

On Theological, Philosophical and Sociological Themes

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Abstract

The article is the report of an attempt to connect Manlio Sgalambro, philosopher and theologian, standard-bearer of “negative theology”, with Luigi Moraldi, hermeneutist and exegete of the “gnostic texts”, who was part of the international team of translation of the Nag-Hammadi manuscripts. The meeting did not take place, but it remains a correspondence of great interest both for the contents it deals with and for the specific approaches of the two great intellectuals on the subject that, even in the present of this 21st century, continues to be overwhelming for the general system of knowledge.

Keywords: Theology; Qumran; Nag-Hammadi; Demiurge; Moraldi; Sgalambro; Crimi

Conversation at the Philosopher’s house, 14 September 1997

Sgalambro: So you want me to talk about theology. But why should I talk if I already wrote? Go get “Treatise on Impiety”; at the end of the first part you will find: «Who is a theologian? Is he one in whom detachment and distancing from God as the origin or positive principle of the world take place. Then he will be someone who understands it and separates from it with a single act of the mind. With disgust.» You know, theology doesn’t need Holy Scriptures, because it is something related to something else that is - or that is not - rooted inside the darkness of consciousness, something that cannot be taught.

Ceccoli Crimi: If I remember correctly, you indicated that this path has been always known to you, even since from a young age, because in choosing which studies to do, you made clear your mind with the intuition that philosophy is not a subject that can be an object of teaching, but eventually it may concern only the transmission of the torch. Then, distinguishing instruction from culture, you chose jurisprudence.

Sgalambro: Maybe. But what is this? A topic; nothing more. And nothing less. Anyway, coming back to what you care about, another reflection that you will find in the same source consists in the fact that there cannot be a natural theology: otherwise, it would be nothing else than a mask for biblical theses. It is difficult to make it easy to understand for someone who supports the common idea of religion - that is not the theological one - who therefore does not give importance to the construction of a sacred text. But it is even more difficult to join the mind of someone who instead went to study the apocryphal sources to understand the sacred text. I am in the position of someone who considers sacred texts irrelevant, and even more the apocrypha.

Ceccoli Crimi: I think I can understand the point of view, also having studied your "Treatise on Impiety" in depth, of course without understanding it. So I did with Moraldi's translation of "Gnostic Writings", with a similar outcome. Anyway, let me express that I am convinced of the fact that theological argument does not have a boundary that can be delimited, and therefore even the Sacred Texts themselves cannot be placed as a barrier. You will certainly dispute this point, but there is an element that emerges from Luigi Moraldi's studies and is in formidable proximity to the concepts that you deal with...

Sgalambro: Which ones for example?

Ceccoli Crimi: Evoking Shakespeare's King Lear, you state that the father's contempt becomes obvious as soon as the contempt for God becomes obvious. Here, this statement is a perfect identity with what emerges from the apocryphal texts translated into Italian by Luigi Moraldi, concerning the thirst of power inside the Demiurge. It comes out with archetypal power and contains precisely that ancient, sinister and solemn term: "impiety", so transferred from the world of men to the world of a dead god.

Sgalambro: You make me smile. Tell me, then. I will be available to listen to you, but with a clear condition: I will listen to you until I won't detect in your words a desire for confrontation that is functional just to your selfishness. Remember this: I don't need to compare myself with those who want to measure me to get a better idea of themselves.

Ceccoli Crimi: I do not intend to abuse the patience and good reception of a Philosopher.

Sgalambro: Speak, then.

Ceccoli Crimi: More than speaking, I ask your permission to read a page from «Gnostic Texts», a fragment from a manuscript marked as «Origine del Mondo» and classified by the team that catalogued these manuscripts as NHC (Nag Hammadi Codex) 297 - 24.127 - 17 - 102.11. The text reads:

«He said: "I am God and there is no one else but me"; Thus saying, he sinned against all the immortals, but they welcomed and protected him. Considering the impiety of the Great Archon, the Pistis became irritated and, without being seen, said: "you are wrong!"».

Sgalambro: Let me see, I want to read it myself. [...] It's quite interesting. You were right, thank you. But what do we do with it? I can only see with my own eyes. My philosophy is inspired by distrust. It doesn't need theoretical demonstration, nor scientific refutation. Nor modern neither archaic and even less arcane. However, I am intrigued by this contribution to the smashing of metaphysical idols: and this perhaps touches the last of the last, the omega of omegas, which is another nothing, a meaningless and marginal one.

