

ABSTRACTS

I. Introductory session

Karl Gustel Wörnberg: *Welcome and Introduction to Key Theme"*

A few words about Scruton's Kantianism as that's where we have had some disagreements. But also some wider themes will be presented as discerned in his thought.

Ferenc Hörcher: *Religion, art, politics - A Response to the opening remarks of Karl Gustel Wörnberg*

This response is planned to include reflections on the way religion related to art and politics in Scruton's thought.

II. Keynote session

Chantal Delsol: *From cult to culture among late Christians, the Scruton case*

Roger Scruton's relationship with religion is complex. What is certain is that he defends the Christian world with all his might, and it is on this idea that I would like to insist. In this sense, he is a typical European of the 20th century, when "sociological religion" flourished. Many Christians regard worship as a mere rite, while they are ardently committed to saving Christian culture. Why this shift? What does it mean to save Christian culture? In what way can we say that Scruton was an artisan in this struggle?

III. Love, tragedy, compassion

James Bryson: *The relation between dying things: love and the sacred in Scruton's Wagner*

Scruton's life-long preoccupation with the mature works of Richard Wagner exercised a profound influence on his "theological turn" later in his career. His understanding of love and desire shaped his religious thinking about mortal life. Scruton's full hermeneutical powers and deep-seated philosophical convictions coincide in his interpretation of Tristan, The Ring Cycle, and Parsifal.

Titus Techera: *Scruton on Religion & Tragedy*

Scruton describes liberal philosophy as "Man's brief caricature." The human quest for self-understanding--as communities, through culture, & individually--leads him beyond the institutional political rationalism of English philosophers, with its analysis of passions & interests, to the rationalism of German philosophers who claim to ground man's freedom in something more exalted than self-interest. Premodern man, man before liberal philosophy, relied on religion for this guarantee of dignity. Post-modern man, man after the loss of credibility of liberalism who nevertheless believes in individuality, apparently cannot. Scruton thus turns to aesthetics, to the arts, to music & opera--he turns toward tragedy as the articulation of man's destiny. Thus, Scruton's confrontation with modern rationalism's reduction of man to matter points not to religion, but to two other directions, conservative dogmatics as a political option, & something else, something lawless, tragedy, as a human possibility.

Windhager, Ákos: *"We need a team!", Compassion as the key element in Roger Scruton's concept of religion*

Roger Scruton was a unique English intellectual who did not link the Knights of the Grail with the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Neither with the mythical knights of the Arthurian mythology. He linked the knights with Wagner's operas. He utilised this symbolism to develop his theory on religion, viewing the Grail Brotherhood as a representation of the Church. The symbol of the church, which is based on and dedicated to compassion. As such, it is undoubtedly a concept, but it also needs to be realised in the actual world. Scruton extensively discussed his search for this representation of the church in his book "The Face of God." History may remember him as the victorious Sir Galahad, the mischievous Sir Gawain, or even as Parzival who, because of this search, reestablished the community. Scruton sought a society that maintains sanctity in its present existence. He found it difficult to grasp the core nature of God, but he had no doubt about the presence of holiness. Nevertheless, holiness needs to be regenerated during the preservation process. Alternatively said, the Chronos must preserve the Kairos, the perpetual existence of holiness. But compassion is the only way mortal man may cross from the Chronos to the Kairos. The Scrutonian perspective on religion envisions a church community where holiness is maintained by compassion. Two instances will demonstrate whether this picture is Christian or not: the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz and the vision of brotherhood in Béla Bartók's Cantata Profana. This lecture will discuss Scruton's perspectives on religion as presented in the Wagner volumes

IV. Keynote session

Mark Dooley: *Scrutinising the Sacred*

The concept of the sacred provides a unifying thread to Roger Scruton's diverse range of interests. It is, however, rooted in the Kantian idea of the noumenal 'thing-in-itself' that transcends human reason, an idea that ultimately results in a 'homelessness of the mind'. How, then, can this be reconciled with Scruton's equally important notions of 'home', settlement, and belonging? Does our affirmation of this idea of the sacred and the transcendental, lead inevitably to that form of alienation that Scruton consistently sought to surmount? And, if so, what implications does this have for Scruton's project as a whole? Why, in other words, was this great thinker of presence so committed to an idea that emphasises absence? 'Scrutinising the Sacred' will seek to answer these questions while reasserting the author's belief that Scruton was, nevertheless, a deep man of faith, and not simply, as he is often portrayed, an 'aesthetically-minded tourist' of religion.

