Bojan Žalec, Stjepan Štivić (Eds.)

Culture Wars

Theology East – West

European Perspectives

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Culture Wars:
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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

The book's title tries to cover the range of the book's subject. Our objective is to critically examine and discuss themes and issues from the second half of the 19th century to the onset of World War II through a multidisciplinary lens. While numerous historiographical studies have been undertaken on this period, there remains a notable gap in the form of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis that situates the collected material within a broader contextual framework. This work aims to address this gap through systematic and coordinated team research.

This book focuses on the religious dimensions and practical applications of contemporary theories of religion, focusing on their relevance to secularisation, modernisation, and the dynamics of violence. Additionally, it examines the role of religion in shaping cultural interpretations, the phenomenon of the culture war (ger. Kulturkampf), and the broader context of ideological conflict.

The book holds significant relevance from both national and European perspectives, as understanding ideological conflicts of the past is crucial for comprehending similar frictions and conflicts in the present. Its significance extends beyond theology, philosophy, history, and religious and cultural studies, encompassing various humanities and social sciences disciplines. Additionally, the book contributes to cultural heritage preservation and holds considerable importance at the European level.

The issues are discussed from various aspects: theological, philosophical, from the point of view of (intellectual) history, religious and cultural studies. We believe intellectual history and culture wars can better be understood through different, complementary viewpoints. Therefore, our book is interdisciplinary.

Let us now make a quick survey of the papers in the book. The first chapter (**Maver**) examines the evolution of cultural conflicts among Slovenes, focusing on the influence of Catholicism and its intersection with political dynamics. It attributes significant shifts in the increasing conflation of Catholicism with political parties and the transformative impact of post-World War I state reconfigurations. **Avsenik Nabergoj** examines the division between Catholic and liberal intellectuals in Slovenia regarding the relationship between art and religion during the interwar period and touches on the lasting impact of these discussions on the understanding of art and religion in contemporary times. **Žalec** critically analyses Aleš Ušeničnik's social ideas and Slavoj Žižek's critique of Janez Evangelist Krek's social model, rooted in Catholic organicism and corporatism. He situates Žižek's critique within the context of Slovenia's transition from socialism to liberal democracy. **Malmenvall** presents Franc Grivec's social vision, emphasising his advocacy for Christian unity under the Catholic Church and

contextualising his ideas within the ideological conflicts of his time, especially in relation to the Russian Revolution and its impact on Slovenian society. **Tratnik** elucidates how France Kralj, a prominent Slovenian artist, became a target of ideological conflict during the politically charged 1930s. He was criticised and ultimately scapegoated by both the communist and national socialist factions, who labelled his work as degenerate art. **Štivić** sheds light on Croatian-Slovenian priest and philosopher Franc Šanc and his understanding of culture from the first half of the last century. **Mester** investigates the role of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* from 1882-1891, highlighting the ideological and religious debates that shaped Hungarian philosophy during this period. **Klun** deals with the concept of postmodern democracy, focusing on the philosophical underpinnings of deconstruction, suggesting that a balance between deconstruction and the necessity of constructive principles may be essential to preserving democratic ideals. **Valčová** depicts how the Christian Liturgy serves as both a reflection and a reconciliation of the tensions between contemporary cultural values and traditional ecclesiastical principles, arguing that the liturgy provides a way for the Church to remain faithful to its roots while effectively engaging with modern societal challenges. **Kardis** deals with Grace Davie's concept of "believing without belonging" and applies it to the evolving religiosity in Slovakia among youth. **Smoczyński** examines normative diversity in Polish society, particularly between its Eastern and Western regions and analyses these disparities through the lens of centre-periphery theory, highlighting the impact of modernisation potential and the contrasting social conditions. **Valčo** delas aspect with the -driven algorithms on social media as an essential element of today's culture wars.

Bojan Žalec and Stjepan Štivić, the editors

PECULIARITIES OF THE CULTURE WARS AMONG SLOVENES

Aleš Maver, Maribor

1 Introductory Remarks

The phrase "culture war" (*Kulturkampf*) is so commonplace in the Slovenian cultural space. The declarative wish for its end is so often expressed that the question of whether it is possible to assume, as has been domesticated, a substantial continuity between the culture wars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Slovene-speaking areas and the undeniably strong polarisation or *vulgo*-division of Slovenian political, cultural and social life today, is almost entirely in the background. It is certainly interesting to note that most of the on-duty deniers of the Slovene split and proponents of the thesis of its artificial creation and maintenance are in a great hurry to fix some of the iconographic and mythographic bases for its perpetuation. Therefore, the "culture war", regardless of the (un)legitimacy of using the term itself, is undoubtedly a welcome and necessary issue.

Earlier culture wars among Slovenes were closer to the Latin than the German variant because of their cultural and social determinants. However, it has to be said that most of the time (surprisingly, given today's circumstances), it did not take place as knife-edge as in the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese or French cases. It was simply a matter of loosening the ties tightened by the Catholic Church during its almost three hundred years of dominance. Of course, the alleged memory of the violent nature of its reassertion of power after the upheavals of the Reformation, as most dramatically formulated by Ivan Cankar in his famous passage from the play *Servants* (*Hlapci*) from 1910, is a myth born for the culture-fighting needs of a much later time. It would be doing history a disservice trying to find continuity between the Catholic-Protestant skirmishes of the 16th century and the Catholic-liberal culture-fighting scrapes of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the experience of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and the decisive leaning on the secular Habsburg power at that time strongly influenced the behaviour patterns of the upper echelons of the Catholic community in Slovenia, so to speak, until today, because at the decisive turning point, it was the quest for support from the rulers that turned out to be the saving formula (cf. Dolinar 2004, 7-20). This is also why the long period of Catholic domination has remained somewhat marked by the imposition of solutions "from above".

This paternalistic model was not softened by Josephinist religious policy in Austria, often understood as "liberal", but rather tightened in its way and a specific direction. This, therefore, became the apparent task set by the Slovene liberals, or better still, by the proto-liberals, when in the revolutionary year of 1848, and finally in the Concordat discussions, the external trigger for it appeared. The relative slowness of the liberal movement away from Catholic identity should be stressed. The move beyond the slow exuberance of anticlericalism and the twists and turns of the dream of a national church in orthodox tones - for all the sympathy for the Trubar movement, Protestantism was not an option for Slovenians because of its predominantly German face in Slovene-speaking areas (cf. particularly Zajšek 2010) from the second half of the 19th century - to religious indifferentism, and finally to agnosticism and even militant atheism, insofar as the latter existed in the classical version of the Slovenian culture wars, did not happen overnight. In this sense, the Latin culture wars were much more thorough and fierce.