Cecoli Crimi: I would very much like the possibility of a direct confrontation between you, Professor Sgalambro, and Mr. Moraldi. If you give me your availability, I will try to provide the opportunity for this meeting.

Email exchange: Cecoli Crimi 30 September; Professor's Moraldi response of 12 October 1997

Cecoli Crimi: Professor Moraldi, I spoke with Manlio Sgalambro who said he is interested in learning more about what you brought to light with your writings and the theology that derives from them. Should you also express this interest, then I would like to try to organize a meeting and a public conference. We will see, above all on the basis of your direct dialogue, what the agreements may be. I thank you in advance for your attention and availability. Best regards.

Moraldi: Dear Davide, thank you for your efforts. However, I must warn you: no theology comes out of my writings. If there is a theology, I leave it to others. I'm not even a theologian, if anything, I'm an exegete, a hermeneut. I do not make comments except to the extent strictly necessary: to contextualize this or that manuscript which is then translated and published to state the specific origin, the provenance, what affordable dating may be attributed to it; nothing more. I don't push myself to interpret, nor to draw a philosophy from it. It's not in my field of interest and therefore I wouldn't know what to say to you and to Professor Sgalambro. Give him my warmest regards. I think you will agree with me that perhaps there is no need for this meeting. Let's think carefully.



In this picture: Luigi Moraldi (left) and Davide C. Crimi, Montaione (Firenze), 1997.

Conversation at the Philosopher's home on 26 October 1997

Sgalambro: I think the professor is right. As a theologian, I try to look "erga omnes", to everyone: this is my conception of the other, whoever he is. And whoever he may be, he will be nothing more than an obstacle opposed to my lucidity. I'm not yet able to distinguish a human being from a thing. I deal with entities and not with people. Much less than being or to become. But why do you care so much about organizing this meeting? What do you want to achieve? What do you want to prove?

Cecoli Crimi: The point is that there are some things that have an astonishing resonance. For example, when you write that theology is linked to the annulment of God and that it is insulting to hear about the lack of God, considering instead that God is too much: so, I believe that the foundation of a so strong statement must lie in that awareness that these apocrypha, which have come to light after millennia, clarify beyond any reasonable doubt.

Sgalambro: Dear Davide, you overestimate the meaning of words. It is so nice to follow the illusion of age, that I don't see in your eyes a sin. Maybe it is beyond your eyes.

Cecoli Crimi: In our time finally we have the beginning of instantaneous knowledge, the tools to make a leap in the collective consciousness, precisely through this contemporary epochal possibility to give new definition of very ancient themes, and I think that men like you and Professor Moraldi can leave a decisive mark in defining this operation.

Sgalambro: You're kind and I appreciate it. But you are also naive and immature. Maya's illusion makes your eyes sparkle. Insist if you want, bang your head where you choose to do it. Remember, however, that mine is not but a negative theology. I'm sure it will be useful to you in the future.

Additional note

Due to those unpredictable thin threads that life shakes to keep the destiny of each of us suspended, I was unable to continue with the tenacity and determination that the realization of the purpose I had would have been needed.

Professor Moraldi gave me the introduction to my exegetical essay on the first three chapters of the book of Genesis - Torah Atziluth.

The meeting between Moraldi and Sgalambro did not take place.

The first part of the text reported here should have been published in a magazine, however this did not happen either.

The text of the notes remained in my archives in prolonged oblivion, also because of a shift of technology, as the text was inside a “floppy disk” and formatted in obsolete shape. This relatively simple problem was depassed just in recent times, so the text “resurfaced”.

All that remains of that content’s power is this thin trace, as a testimony of what could have been and what could be otherwise and again.

Luigi Moraldi, a recognized internationally renowned expert in the field of the apocryphal Gospels of ancient Christianity and the texts of Gnosis, passed away on 11/11 2001. He was working on the figure of Simeon Bar Kocheba, a work that remained unfinished.

Manlio Sgalambro, a philosopher of clear fame, in the last phase of his life resumed the common thread of his first works, bringing them into a system in what can be considered a compendium of his thought, *De Mundo Pessimo*. He passed away on 6/3 2014.

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