

Letter from the Editors

Dear reader,

As with our previous four issues, we are glad to present the proceedings of yet another San Marino Symposium, which took place in 2007, on the theme of "Science, Reason and Truth". These proceedings were originally meant to be published elsewhere, but due to reasons external to Euresis, the process was greatly delayed and we finally publish this volume within our Journal. The theme of the 2007 SM Symposium was inspired by the title of the Rimini Meeting: "Truth is the destiny for which we have been made". These words by Luigi Giussani remind us that the idea of "truth" is present in our cultural tradition as a foundational concept. For Giussani, truth is a constitutive element in our nature, manifested as a fundamental need of reason.

But regardless of that, the modern cultural climate forces us to ask a pressing question: does it still make sense to speak of truth in our times? Or has this view of reality been superseded by another, where the detailed description of the scientific laws and the quantification of the interactions between the elements of the world are enough to satisfy man's thirst for knowledge? As we grow in our understanding of natural phenomena, the idea of what it means to have knowledge of the natural world seems to coincide with the causal descriptions that we are able to provide within the framework of the scientific disciplines. For instance, our concept of life is ever more linked to the understanding of the DNA, and the measurement of cosmological parameters offers the potential for a self-contained description of the Universe.

The question about the existence and the possibility of knowledge of truth becomes even more relevant then, when we realise that the kind of certainties that science can provide us with are marked by limitations of method, observational capabilities, and lack of complete information. Scientific truth is determined by concepts such as 'domains of validity', for example, and even if science gradually and continually progresses to a greater understanding of natural phenomena, its certainties will always have a provisional and limited character, which may seem to keep any final truth forever out of reach.

Even in the face of these intrinsic limitations of the scientific method, and of conceptual open problems such as the interpretation of quantum mechanical systems or Gödel's incompleteness theorem, it seems to us that truth remains a fundamentally relevant concept, and crucial also in the scientific adventure —not because its existence can be secured by the many scientific discoveries, neither because it is fully reachable through them, but because it is affirmed and required as a fundamental necessity of reason itself.

Reason, this mysterious energy of man which the Christian tradition identifies with man's "imago Dei", is indeed what provides the links that connect all things into an ordered, unified world-view. Reason, by its natural dynamism is rooted in the concept of truth —a "positive hypothesis" which renders reality understandable, or at least a path towards knowledge possible to be followed.

The contributions in this volume are a testimony that the question of truth, before being a judgement on the objectivity or subjectivity of the knowledge of reality, is intimately related to our conception and use of reason, as the movement of reaching out to the knowledge of things starts within man, the only being capable of a conscious relation with others, and not outside him.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of our long time collaborator and friend, Peter Hodgson, who passed away in 2008. His contribution to this volume is yet another testimony of his everlasting quest for beauty, truth and meaning.

The Editors. ■