However, that a culture war was able to begin and to flare up at a historical moment when the position of the Slovenian national community was not particularly stable, even in the most Slovene region of Carniola, testifies, of course, to the extent to which a part of the Slovene cultural community was tormented by the "yoke" of the imbalance created by the long-standing, unchallenged dominant role of Catholicism in the entire public sphere. It is no wonder that it took some time before such sharp reflections of the culture wars reappeared as can be gleaned from its early phase, exemplified, for instance, by Josip Stritar's lamentations on the ills of a liberal Slovene in his *Vienna Sonnets* (1872), or the roughly contemporaneous call by the anonymous Slavoljub (Slavophile) that the Styrians, for God's sake, should not vote for the "parson canon Kosar", because the parliament is not a gathering of "sermonisers and gloom-mongers" (Orožen 1971, 221). A kind of pinnacle of culture-fighting rhetoric on the liberal side, Ivan Tavčar's novel *4000* (1891) belonged then already to the turn of the century.

The early climate of culture war mobilised, alongside some destructive ones, mainly creative forces on both sides. It also pushed the defenders of the initially dominant Catholic orientation towards modernisation and organisational renewal, which, after a short fast, eventually restored them to a leading role in political life. At the same time, it enriched the Slovenian areas with the necessary pluralisation, which at the beginning of the 1890s - freely following Vasili Melik - was no longer, as it might have been in the 1870s, the clog of national emancipation, but the logical consequence of its progress (cf. Melik 2002, 416). With its growing hegemony within the increasingly loose "concord" into which the first phase of the culture wars had degenerated, the re-strengthened Catholic camp increasingly stifled the other (liberal) elements within the national move-

ment. Where the latter did not become independent in time, the consequences could be drastic, as Carinthia's example shows.

Of course, the sense of widespread threat that pervaded the early emancipatory efforts did its work, endowing the so-called "split" with attributes of national disaster that many still find difficult to dissociate themselves from today. The feeling that the end of "concord" has taken away something precious tends to overshadow more rational reflections and the consideration of comparisons from abroad. On the other hand, placing the ideal of unity on a pedestal has been a valuable tool since the pioneering days to divert attention from processes detrimental to social health, which in these places, after all, have all taken place in the pure national interest. In this story, one of the greatest "losers" of the culture wars, the later bishop of Krk, Anton Mahnič, finds himself. A disaster as great as a political break-up must have its culprit and its perpetrator, and for most Slovenians, for whom the culture wars are even a topic, that honour goes to Mahnić. However, despite the harsh tones of his controversial writings, the man was primarily describing what already existed in the community of Slovenes, not reinventing it and sowing the "seeds of evil". As is often the case in societies such as Slovenian, it will not be uncommon, even in a much later period, to think that problems that are not spoken about out loud do not exist. Mahnić's *"auto-aut"* would, therefore, not be problematic if it did not point to genuinely existing disagreements, which, in the end, turned into something productive. It is very telling of the Slovenian obsession with the search for formal and external unity that even among the heirs of the Catholic current in Slovenian society and culture, the bishop of Krk has rarely found defenders willing to come to his defence without a long line of apologetic "buts".

As already mentioned, it cannot be said that the Catholic camp has not been changed by facing the challenge of resistance to its domination. The Catholic political movement has always been accompanied by a dichotomy between Catholic-conservative and Christian-social elements, between which, of course, the marked opposition was neither necessarily nor often expressed. However, only the cooperation of the two could have enabled the original Catholic National Party and the later (Pan)Slovene People's Party to become, in fact, the first (if not, so far, the only) real people's party in Slovenian history (cf. for its early decades Rahten 2001). Nevertheless, the search for a balance between these two necessary components has, especially at historical turning points, posed a very pronounced challenge for the party leaders, who, again, have not always been up to it.

2 Catholicism among Slovenes in the Austrian Framework

After this brief introduction, it is necessary to sketch the development of Catholicism among Slovenes from the early 19th century to understand better the foundations of the culture wars, which started mainly in the last decades of the same century.

In the ecclesiastical and cultural sense, Slovenian historical lands belonged to the broader Austrian framework for centuries and thus shared its fate. I mention this because, after the change of the state framework in 1918, it was also the case that Slovene Catholicism was largely shifted from the previous Austro-German and, thus, in a sense, Northern European Catholic circle to a south-eastern one, which, of course, resonates to this day. This led to the fact that some topics on the agenda before the Great War were not discussed by the Slovenian Catholic public, at least until the Second Vatican Council or even beyond (cf. Maver 2016, 237-39).

If Slovenian historical areas experienced similar breakthroughs in ecclesiastical terms and development as Habsburg Austria as a whole, then the 19th century was undoubtedly one of the most eventful and decisive. Numerous, even surprising, upheavals characterised it.

In 1819, there was firstly a symbolic farewell to the hitherto dominant Josephinism. Emperor Francis I, with his grey eminence Prince Metternich and a large entourage, made a solemn pilgrimage to Rome to see Pope Pius VII (cf. Leeb et al. 2003, 363), in a way reversing the course that Pius VI had taken almost forty years earlier, He also stopped in Maribor on his unsuccessful mission to Vienna to try to bring the newly emboldened ruler Joseph II to his senses. Nothing stuck, however, because the real Joseph tsunami was yet to come. At that time, it was the European trend. Josephinism was undoubtedly born out of discomfort with the excesses of the outmoded Baroque religiosity (see especially Dolinar 2004, 7-20). However, four decades later, what once seemed fresh and reasonable has turned into a hard-hearted rationalist contempt for the joys of religious life and a tight state embrace around the neck of the church. Then, the horror of a different Napoleonic shock has awakened in many a nostalgia for the golden Baroque days, which could perhaps be recalled by a renewed leaning on Rome, which the "altar boy on the imperial throne", as Joseph II was sometimes called, had made so irrelevant. The transition has been slow.

In 1818, for instance, after more than five and a half centuries, conventual friars, who were even spared by Jožef and had only to change their location (Vostner 1964, 13) due to a shortage of monks nevertheless left Maribor, and in the 1820s monastic outposts continued to be closed down here and there in Styria (cf. Leeb et al. 2003, 362). Even the suspicious theological textbooks on church

law and church history, which had already been placed on the index of forbidden books in 1820 by Francis' new friend Pius VII, were only taken out of use in 1833 (Benedik 2010, 73). On the other hand, the 'Apostle of Vienna' Clement Maria Hofbauer, with his Redemptorists, demonstratively cultivated a return to the luxurious Baroque liturgy and gained many followers (cf. Rumpler 1997, 91-93). The bishop of Seckau, a former Benedictine from former Western Austria, later German Württemberg, Roman Sebastian Zängerle, who was also the archpriest for a large part of the Slovene population of Styria under the Josephinist diocesan boundaries, was among those who (constantly) understood the signs of the times the best. Incidentally, he, too, was driven from his home station by the Josephinism-like abolition of monasteries.

He, therefore, cheered on the establishment of new monasteries and other religious houses and, after the Redemptorists even brought the Jesuits to Graz in 1832, the fear and trembling of all progressive Europeans since the middle of the 18th century (Leeb et al. 2003, 363).

