

Dialogues between believers and non-believers

December 12, 2017

Renewing theology through dialogue between religious and skeptics: this is the topic of the lesson held at FBK by Anthony Carroll, in memory of Davide Zordan

On December 6, **Anthony Carroll**, professor of philosophy and theology at the **Heithrop College** of the University of London, was the speaker of the “**Davide Zordan lecture**”, an annual event (now at its second edition) organized in memory of the researcher of the **Center for Religious Studies**, who died prematurely in 2015 at the age of 47.

The topic of the lesson was that of dialogue between **believers** and **non-believers**, seen from the perspective of a renewal of contemporary theology. Carroll started from a fact: according to a recent [survey](#) conducted by the **BSA** (British Social Attitudes), 53% of Britons declared themselves as non-believers. “A figure that represents a considerable change, which is also affecting other European countries”. However, the very concept of “believing” and more generally of “being religious” can be interpreted in different ways: does it mean to follow doctrinal statements? Participate in religious practices? Or have an absolute dependence on something or someone?

“In reality, the experience of faith is unlikely to be homogeneous: many non-believers have been believers, others have never been believers,” the scholar stressed. «And **Feuerbach**’s concept of a transcendent and supernatural God, who alienates man from complete realization is still present. A negative concept of God, in short, which can lead to rejection “.

But at what point progress has been made in the dialogue between believers and non-believers? According to the English scholar, “those who believe inevitably share many experiences with those who do not believe, living them however with a different “lens”, strongly dependent on personal experience”. And there is no reason to wonder who is right or wrong: in this regard, Carroll cited the analogy with physics, where it is possible that different models of reality, referring to the same phenomenon, can be equally valid (as underlined by **Stephen Hawking** and **Leonard Mlodinow** in their book “Grand Design”).

In closing, remembering Davide Zordan's great passion for **films** (he was president of the [Religion Today Film Festival](#) of Trento), the theologian emphasized the important role played by the big screen in the renewal of theology. "As Davide taught us, cinema can accompany believers and non-believers in their dialogue".

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