (20-22 Oct. 1993)

There always are at the Center „special occasions” for Special Conferences. Some of them can be quite expansive, others smaller, shorter. Here are some of them:

- „Mind and Brain” (21-27 Jun. 1998) (with Vatican Observatory and with Center of Theology and the Natural Sciences)
- Templeton program „Science and theology in contemporary world”
- A. Fantoli, „Galileo” - Polish edition.

Publications

As with each scientific institution, the Center also publishes books, usually with other publishers. A separate part among the books are Ph.D. dissertations, which number 18 until the present. A periodical „Zagadnienia Filozoficzne w Nauce” (ZFN) [Philosophical Issues in Science] is published twice a year and its student supplement „Semina Scientiarum” once a year. The Center has also its detailed web-page (<http://www.obi.opoka.org.pl/>) with the articles in ZFN published from the beginning till 2000.

The periodical ZFN (Philosophical Issues in Science) started as a bulletin of interdisciplinary meetings and since the 12th volume became an official journal of the Center. The structure of the periodical is: articles and reviews as a base, but there are also other very important series, like: „from the writings of classics”, „materials and reflections”, „discussions”, „polemics”, „remarks”, „interviews”, „conferences and symposiums”, „short notices”, etc.

Resources: Personnel

The people who collaborate with the Center are numerous. Some of them have started their own activity, not always scientific, and others work in numerous institutions. At the core of the Center there are always over ten persons. Today there are two professors: Michael Heller – diocesan priest, cosmologist and philosopher, the main director of the Center and Abp Joseph Życiński, who remains in Lublin because of his responsibilities there, and thus his presence in Cracow is limited. There are three Ph.D.'s with habilitation (a scientific degree common in Central European countries): Rev. Janusz Mączka, Alicja Michalik and Rev. Stanisław Wszolek. Besides these there are 6 other Ph.D.'s.

It is of significance to mention the Ph.D. subjects written under the guidance of Michael Heller: (1) Ensemble of Universes problem in relativistic cosmology, (2) Application of differential spaces to classical and quantum field theory, (3) Background microwave radiation as the „experimentum crucis” in cosmology, (5) H. Poincaré's philosophy of science and its influence on forming the new idea of science, (7) H. Weyl's concept of mathematics and its application to a notion of space as continuum (8) Neothomism and Lvov-Warsaw school's analysis of interactions. (13) The Creators of Darwinism as an instrument of propaganda in 1948-56 (15) Philosophical aspects of object oriented languages (16) Philosophical aspects of science modeling evolution by means of dynamical systems, etc.

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