At the same time, Zängerle was painfully aware that while Francis' and Metternich's Austria may indeed stand on the alliance of throne and altar, the throne has the main say in purely Josephinist fashion, and that the freedom of the Church in Austria is relatively worse off. Metternich was, after all, essentially a man of Enlightenment who was only somewhat sobered by the disasters known as the French Revolution and Napoleon. This is also why Zängerle did not, like his Josephinist-minded Viennese colleague, hide in a mouse hole in front of the March Revolution but led a solemn *Te Deum* in the cathedral of Graz in thanksgiving for it a month before his death (Leeb et al. 2003, 364). The situation also worried his colleague among the suffragans of Salzburg, the bishop of Lavant, Anton Martin Slomšek, who, as early as April 1848, had expected instructions and joint advice from the metropolitan of Salzburg, Prince Schwarzenberg, on how to respond to the Revolution's onslaught (cf. Granda 2010, 318-319).

In any case, the revolutionary ferment was responsible for a second fundamental break in the ecclesiastical history of the Austrian lands in the 19th century. It decisively uprooted the previous model of state churchmanship, but two different answers emerged when it came to the question of what should replace it. One went in a purely revolutionary direction towards a kind of ecclesiastical democracy with an important role for the lower clergy and laity, and the other bet on the continuation of the union between throne and altar, but with the roles reversed (cf. Leeb et al. 2003, 368 ss.). That the Slovenes were also completely "in line" with the concurrent developments, which were overtaking, among others, the Czech lands on the left (cf. Schulze Wessel 2007), is evidenced, for example, by the Carinthian priest Andrej Einspieler, who in his newspaper *Slovenija* directly expressed many ideas, for example, such an apparent demand: "As far as

the Church is concerned, it is understandable that in the parishes of one single nationality the liturgy and the Christian catechesis must be carried out in the vernacular." (quoted from Juhant 1997, 203-204.) The thought of "abolishing the unmarriageability of priests" also crossed his mind, albeit slightly more cautiously.

3 From the Concordat to the Culture War

In the end, of course, the other current prevailed, primarily because the weakened Habsburg monarchy, with the young Francis Joseph at its head, wanted a strong partner and was even prepared to switch places between the throne and the altar (on this period, especially in Styria, Cvirn 2010, 341-356). That this was to be the case was already evident when the emperor followed the bishops' wishes to regulate marriage law in everything, essentially overturning the civil code still in force (Leeb et al. 2003, esp. 375-377). In 1855, on his birthday, the Concordat was then signed, which, with its nature as a supposed living anachronism, as most modern historians perceive it, attracted much attention abroad as well, mainly because of its wide-ranging abandonment of the school field in favour of the Church (cf. Rumpler 1997, 342-344).

The agreement probably did not work out for the Austrian authorities. The Concordat caused them several internal political problems over the next twenty years, and the impression it was supposed to have made on the Catholics of southern Germany was also lost. (The Habsburgs were at that time working hard to unite Germany around Austria.) Franz Grillparzer, the old Josephinist, caustically remarked that while the Concordat might get you first place in heaven, it would not in Germany (cf. Vocelka and Vocelka 2015, 112).

However, it was precisely in the time of the concordat euphoria among committed Catholics in Austria that the transfer of the Lavantine episcopal see to Maribor in 1859 fell, with the new rounding off of the diocesan boundaries, which united the Slovenes of Styria in the vast majority under Slomšek's crozier (cf. Hozjan 2010, esp. 375-378).

In the 1860s, the concordat was also heavily disputed due to the gradual democratisation of political life. Again, in line with European trends, Austria was swept by a wave of characteristic Austrian liberalism. Although Anglo-Saxon historians, in particular, are still prone to laud the glamour of the freedom and progress parades of the time, it is important to draw critical attention, above all, to the oligarchic nature of this liberalism. It indeed established a catalogue of fundamental rights that is still impressive today. However, already, in the case of the right to vote, it did everything to ensure that it was limited for as long as possible primarily to its supporters since the backward majority of the population

was allegedly not yet ripe for it (cf. Judson 2016, 269-333; Taylor 1976, 158 ss.). The Catholic Church and the clergy were, after all, the main bogeymen of Austrian liberals, even if they remained overwhelmingly Catholic.

With its provisions, the December Constitution of 1867 was essentially already a repeal of the concordat; the May Laws of 1868 did the rest (see Cvirn 2005, 31-34; cf. also Cvirn 2015, 116 and 193). Catholics were horrified, above all, by the introduction of 'emergency civil marriage' as an option. On the one hand, the resistance to the concordat homogenised the city and town elites in many parts of Slovene ethnic territory, who were increasingly inclined towards German culture. The citizens of Maribor found it worth celebrating the May Laws with torches and breaking the windows of the bishop's palace and the theological seminary (Baš 1967, 202). In 1869, the Church's monopoly on education was ended by the new law on the elementary school. The irony was that after the May Laws, the Catholic Church had less freedom to regulate its internal affairs than other religious communities precisely because it remained the privileged and state church in the monarchy (Leeb et al. 2003, esp. 386). On the other hand, the liberal offensive against the Concordat mobilised the Catholic masses for the first time and put the Slovene political elite in an awkward position since it was, of course, not unanimously in favour of the Concordat but had to take into account the feelings of the majority of its "base" (cf. Baš 1931, 33-36).

The liberal spirit of the time was also reflected by the then bishop of Lavant, Jakob Maksimilijan Stepišnik, who was considered a man of government and probably was (cf. Šimac 2010, 120-121). Slovenes resented him because, unlike Slomšek, he did not march at the head of the Slovene national movement but was careful to maintain neutrality (Baš 1931, 37).

Stepišnik was a much more complex figure (cf. briefly Ambrožič 2010, 401-403). As a native of Celje, he was probably closer to German than to the Slovene language, but when the Catholic political association in Maribor was founded in 1870, he also mentioned something that "is the cornerstone of all Austria; and that is justice, which must be the same for all nations" (Iz Maribora, 115).

When he addressed this meeting, he should have been in Rome and voted on the dogmatic constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, which proclaimed the Pope's infallibility when speaking of faith and morals *ex-cathedra*. However, Stepišnik and the other Austrian bishops had earlier made excuses because of the unbearable heat in the city on the Tiber, which led them to travel back north. Even before that, the men had been so honest that they openly admitted that if they had still been in the Eternal City, they would have voted against the document on 18 July (see in particular Benedik 2010, 80). It is characteristic of the aforementioned northern direction of Austrian and, thus also, Slovenian Catholicism at that time that among the main opponents of the dogma of infallibility were not only the

leaders of the Church in Austria but the Viennese Cardinal Rauscher and his Prague and Esztergom colleagues Schwarzenberg and Simor, but also almost all the Slovenian bishops, the metropolitan of Gorizia, Andrej Gollmayr, the bishops of Ljubljana and Trieste-Capodistria, Jernej Vidmar and Jernej Legat, and Stepišnik, as well as the bishop of Parenzo-Pola, Juraj Dobrila (Benedik 2010, 80).

