



Memes of Ethics – A Co-evolutionary Approach The case of Religion's Memes

K. E. Simitopoulou and N.I.Xirotiris

KEYWORDS Evolution. Cultural Evaluation. "Mutant" Memes.

ABSTRACT The issue of **co-evolution** (interaction of biological and cultural factors during the integrated evolutionary process of humankind) is increasingly present in the international debate among anthropologists. A systemic approach of culture (including ethics) as a complex system, based on the existence, structure, replication and dissemination of "cultural units" (Memes), reveals direct analogies between the cultural and biological evolutionary processes.

Considering that:

- a) Religion constitutes a major cultural trait in all past and contemporary cultures, with major importance for the moral behaviours and the ethical systems; whereas "rationalism" is based on the biological background of humans, linked to the potential of the evolving human brain;
- b) In our evolutionary phase, no definite barriers can be drawn between biological and cultural behaviour and
- c) The exact contribution of nurture versus nature in the evolution of human civilization is far from clear, a co-evolutionary approach, applying the memes theory, is suggested for the interpretation of the interaction between ethics and rationalism, in the particular case of religion's memes.

Authors' Address: K. E. Simitopoulou and N.I.Xirotiris, Laboratory of Anthropology DUTH, P.O.Box 209-GR 69100, Komotini, GREECE
Email: simit@he.duth.gr