V. Comparative and secular religions

Dominic Green: *Scruton in comparative terms to non-Christian religions, especially re Judaism and Islam*

Struck by the image of Roger driving around the countryside on a Sunday to play the organ at churches that otherwise would have no music, this talk wants to identify a difference between Scruton's conception of the traditional, social value of the Anglican Church versus his Romantic & philosophical Christianity (which shares intellectual roots with his green politics).

Nyirkos, Tamás: *Roger Scruton on Secular Religions*

The paper analyzes a lesser-known segment of Scruton's thought, the critique of so-called "secular religions." Although he wrote no comprehensive work on the latter, he often returned to the argument that some modern ideologies are analogous to traditional religions in providing a similar comprehensive worldview, mostly in an unquestionable, dogmatic manner, excommunicating dissident views instead of entering into political dialogue with them. His examples include Marxism, feminism, human rights, psychoanalysis, new atheism, or the worship of revolutions and progress. The paper poses the question whether Scruton's use of such an argument is only a rhetorical tool that – perhaps inadvertently – relies on the negative ring of "religion" in contemporary discourse or can be reconstructed as the expression of a coherent set of ideas that can distinguish not only politics from religion but also between "real" and "secular" religious phenomena, also called "quasi-religions" and "idolatry" in Scruton's texts, including book chapters, journal articles, and interviews.

VI. Keynote session

Anthony O'Hear: *"When Freedom Came, God Disappeared." Isn't that strange?*

Following the enigmatic quotation from Roger Scruton's libretto for David Mathews opera *Anna*, I wonder whether it really is strange, I explore the connexion between Scruton's views on religion and his critique of modern materialism, both economic and philosophical. I go on to consider the extent to which his own 'religion', with its basis in his cognitive dualism, is truly religious. In doing this, I will also refer to Scruton's interpretation of Wagner's *Parsifal*.

VII. Oakeshott and Scruton: religion and politics

Smrcz, Ādám: *Politics as the Second Nature of Communities in Scruton*

One of the characteristic features of political – as opposed to theocratic or tyrannical – communities is that their members are involved in common deliberative processes through which they can determine both their common ends and their respective means (Scruton 2002, 8-16). Similarly, one of the characteristic features of Western religious communities is that their revealed truths are „mediated” through, or contingent upon the dispositions of their followers (Scruton 2012, 27), meaning that even religious institutions are at least partly fashioned by a kind of deliberation that we generally call political. This can be seen, according to Scruton, already in the case of Orestes, who was freed from the divine curse by his political community, but this is also why the creation of the Church of England – which famously took place due to political, instead of dogmatic reasons – is not to be regarded as an anomaly of Western Church history, but rather as an instance of its innermost logic.

However, this political nature of religious institutions only seems to be a second nature. This is partly because very few religions show such characteristics apart from Western ones, while pre-political Western religions – which served as the original binding force before social contracts took place – also lacked such peculiarities. Modern religious institutions can, hence, be considered as the unintended consequences of the concurrence between religious tenets and politics. According to my claim, Scruton had a twofold aim by highlighting such a fortunate interdependence between politics and religion: by doing so, (1) he identified a particular Western attitude towards otherworldly matters, but at the same time (2) he could emphasize the underlying importance of politics altogether. For him, religions were only the most extreme examples of (partly) political institutions, and the above mentioned political (second) nature potentially applied to any kind of social organization. In my proposed talk, I aim to expand on this subject, because this is the focal point from which Scruton's critique of modern ways of belonging (like being a fan of a football club or of a pop band) can be best understood: what makes them undesirable for Scruton is their lack of political character.