At least on the surface, there is a contrast between Rauscher's and Schwarzenberg's enthusiasm about the distinctly pro-papal Concordat and their opposition to the infallibility of Pius IX and his successors. With Stepišnik, the matter is even more complicated. If in the question of infallibility, as well as in his initial attitude towards Austrian liberalism, he shows himself to be an apparent heir of Josephinism, equally notable is his preference for Catholic religious orders, both male and female, which, for liberal Catholics, were usually a great source of amusement, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Austrian liberals also made it the main point of their project of church legislation to clip the wings of the religious orders, but this never came about because liberalism had already fallen into disrepute after 1873 and because the emperor, personally religious, had lost his patience with liberal experimentation in the religious sphere (cf. Cvirn 2015, 131-132).

The adoption of the dogmatic constitution *Pastor Aeternus* was used by the Austrian government to formally revoke the concordat, which was only acknowledged by Pope Benedict XV five decades later (Leeb et al. 2003, 387). Between 1870 and 1874, a culture war, which reached Slovenian lands in particular between 1872 and 1874, continued (cf. Cvirn 2015, especially 191-193; on the early 1870s in Austria in general Rumpler 1997, especially 450-455; also briefly Friš and Matjašič Friš 2007, 471 ss.). Now, especially on the pages of the newspaper *Slovenski narod*, which had moved to Ljubljana in 1872, heavy words were hurled at the clergy and their role in the national movement. A typical document of the time is the extensive feuilleton *Consequences of Forced Celibacy*, written under the pseudonym Cismontanus by the priest Lovro Rakovec from the Slovene Litoral (about him Cvirn 2005, 42). Let us look at the juicy final chord of his treatise:

"Then it was all profit, naked avarice, naked selfishness, ruthless self-righteousness, the blind greed of the greedy, the gluttonous! The Pope and Rome do not care about the special virtue, the greater perfection and sanctity of virginal, angelic celibacy! If he cared for these, we would not have so many shameless, eclatant anti-celibates among the popes, cardinals, and consortes. "Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi" is their policy. - If the marrying of merciful papal oxen - soldiers, I meant to say - were of as much use to the Pope and the Vatican, as much profit, as celibacy: long ago the Infallible One would have anathematised celibacy, cursed it a thousand times, and ordered the priests to bear the yoke of

the holy matrimony under the penalty of a temporal and eternal curse - at least the holy matrimony is, but celibacy is not a sacrament." (Cismontanus 1874, 1-2.)

At the same time, the Slovenian proto-liberals wrote on their flag a demand to replace the supposedly endlessly foreign Latin with Slovene (or at least Church Slavonic) in the liturgy. Under the aegis of the heroes Cyril and Methodius, Josip Jurčič, the editor of *Slovenski narod*, took up the cause: "Come, help us in our agitation to have the Latin language, incomprehensible to the people, expelled from the church and our Slovene language put in its place. You say that Rome is a lover and admirer of Slavs. You know that Cyril and Methodius are saints, yet they have introduced the Slovene language everywhere." (Quoted according to Cirilmetodar 1925, 2.)

In those turbulent years, the Styrian priest and politician Božidar Raič read the severe levites to his, mainly senior, clerical colleagues about their role in national politics, even using the striking notion of a national church:

"They are as convinced that the root of the split in the National Party is the religious principle as they are surely aware that eating red sausages on Fridays is forbidden, but they secretly do. However, they behave like this when they are talking and arguing with a National Liberal, and when they are alone in a room, they tell each other openly that they have invented the word 'religion' as a nice little larf under which other tendencies are concealed, the lordship of their group over all others. Moreover, the principle of nationality, by which the like inhabitants of the lands of the same empire will associate in national groups, will surely (when it is not yet certain) prevail over the lordship of popery over the tendencies of the present age, which are a great embarrassment to them." (Raič 1873, 2)

However, the new May Laws of 1874, the first of which was affectionately known as the *Katholikengesetz*, were, as has been said, essentially the swan song of Austrian liberalism in religious politics. The latter, as mentioned, was never sanctioned by the Emperor, and the result of the others was essentially that the Catholic Church remained a *de facto* state church. The year before, the Vienna Stock Exchange had crashed, and with it, the belief in the almost infinite power of progress and liberal capitalism (cf. Rumpler 1997, 463-466). At the same time, bishop Stepišnik, on the one hand, and the liberal Slovenian leaders, on the other, finally realised that they had nothing to hope for from the Austrian German liberals. They were happy about the support of Slovenian sympathisants for the May laws. However, in return, they had no intention of giving them concessions in the area of language and nationalities politics (cf., in particular, Cvirn 2015, 192-193). Thus, the Slovene conservatives and liberals in Slovenian lands found themselves in an embrace of the already mentioned "concord", which, however, due to the situation at the base, had an increasingly conservative Catholic face, just as the mass Catholic movement elsewhere in Austria also increasingly nar-

rowed the living space for the liberalism of the elites with the expansion of the suffrage (cf. Melik 1988, esp. 87 s.).

The peak and the slow decline of liberal politics ushered in the next major break in the ecclesiastical-cultural image of Austria in the 19th century. At the same time, this was a period when both religious life and the Catholic political movement were gaining strength in the Austrian ecclesiastical framework of which the Slovenes were a part. In many ways, this process took place against the backdrop of painful memories of the Josephinist-style state churchmanship and of attempts to persecute its shadows.

4 The Emergence of Anton Mahnič

That is why (the papal) Rome was placed on a pedestal with such seriousness, as in the thought and work of the theologian, philosopher, and later bishop Anton Mahnič. This increase in the value of the shares of the Church's central authority in the eyes of Slovenes is closely linked to the unprecedented growth of the Catholic social and political movement in the Slovene lands at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

The bellicose priest from Karst has earned most of the censure as a cultural and, in particular, literary iconoclast. However, he is only a shade less unpopular for his consistent adherence to principles (supposedly also bypassing real life, as some of his admirers among his younger contemporaries have been able to point out cautiously) and for his legitimism (cf. Srebrnič 1921, particularly 217-221). However, a good deal of agreement is again that a line must be drawn between his "Slovenian" phase of the *Rimski katolik* (Roman Catholic) magazine and his later activities on Krk, especially during the war and early post-war period.

Since the accusation of ossified legitimism is indeed a persistent one, many may be surprised by the following ideas of the publisher of the *Rimski katolik*:

"There is nothing so bad that the providence of God cannot use it for good ends. So it is concerning the revolution. The revolution broke the chains of state absolutism, in which the Church also groaned miserably, as in Babylonian slavery. Church history knows no sadder time for the Bride of Christ than the period of state absolutism in the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries. It was only after 1848 that the Church began to breathe more freely, and her friends were now allowed to raise their voices, challenge her, and warm her spirits for her freedom." (Mahnič 1912, 154.)

From the quoted one and similar writings, we can conclude that Mahnič's political theology must be read against the background of his fierce opposition to Josephinism, which still resonated strongly in the Church in Austria in his time and to all other forms of state churchmanship.

