

According to Patristic Tradition, there is a rational or cataphatic knowledge of God, and and apophatic or ineffable knowledge. The latter is superior to the former because it completes it. God is not known in His essence, however, through either of these. We know God through cataphatic knowledge only as creating and sustaining cause of the world, while through apophatic knowledge we gain a kind of direct experience of His mystical presence which surpasses the simple knowledge of Him as cause who is invested with certain attributes similar to those of the world. This latter knowledge is termed apophatic because the mystical presence of God experienced through it transcends the possibility of being defined in words. This knowledge is more adequate to God than is cataphatic knowledge.

Dumitru Staniloae

Then, standing apart from the crowds and accompanied by chosen priests, he pushes ahead to the summit of the divine ascents. And yet he does not meet God himself, but contemplates, not Him who is invisible, but rather where He dwells. This means, I presume, that the holiest and highest of the things perceived with the eye of the body or the mind are but the rationale which presupposes all that lies below the Transcendent One. Through them, however, His unimaginable presence is shown, walking the heights of those holy places to which the mind at least can rise. But then he [Moses} breaks free of them, away from what sees and is seen, and he plunges into the truly

mysterious darkness of unknowing. Here renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, he belongs completely to Him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united by a completely unknowing inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing.

Pseudo-Dionysius

The aspiration of the one who accepts to become witness of Life, of Being, provokes the reaction of the little “I”. At this point this one begins the grow and becomes capable to receive the great force that works starting from the night of the Mystery. “The night of the Mystery” expresses, of course, the point of view of the one who has not penetrated it, because the Mystery, when one realizes its presence, in itself, is Light, pure transparency. Thus one must begin with the opening... As for the structures that are revealed to us, once our vision ceases to embrace only the little “I”, their study is entirely the object of mathematics. Meaning is the content of a new life, this one internalized, where our existence is finally in totality impregnated by Being. Being is the All which forms the One. This is also the Head of Creation from which the seed springs, the light-cell of matter.

Anoushka von Heuer



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PROGRAM

*The Eighteenth Ecumenical
Theological Symposium*

**Meaning and Mystery:
From the Philosophy of
Knowledge to the
Theology of Person**

Saturday, December 4, 2010
3:00 PM

Metropolitan College of New York
75, Varick Street, 11th Floor, Room F
New York, NY 10013
(Subway 1, 9, A, C, E to Canal Street)

Theodor Damian, Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality:
Encoding and Decoding Messages: The Interplay between Apophatic and Cataphatic in the Art of Communication

Richard Grallo, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Applied Psychology, Metropolitan College of New York:
Contemplating the Past

Fr. Prof. Nicolai Buga

Adjunct Professor of Spirituality, St. Tihon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Philadelphia:
The Mystery of the Person in Fr. Staniloae's Theology

Paul J. LaChance, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Theology Department, College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey:
Sociology of Knowledge and Social Grace

Alina Feld, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Hofstra University:
Radical Theology or the Deconstruction of Christianity: Jean-Luc Nancy's "Dis-closure"

George Lazaroiu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of Journalism, Communications and Public Relations, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania:
Richard Swinburne: The Nature of God and the Problem of Evil

Daniel Munteanu, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Theology, Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg, Germany:
Human Being as Imago Trinitatis: Main Aspects of the Trinitarian Concept of Person

Daniel Damian, M.A.

Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Metropolitan College of New York:
Know Thyself: A Psychological Perspective

Fr. Nicolae Nicolescu, Ph.D.

Director *Epiphania* Magazine, Jassy, Romania:
Sacred Mystery and Church Service: A Christological and Anthropological Investigation

MODERATOR:

Alina Feld, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Hofstra University

GUEST OF HONOR:

His Eminence Dr. Nicolae Condrea,
Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox
Archdiocese of the Americas

DISCUSSANTS:

Bert Breiner, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor of Religion, Hunter College, City University of New York

Doru Tsaganea, PhD

Associate Professor of Mathematics, Metropolitan College of New York

EXHIBITION

The "Spiritus Gallery" of The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, Art director and curator: Viorica Colpacci, MA presents the exhibition
The Art of the Spirit: Tradition and Modernity with works by: Lee Vasu, Șerban Chelariu, Liviu Georghescu, Viorica Colpacci as well as traditional works by Romanian iconographers.

Meaning and Mystery: From the Philosophy of Knowledge to the Theology of Person

There are six main different concepts in this title: meaning, mystery, philosophy, knowledge (or philosophy of knowledge or epistemology), theology, and person. They may seem very different from each other, and rightly so, yet, there is something that brings them together in surprising ways, and this something is, in fact, somebody, and His name is the divine Logos incarnated in Jesus Christ the Saviour.

The concept of Logos - since Logos implies both word and reason - is indicative of meaning and mystery. Meaning, because of being Word, and in particular, The Word, has to have a meaning. This brings us to the cataphatic aspect of the word/Word. Mystery because the divine Logos is born of the Father before all ages, being consubstantial with the Father. Consequently, as He is born before all ages, no one after Him can encompass or exhaust His being, meaning, nature, and hence, the apophatic aspect of it.

The Logos is subject to Philosophy and Theology, because both deal with meaning. As pre-Christian philosophers, such as Heraclitus of Ephesus for example, in their attempt to understand and explain the world came up with, actually invented, the concept of Logos, Logos is a major philosophical starting point of reflection and because of that, a source of knowledge.

Yet, since this Logos, present in vague ways in pre-Christian philosophies, is the counterpart (or even same part!) of Christian Biblical Theology and then of Christian Systematic Theology, when it comes to His incarnation in Jesus Christ, that brings us into the field of Theology and of Personhood.

Thus, several fields of belief, life and reflection are brought together in one single mathematical-theological equation: the multiple equals the one.

In this Symposium, experts from different fields in the Humanities will explore the logic and the paradox of these philosophical and theological concepts and will reflect on either their common denominator or on their proper nature and on the contribution they bring to a fruitful interchange of ideas, knowledge and experience.

Theodor Damian