
Χαιρετισμός
Καθηγητή Κωνσταντίνου Χριστοφίδη, Πρύτανη του Πανεπιστημίου
Κύπρου
στη δημοσιογραφική διάσκεψη για τη δωρεά της Πρεσβείας της Σουηδίας
του καταλόγου βιβλίων,
The Linnaeus Apostles. Global Science & Adventure

που διοργανώνει

το Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου

28 Απριλίου 2014, 09:30

Αίθουσα Συμβουλίου-Συγκλήτου Α.Γ. Λεβέντη

Your Excellences',

Mrs Severi,

Dear students and colleagues,

Good morning and welcome to the University of Cyprus

We feel privileged to host in our premises today this press conference for the announcement of the donation, by the embassy of Sweden, of the complete catalogue of the works of **Carl Linnaeus** and his so-called Apostles, on Natural Sciences.

The work of **Linnaeus**, and his naturalists' predecessors of the 17th century (John Wilkins and John Ray), marks the end of an era in the history of science. It epitomizes the transition from the Aristotelian scholasticism to the new natural philosophy set by Francis Bacon and John Locke, at the end of the Middle Ages in science (about 1542).

As you know, during the Middle Ages the natural world, especially of theologians, was a result of the fallen angels who were outcast from heaven. Hence, Nature was inhabited by demons who apparently replaced the old pagan gods. This is how naïve and ignorant people of the time

explained natural phenomena, catastrophe, famine, and disease. Such a belief towards the natural world did not allow for its further examination, since the interest in Nature's ungodly secrets was basically a sin.

Nevertheless, in the 16th century, Rabelais was the first to state what became the aim of **Linnaeus** later (18th century), in *La Vie tres horrifique du Grand Gargantua* (1533). After recommending the study of Latin, Greek and other languages, the book's protagonist advised his son Pantagruel to study deeply the facts of nature: *"I wish you to give them such diligent enquiry that there will be no sea, river or fountain of which you do not know the fish; all the birds of the air, all the trees, shrubs and bushes of the forest, all the herbs of the earth, all the metals hidden in the bowels of chasms, the precious stones of the Orient and the South, none should be unknown to you"*.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The works of **Linnaeus** and his Apostles is of such detail and value that only quite recently (20th century) has, the Natural History department of the British Museum, been able to materialize a system of naming and taxonomy, which comes directly from the work of **Linnaeus**, trying to accomplish the program suggested by Rabelais. But mind you, Linnaeus worked with no means and alone while, the British Museum employs a staff of 400 scientists.

What is truly inspiring about **Linnaeus** and his collaborators is that they had no wealth or high social position to back their careers, in a time when no one was interested in investing in natural science. Linnaeus was a son of a country parson in war-impooverished Sweden, with an inborn motivation and ability to achieve the completion of a scientific mission, the result of which is relevant even today.

Our Library has just become wealthier with the addition of the works of **Linnaeus** and we are truly grateful to the Embassy of Sweden for their

generosity and belief in the qualities and scientific mission of the University of Cyprus.

We sincerely hope that this donation today marks only the beginning of the establishment of a fruitful cooperation on several matters in the immediate future.

Thank you very much