His emphasis on the attachment to Rome, his firm rejection of interference by (any) state authority in internal Church affairs, and, lastly, his demand for an independent cultural and political organisation of Catholics in Slovenian areas stem from this fundamental starting point. Legitimism plays a relatively marginal role in this respect.

For Mahnič, the ideal remains an (Austrian) state based entirely on Christian principles. However, in fact, like St Augustine almost a millennium and a half earlier, at the end of the Theodosian period, he realises that such a thing is an illusion.

He is therefore concerned with stressing the need for the Church to be independent of state structures, lest it wake up again in Josephist grip. To this end, he is also prepared to run the train both ways, for: "Nothing can hold back true progress more, nothing is more opposed to the institution of God than for the State to want to rule the Church, just as nothing is more disastrous for society and the Church itself than for the servants of the altar to force themselves into the administration of secular affairs." (Mahnič 1912, 145.)

The last line echoes the almost simultaneous instruction of the bishop of Ljubljana, Jakob Missia that qualified laypeople should always be given preference over clergy as candidates in elections (cf. Dolinar 1988, 130).

Of course, Mahnič has in mind the situation of years of his youth, when the Austrian variant of liberalism was most prominent at the helm of the state. He is writing at a time when the Austrian liberals (in the context of the "grand coalition" that collapsed over the Celje gymnasium issue) are once again part of the government (cf. Rumpler 1997, 508-510). In this context, Mahnič is well aware of the oligarchic nature of the freethinking movements in Austria and throughout Europe, which today's observers often obscure. For him, from Joseph II onwards, there has been an equivalence between liberalism and the imposition of solutions from above, between liberalism and soulless centralism that is blind to local conditions and particularities, since: "The French Revolution wrote on its flag: 'Liberté'. However, it was the French Revolution that suppressed the autonomist right in the French lands. [...] Liberalism is everywhere, destroying provincial autonomy and distorting historic, hard-won rights. It has gripped Austria, Spain, Italy and Germany with the iron chain of centralism. Liberal and centralist are identical." (Mahnič 1912, 50.) What such centralism means for the Church if it allows itself to be harnessed to the chariot of the state (in which it has indeed been harnessed in Austria and the Slovene lands), the publisher of the *Rimski katolik* illustrated in plastic, even drastic way: "For in a liberal country it can easily happen that a Jewish minister, an atheist minister, a Masonic minister is in charge of church affairs - and then, at the suggestion of such a minister, Catholic bishops are to be appointed!" (Mahnič 1912, 146.) The conclusion is therefore

clear: "A state that does not profess any faith, a liberal state that has betrayed the Gospel of Christ, that has rejected the Concordat and severed the ties that bound it to the Church, such a state has forfeited any right to interfere in any way in the affairs of the Church." (Ibid.)

The rejection of the Austrian model of state churchmanship, in which the Catholic Church was still privileged but at the same time limited, further inspires Mahnić's rejection of any concept of a national church. From the Austrian experience, he had observed that such an arrangement was inappropriate for Christianity, especially for Catholic Christianity, since it would eventually lead to more or less complete dependence on secular authorities. The developments of the twentieth century, when the attempts of the national churches sank one after the other, proved him entirely correct. He probably also saw that the idea of a national church attracts, in the first place, those who cannot help themselves much with Christianity, and he saw in it the breeding ground of his main bogeyman, Catholic liberalism. That is why he wrote firmly:

"National customs and traditions are spoken of, national laws and privileges vis-à-vis the Roman See are emphasised (e.g. Gallicanism). [...] In this, the service of God in the vernacular is especially required; the linguistic bond which unites Catholics of different nations, namely Latin, is to give way to the vernacular languages. However, the history of our age proves that it is not meant to remain only with language and ritual. No! It is not only our Church and ritual that we want to be rebranded but also our religion and, with it, our morals." (Mahnič 1912, 173s.)

In the same context is Mahnić's allegedly significant participation in the drafting of the pastoral letter of the bishops of the Gorizia ecclesiastical province on the occasion of the so-called "Krutorogov affair" in November 1887, where the prohibition of priests' participation in agitation against the valid liturgy and liturgical language was particularly emphasised (cf. Dolinar 1988, 126).

Finally, the experience of the "state church in chains" probably strongly influenced Mahnić's preference for religion over ethnicity. Although one can, in a sense, agree with Jožko Pirc that the question itself was posed incorrectly (cf. Pirc 1990, notably 121; but Janez Janžekovič, whom Pirc quotes as the thinker who got things right, is, at least with some of his views and writings from the post-World War II period, rather a poor example of the balance between the two values), at least the experience of the Catholic Church in Austria in the 19th century was not an excellent example of the balance between the two. The ordeal of the Church of Austria in the 19th century, and then of many local churches in the 20th century, shows beyond doubt that it is useless to subordinate religious affiliation to national or state affiliation.

To avoid this, Mahnič recommends, in the first place, the gathering of all Catholics around the See of Rome and the Pope who sits on it. This is why we

can speak of a "Roman way" in the Slovenian Catholic milieu, accustomed to the hierarchy leaning on the more tangible state power. The professor from Gorizia speaks, after all, in his time trend, when many were looking for ways out of the cramped embrace of the state in a similar direction. It will suffice to cite here Mahnić's most pertinent thoughts on this point:

"The cornerstone of the united organisation of all Catholics is the Roman Pontiff himself, the bearer of religious authority, the origin of religious unity. Divine providence willed that in our times, the Roman papacy should be glorified by the dogmatic stipulation of its infallibility. In this way, God reminds us to cling without scruple or reservation to the God-ordained rock of religious and Catholic unity with a full, whole heart. The consciousness that we are Roman Catholics, that the Roman Church is our mother, and that the Pope is our father is being awakened and strengthened in us; with it will grow the consciousness of Catholic unity and wholeness. [...] Be the Pope Italian or French, Roman or Slav, and if he were Chinese! It is not flesh and blood, but the Heavenly Father who makes him infallible. The Roman Pontiff is the cornerstone of the Catholic edifice, the one who sustains all, unites all, and through whom we are all one." (Mahnič 1912, 280-281.)

On the one hand, the centralism of Austrian (and European) liberalism is thus countered by the "spiritual centralism" of Rome, which, precisely at the time of the popes as "Vatican prisoners", was the most likely ever to appear to be genuinely elevated above any partial state or national interest. On the other hand, "at the micro level", Mahnič pins his hopes on the social and political movement of Slovenian Catholics. He looks for examples of this in the Middle Ages, when, in his opinion, "all freedoms were spreading everywhere when democracy was triumphant everywhere; and it was no accident that those times were called the ages of the people" (Mahnič 1912, 132). In the confrontation of the oligarchic liberalism of his day with this ideal, concepts that smack of the revolutionary also fly from his pen:

"Our democratism, or republicanism [sic!] if you like, it is not an ordinary political one, but democratism in a higher sense. Taken in this sense, it is compatible with every monarchist form of state and, if you like, even with the absolutist form! We only demand that the State and its politics be placed on naturally sound, Christian ground, on the ground of those Gospel principles according to which the State and its politics are and must be at the service of the people and promote the interests of the great masses, and not sacrifice the common welfare to the interests of tens of thousands of Jews and liberal capitalists." (Mahnič 1912, 134.)

