

Welcoming Speech by the Head of the Center at the Conference Opening Ceremony

Dear Rector Lakušić, Dear Provincial of the Croatian Province of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Šujević, Dear Dean Fr. Šestak, Dear Dean Elect Fr. Volenik, Dear Former Dean Fr. Koprek, Honorable Fathers, Distinguished Academicians and Professors, Dear Colleagues, Dear Students, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you on behalf of the Center for the Study of the Relationship Between Science and Religion at the Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Zagreb. It is a great privilege to address you on this wonderful academic occasion briefly. But, before I open the Conference, I would like to share a few facts about the Center and the Conference.

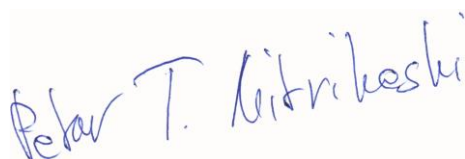
The Center is an organizational unit within the Faculty. We are an academic platform dedicated to developing philosophy that examines the interactions between theology and natural sciences on an academic level and between science and religion on a societal level. Our basic mission is to establish a meaningful dialogue between reason and faith at a fundamental level. Operating in this academic realm, we are not activists of any kind, nor are we an ecumenical initiative, although a multidenominational atmosphere in the academy is appreciated.

The Conference you are attending was envisioned years ago by others. However, to realize this idea, the first step was to found the Center. Once that was done, we needed to build a solid foundation for a recognizable and academically credible conference. We like to believe we achieved that, but it is not for us to judge. I can only say that what you see in the program reflects this effort, which organized the conference into three main sections: the first—"The Relationship Between Science and Religion"—interests the Center; the second—"Religion and Society"—is of interest to the Faculty; and the third—"Science and Society"—aligns with the University's broader focus. Taken all together, they bear the potential to encourage joint reflections that compel scholars to address the most complex and unresolved academic questions, such as the origins of the Universe, the emergence of life, or the advent of human consciousness, based on the fundamental assumption that throughout this entire endeavor, we must not abandon academic principles at any cost.

I express my gratitude to the main patron of the Conference, the Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, and its Dean and Board, for the comprehensive support of the Center. Also, I thank our second main patron, the University of Zagreb, and our patrons, the Catholic University of Croatia, the Catholic Faculty of Theology at the University of Zagreb, the

Faculty of Science at the University of Zagreb, and the Institute of Philosophy (Zagreb). Gratitude is offered to our sponsors, the Foundation of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Rhema Foundation, and the Croatian publisher *Christian Present*, while not forgetting the media that follow the event. Last but not least, I express my deep gratitude to my colleagues at the Center and to the men and women of the Conference Boards, for without them, this would not be possible.

Having said this, I declare this Conference open and wish you inspiring moments following the lectures. Thank you.



Petar Tomev Mitrikeski

September 24, 2024

The First CePOZiR Conference – 2025.

Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Zagreb