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## Global Perspectives on Science Spirituality : report from the Paris Workshop, 14th-20th July, 2005

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## **Global Perspectives on Science & Spirituality Report from the Paris Workshop, 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> July, 2005**

Global Perspectives on Science & Spirituality (GPSS) is an international, competition-based fellowship award programme jointly administrated by the Interdisciplinary University of Paris and Elon University, with funding from the John Tempelton Foundation. Scientists and philosophers were invited to submit applications; from among these GPSS selected 18 projects. The Paris workshop brought together all the regional awardees. The aim of the workshop was to present their work, exchange ideas and meet with the Principal Investigator, international experts and mentors.

Here follows the list of winners of the award and the titles of their projects:

- B. Gaal: "Opening up a closed word".
- R. Constantinescu: "Between determinism and divine providence".
- I. Kasavin: "Science and religion in the formation of a value system for a new civilisation".
- N. Pecherskaya: "The religious basis of contemporary problems in the natural sciences and humanities".
- G.Chen: "On scientific approaches to human consciousness and the implications for Taoist religion".
- J. Sheng: "Daoism and science: A historical survey".
- X. Liu & Z. Wang: "Overcoming the conflict between science and spirituality from a Chinese perspective".
- K. Seng: "One Universe, two perspectives: cosmology, epistemology and science-religion dialogue".
- S. Menon: "Cognitive and experiential foundations of consciousness and spiritual agency".
- A. Pamplany: "A religious and philosophical hermeneutic of the Indian scientific tradition".
- M. Paranjape: "The Third Eye and two Ways of (un)knowing: Gnosis, alternative modernities, and postcolonial futures".
- H. Kim: "Where sciences really meet religions: Some preliminary East Asia reflections on the Christian theology of nature".
- P. Swanson: "Science – Spirit – Religion: Reflections on science and spirituality in the Japanese context".

- L. Kvasz: "Science and its patterns of transcendence".  
A. Marskos: "Body and calculus".  
F. Mikes: "Creative chaos and strange attractors: Explaining the emergence of novelties under totality and finding new impulses in today's Czech Republic".  
R. Takenda: "Where should the true encounter between Religion and Science take place?"  
G. Bugajak & J. Tomczyk: "Current controversies about human origins. Between anthropology and the Bible"

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University was represented by G. Bugajak from the Institute of Philosophy and J. Tomczyk from the Institute of Ecology and Bioethics. During the workshop they presented the main aims of their project and their research activities.

*'On the origins of man. Problem solved?'*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the beginning of the conflict between creationism and evolutionism. It was the time when scientists accepted the idea that the world and all living organisms, including humans, came into being and developed in the course of natural evolution. Theologians obviously could not agree with such a theory. Although certain solutions were proposed, the alleged conflict between evolutionism and creationism still remains unsolved; it remains a perennial challenge for scientists as well as the wider public. The popular opinion that there is a real conflict between the biblical story and the biological theories about the origin of humans is reinforced by vast a great deal of being literature currently published in Poland. Most of these publications: books and articles are translations, promoting the so-called 'scientific creationism', associated mainly with the American Academia. The problem touches especially teachers of biology who are sincere believers in their faith and who apparently cannot teach their subject in agreement with their conscience. Similar dilemmas arise during classes of religious education.

The authors of the project wish to start with the phase of theoretical considerations. It is worth finding out more about the current state of the controversy over human origins as it is reported in the literature of the subject. Some work has already been done in this field by the former professors of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University. The results of their research deserve being closely reviewed and newly estimated in the light of current opinions about the relationship between the biblical narrative and scientific theories. Also in recent literature there appear new ideas, on the one hand put forward by the so-called 'scientific' creationists and on the other hand formulated by the ardent opponents of the dialogue between science and religion. The latter are, more often than not, former Marxist philosophers who seem to be looking for new areas of attack on religious beliefs. Their opinions become more and more influential and therefore

need to be thoroughly analysed in order to propose adequate terms of 'defence'. Apart from this type of strictly academic research, it is also important to find out what common opinions about the alleged conflict between science and religion and their views on the origin of the human race are being articulated in popular literature and magazines.

This stage of the project will allow the authors to define precisely what particular problems are being raised by the scientists, philosophers and the wider public; it should also be possible to establish if there are any applicable answers in present selections. The findings of the preliminary research will be presented in the form of a conference paper. Together with other contributions presented at the conference, they will provide a basis for designing a questionnaire which will make it possible to proceed to the next stage of the project.

The questionnaire will be distributed among anthropologists, theologians and teachers of religion. The results of the questionnaire should enable us to define in a more precise way the nature of the problems faced by the members of those groups. We predict that these problems will fall roughly under two main categories; the academics are likely to hold views which are distinct from the opinions of the wider public, including those presented by the students who attend courses of religious education. The analysis of the results will aim at answering whether the existing solutions are applicable to the problem raised; new solutions may also be proposed. This will be the crucial phase of the project. The issues raised at this stage should be of great help for teachers who, in the educational process, are confronted with the controversy between the biblical and scientific accounts of human origin.