Developments in the 1890s, when the influence of Mahnič's "Roman Way" was at its zenith in Slovenia, showed that this kind of democratism had not fallen on deaf ears in Carniola and beyond and that there was also a great deal of dissat-

isfaction with the excesses of oligarchic Austrian liberalism. Of course, it cannot be ignored either that sympathy was undoubtedly present for the very pronounced "anti-Semitism without Jews", which, given the horrors of five decades later, is nowadays a particularly problematic component of Catholic political thought at the time. In any case, the Catholic political party quickly took root and already won most of the votes during the 1895 regional elections. However, it had not yet managed to translate this into a majority of the seats in the regional assembly (cf. Melik 1988, 93). However, if this meant that the danger of the negative influence of the (liberal) state on the Church was removed, there was, soon, perhaps already with the gradual shift of the rural elite from the liberal to the Catholic camp (cf. Melik 1988, 92), a danger that the Church would become too firmly attached to one party and thus drive away a part of the Slovenes from itself. This did not happen immediately, but the pebble started rolling down the hill.

5 Peak of the Culture Wars among Slovenes

So, if the stage of the culture wars that had begun in the 19th century still unfolded like that in Germany, and the organisationally strengthened Catholic pole emerged as the victor also under the Alps (finally in 1908), the trajectories from the neighbourhood were somehow followed by its further stages in the first half of the 20th century as well. In the concrete Slovenian situation, the First World War was the Armageddon of "old Europe", and the change of the state framework constituted a significant external acceleration (cf. Lukan 2014 and Rahten 2016). It was the first time in the post-Reformation history of the Slovene space that the opponents of the (still firm) Catholic monopoly over Slovene society, who, at least at the beginning of this phase, had not yet (altogether) questioned the very meaning of the Catholic tradition for Slovene society, found themselves in a significant institutional advantage (cf. Maver 2014, particularly 506-508).

In a way, the culture war has acquired specific attributes of the one under Bismarck, which it lacked before (cf. the subtitle in Mithans 2017). For, like the leading Protestant elites of the new German Reich of 1871, the dominant Serbian elites of the newly-fledged South Slav state considered the question of the attitude towards Catholicism in their own region to be, probably at least to some extent, a question of civilisation. As in the German case, however, one cannot speak of any serious religious basis for their anti-Catholic orientation since some Serbian thinkers, for example, claimed that in old Serbia, the question of the relationship between church and state did not exist at all (cf. Banac 2013, 55). However, the resistance to Catholicism as an essentially foreign phenomenon was undoubtedly intense and dictated some almost laicist measures throughout most of Alexander's reign, and later even prevented the ratification of the Concordat. Certain

paroles and notions were thrown into the Slovenian public sphere for the first time, which could have borne abundant fruit in different circumstances after the Second World War.

At the same time, another shift with ever greater importance for the future took place with the partial acceleration of a more consistent separation of a part of Slovenes from the Catholic Church, regardless of the rejection of its social monopolies, which could not yet become really pronounced on the outside, but which was favoured by the government's occasional laicist discourse. I am increasingly of the opinion that the events leading up to and during the formation of the South Slav state have caused an irreparable rift within the Catholic community itself (cf. e. g. Finžgar 1992, particularly 322). Since this subject is much more taboo than the question of the 1892 "schism" and is raised in its context - in distinctly Manichaean tones, to use the term - especially by the heirs of the radical left-wing, there is much that is still unresolved and unspoken. So, of course, one cannot say that the contradictions emerged out of nothing in 1917. They can be traced back at least as far as the Balkan wars before the First World War, and they can be reasonably traced back at least as far as 1848. In the same way, the regional aspect has always played (and still plays to some extent) an important role in them, even if it has often been portrayed as too clichéd in the post-war period and has thus been subject to abuse. However, it would be foolish to deny, in the face of such excesses, that the view of the Yugoslav state framework was often quite different between the central and more marginal parts of the Slovene ethnic territory (cf. Griesser Pečar 2019, 301-332).

Although the establishments of the two main political blocs followed a very similar path in shaping their attitudes to the new situation, which included a relatively late warming up to parting with the familiar Habsburg world, the disintegration of which the Slovenes' influence was, objectively speaking, relatively marginal, the urgency of the decision significantly divided only the Catholic camp.

From there, until the cruel schism at the end of the occupation, we can trace how the Catholic-conservative and the Christian-social currents in it were drifting further and further apart. The once-dominant bloc did not break up earlier, mainly thanks to the skilful tactics and prudent leadership of Anton Korošec, one of the main actors in the "twist" at the war's end. At the moment when the gulf separating the political Catholic community became decisive for further development, the culture war in Slovenia in the Western European sense came to an end. Although the Catholic left took up some of the basic premises of the liberals of the late 19th century, its struggle against the collectivism rooted in Catholic domesticity was inconsistent and one-sided. It has virtually failed to recognise the same danger in the new phenomenon of the Communist party collectivism,

born of the revolution, towards which it maintained (or partly still maintains) a much more sympathetic attitude than towards its pre-war opponents on the Catholic right. Nor can the Catholic left be considered the heiress of the liberals because "liberalism" (today increasingly replaced by "neoliberalism"), as the Catholic left understood it, remained in its imagination a significant threat to the healthy development of the idyllically conceived ("united") Slovenian national community. This critique often clashes with the remnants of the former Catholic-conservative current, its primary opponent, which also dreams of a "healthy community".

For various reasons, a large part of the Catholic left has been engulfed in a gradual process of secularisation, which has led it to emancipate itself from its roots in the Catholic bloc, but this does not mean that it has not retained a significant influence (underestimated on all sides) within the Catholic community here to this day.

6 Conclusion

In this way, it is part of the persistence of what is imprecisely called the culture war in Slovenia. The revolution and civil war that grew out of the unhealthy terrain of occupation involved a more or less conscious choice of crime as a means of struggle (ultimately for power), and such a choice by the later victors played a much more significant role and constituted a perpetuation of division. The latter cannot be called a culture war in the broader European sense of the word since it is not in any way a revival of the old Catholic-liberal ideological conflict. The fact that the Catholic Church is considered a party to the proceedings is, as has already been said in passing, more of a reminiscence of the beginnings of the culture wars and their origins. However, it does not correspond to the actual situation. On the one hand, the Church has not played a leading role in the bloc for a long time because it lacks the ideological, organisational and personal strength to do so. On the other hand, both its hierarchy and its rank-and-file members are spread out on both sides of a new and, since the revolution, immortalised divide, which makes it ridiculous to see in it a monolithic and homogeneous formation with a common agenda, which it was not even in the 19th century.

To summarise briefly, the post-war division is based on the acceptance or rejection of post-war political mythology and, within it, the decision to implement revolutionary crime as a necessary means on the historical path of Slovenian society. Of course, many nuances are possible in relation to this question. However, in the end, they are concentrated on the (tacit, vocal or loudly approving) acceptance of the profound imbalance between the post-war mythology and all the other elements of Slovenian communal identity based on the post-war developments.

Underlying this is the often justified view that deviating from this consensus would necessarily call into question the revolution itself. Thus, it raises a series of uncomfortable questions that the dominant part of Slovenian society considers irrelevant or even harmful to its further development. In any case, the advantage of this current lies in the simple fact that it is roughly known what the benefits of maintaining it are. Still, it needs to be clarified what a whole confrontation with the sideways of the past would bring. That not even the minority current, which is convinced of the necessity of redressing the imbalance and of re-raising the fundamental question of the choice of crime as a means, is prepared to come to terms with them entirely, has been repeatedly evident.

Although this is a "different" culture war from the traditional one, at the end of the day, it is worth asking when it might end. What is happening in truly comparable environments, such as Spain in particular, with its experience of civil war and large parts of the former Soviet space, is not encouraging. Although almost everywhere there has been an "official" coming to terms with the imbalances as a logical consequence of the civil conflict being won and lost, there is no guarantee that the dilemmas swept under the carpet will not return, even where the restoration of the situation before the renaissance of tortured self-questioning in the late 1980s and early 1990s seems to have been a complete success. It would have been helpful to say a conscious farewell to the legacy, nurtured on all sides, of the pioneering period of the struggle for national emancipation. To succeed, the Slovenian community must think about virtually everything as one, as a formless collective.

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SOCIAL QUESTION AND RELIGION: CONTEXT AND ORIGINS OF ALEŠ UŠENIČNIK'S SOLIDARISM

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1 Introduction

Aleš Ušeničnik (1868-1952) was a prominent Catholic philosophical and ideological authority in the 20th century up until the end of World War II and, in many ways, a central "point" of events in Slovenia during the first half of the 20th century (up to 1945).[1] He succeeded the radical advocate of clerical separation, Anton Mahnič. Ušeničnik believed (utopically) (Pirc 1986, 312) in the possibility of a Catholic renewal of all areas and subsystems of Slovenian culture and society. Politically, he supported Christian democracy (310). Economically, he advocated for cooperatives and corporations, rejecting economic liberalism (capitalism[2]) and materialistic socialism or communism. He called the right path Christian socialism, Christian solidarism, or the Christian social system (Ušeničnik 1910a, 457ff).

Even after Mahnič's death, Ušeničnik spoke of him as a "great spirit" and "a greatness that transcends all times" (Ušeničnik 1921, 161). In 1912, he erected a beautiful monument to him with the book *Več luči* (*More light*), in which he compiled Mahnič's "epochal essays" (Ušeničnik 2000, vi) from the journal *Rimski katolik* and wrote an introduction. However, Ušeničnik did not only praise Mahnič. In a special issue of the journal *Čas* from 1921, dedicated to Mahnič, he was

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1   For biographical data and a comprehensive illumination of his life and work from various perspectives, see Pirc 1986; Ogrin and Juhant, eds. 2004; Debeljak, ed. 2018; Trontelj 2019; Tominšek 2004; Juhant and Trontelj 2019; Strle 1968.

2   The term "capitalism" in this article refers to liberal capitalism (unless explicitly stated otherwise). Ušeničnik did not reject capitalism as such, but the liberal form of capitalism that prevailed in his time and still does today. He did not reject capitalism as an economic system based on capital regarding modern machinery and means (large machines, factories, etc.), on which sizeable modern production relies and which we cannot and do not want to forego. In this context, he stated that the wheels of development cannot be turned back. Moreover, he believed that the state's task is to ensure the highest possible production, but this must be achieved in a moral manner, which is not the case with liberal capitalism.

also critical of him (Ušeničnik 1921, 161-166), as were other writers in that issue, such as Josip Srebrnič (Srebrnič 1921). Despite some differences, Ušeničnik was a successor of Mahnič and the main representative of Mahnič's direction. On the other side, there was Krek's direction. Regarding the Christian social movement, Albin Kralj (Kralj 2004, 137-138) speaks of three generations: the first generation is best represented by Ušeničnik, the second by Andrej Gosar, and the third by the representatives of the youth movement under Krek's influence (Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza with Krekova mladina (Krek's youth), križarji), many of whom increasingly approached Marxism and accepted Marxism as a doctrine for economic analysis. Srečo Dragoš divides the Slovenian Christian social movement into four directions: 1. Christian solidarism (Janez Ev. Krek and Aleš Ušeničnik), Christian social activism (Andrej Gosar), Christian socialism (Fr. Angelik Tominec), and socialist Christians (Edvard Kocbek). (Dragoš 1998, 229-243; 1993; Kralj 2009, 174-175, note 299)[3] It is worth saying a few words about the term "Christian socialism." This term was used for a time by both Ušeničnik and Gosar. The most significant turning point in this regard was the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), in which the Pope condemned Christian socialism based on the determination that Christianity and socialism are incompatible. The Marxist socialism was meant here. Like Ušeničnik, Gosar believed it was the duty of Catholics to follow the guidance of the Church. Thus, Gosar abandoned the term "Christian socialism" for his stance and began using the term "social Christian activism" in his major work *Za nov družabni red: sistem krščanskega socialnega aktivizma* (*For a New Social Order: The System of Christian Social Activism*) (1933-1935). Ušeničnik labelled his social stance in *Sociologija* (1910) as Christian solidarism (a term he adopted from the German Jesuit Heinrich Pesch). However, in the 1920s, he also used the term "Christian socialism" (e.g., in 1925 in the work *Socialno vprašanje* (*Social Question*), which he defined as opposed to materialistic socialism.

It follows that studying Ušeničnik's social thought is extraordinarily important for Slovenian (intellectual) history. This chapter will focus on his vision for the renewal of Slovenian society and its context. This vision encompasses both economic and spiritual renewal. Regarding the former, Ušeničnik's critique of capitalism and his idea of transcending the division between labour and capital is significant. He envisioned this transcendence as a corporatively organised econ-

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3   For the justification of the use of these terms for the mentioned directions, see the references in Dragoš's works.

omy, with cooperatives and corporations as key economic forms. Concerning the latter part of the renewal, he envisioned (re)Catholicizing the entire Slovenian society. He attributed great importance to Christian social thought (Ušeničnik 1907; Granda 2004, 26). He devoted "around 50 formally different writings, constituting a good third of his entire opus" (Pirc 1986, 176). He characterised Christian social principles and their implementation as "the apology of Christianity" (Ušeničnik 1910b), "which is certainly an extraordinary thought that has not lost its relevance even today" (Pirc 1986, 177).

2 Social Encyclicals, Especially *Rerum Novarum*

Ušeničnik did not develop any original social theory of his own. He was faithful to the Church's social doctrine, which he interpreted, adapted, and implemented within the Slovenian context. Three papal encyclicals are particularly significant for his thought. The first is *Rerum Novarum* (1891) by Leo XIII. Pius XI issued the other two: *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). QA is important for its condemnation of socialism as incompatible with Christianity and for its "promotion" of "corporatism." DR is significant for its condemnation of communism.

RN is the foundational encyclical of the Church's social doctrine, which had a tremendous influence not only in Slovenia but across the entire Catholic world and beyond.[4] It serves as the basis for the other two encyclicals. Therefore, I will outline it in more detail, as this will help us better understand Ušeničnik's thinking and actions. RN is the first of the so-called social encyclicals. The term "social encyclicals" refers to encyclicals that address economic and political issues of everyday life. These are issues also tackled by social ideologies and politics. Thus, RN has an ideological character in this sense. As its title suggests, it deals with new things that were no longer new by its publication but had already taken on a significant amount of context. However, what was new was the approach and attitude towards social issues and the situation, which it declared and "enthroned" at the highest level. However, let us proceed systematically. First, I will outline the "new" conditions to which the encyclical refers, and then I will describe the new approach of the Church it represents.

4   For a concise overview of RN's sources, content, and impact, including in the Slovenian context, see Juhant 1994a, 15-16; b.

2.1 Historical Background

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Europe underwent significant changes in the economic sphere. These changes did not bring any benefits to workers. Factors contributing to these changes include mercantilism, the closure of monasteries and communal lands, and the emergence of a new social class: landless peasants and proletarians who depended on wages. Mercantilism involved a combination of private privileges and governmental power, resulting in an enormous increase in the wealth of merchants. The closure of monasteries and communal lands left people without land. Land was increasingly treated as a purely "private" matter, with its aspects of the common good, except for tax obligations, largely ignored. Under the new economic system, wages became detached from needs. Labour turned into a commodity like any other. In theory, its price was determined by supply and demand, limited by the marginal utility and the law of marginal productivity[5], but in practice, it was determined by power relations. The result was that European societies were increasingly divided into two groups: the wealthy and highly wealthy on one side and the poor and extremely poor on the other. Workers, in particular, were in a dire situation, living under impossible conditions. (Médaille 2007, 110)

This situation was paradoxical in a way, as the new economy undoubtedly increased production to a level that was practically unimaginable before. However, the distribution of products was unfair: immense poverty for the masses and wealth for a relatively small number. The question of the era became: Why are so many people poor despite such great wealth? (Médaille 2007, 111) While proponents of the prevailing economic theory of marginal value could not provide an answer, socialists did: "Property is theft" (Proudhon). The privatisation of property was seen as the cause of all problems. Socialism in the 19th century was not a uniform doctrine but rather highly diverse: guild socialism, trade union socialism, utopian communism, etc. (Krek 1901, 3-7, 268-573; Marx and Engels 2009, 124-141; Engels 2009, 78). However, by the end of the 19th century, a predominant feature of socialism was the belief that all property should be controlled and managed by municipal or state authorities. (RN, para. 4). The most alarming was Marxist socialism, which its proponents called scientific socialism

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5   For the theory of marginal utility and the law of marginal productivity (which represents the development of the law of rent (Médaille 2007, 174)) and for criticism of the law of marginal productivity, see Médaille 2007, 63-71, 174-184.

(Engels 1977) or communism (Engels 2009, 78). They promised a rectification of the situation and the advent of communism. Following a series of revolutions in Europe in 1848, supported not only by the lower classes but also by the middle class, the establishment of socialism, or something even worse, became a real threat. (Médaille 2007, 111)[6]

2.2 Response of the Catholic Church

The Church initially responded to the worsening conditions of the working class as if it were merely a problem of charity, rarely questioning the causes of the sudden increase in the number of poor people. It overlooked the emergence of a new class and conditions and ignored the creation of new structures. (Médaille 2007, 111) The working class lost its alliance by failing to recognise the new situation. (Murphy 1993, 8)[7]

However, the Church's attitude and understanding gradually changed over time. During the revolution of 1848, French bishops highlighted the insensitivity of employers and called for reforms that would lead to a sense of partnership between workers and owners. (Murphy 1993, 9) The most significant work, however, was done by the "founder of social Catholicism" (ibid.), Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811-72), Bishop of Mainz, whom Leo XIII. called "his great predecessor." (Juhant 1994a, 15). Ketteler effectively pointed out the structural problems of the economic system and the flawed intellectual foundation supporting it. He also insisted on the Church's right to address and judge temporal matters from a moral perspective. (Murphy 1993, 10) Besides Ketteler, there was also a growing awareness of social issues among other (prominent) clerics and believers: Cardinal Manning in England, Cardinal Gibbons in the United States, Baron von Vogelsang in Austria, and others. (11) Undoubtedly, one of the main incentives for action was the rising influence of socialism. (Médaille 2007, 112)

2.3 *Rerum Novarum*

The encyclical recognised (even in its title) the existence of new conditions, which were no longer new by its publication in 1891. The initial paragraphs of

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6   Regarding the attitude of Leo XIII. toward socialism, see Krek 1901, 573-592.

7   Granda notes that "the Church has significantly lagged in shaping its attitude toward the social question, especially the one triggered by capitalism," and that Ušeničnik was "exceptionally active in addressing this delay" (Granda 2004, 176).

the encyclical address the consequences of these new conditions. In paragraph 2, the Pope notes that under the new conditions, workers are left isolated and disconnected, each on their own, and (therefore) powerless, subjected to the inhumanity of employers and the unchecked greed of competition, so that a handful of wealthy people have imposed a near-servile yoke on the countless masses of landless workers. The Pope observed that with the collapse of the old system(s), workers were left without protection, solidarity, and property or assets. (Médaille 2007, 112)

Three key themes can be highlighted as central points in the strategy of *Rerum Novarum*: the just distribution of land, a just wage, and associations (of workers). (Médaille 2007, 115) The first point can be more appropriately understood in today's context as the just distribution of property. On the other hand, land ownership is increasingly regaining importance today (self-sufficiency, strategic importance of food, growing global population, ecological crisis and changes, etc.). Leo rejected the socialist idea of abolishing private property as harmful to workers (RN, para. 4). Property is a right of man, which does not originate from the state but from human nature (paras. 5, 47). State laws can only be just if they are following this right. (paras. 11) The Church must instruct people, provide guidance, and regulate the morality of all social classes (Médaille 2007, 113). Only the Church can do this (RN, paras. 26, 30). Hence comes the Church's right to intervene in economic matters (Médaille 2007, 113). It is the Church's duty to protect workers; the state can act only within a limited scope in this regard. It is the Church's duty to shape people's conscience (RN, para. 26), and only a "return to Christian life and Christian institutions" can heal society "now" (para. 27).

Leo believed that differences among people are natural and that physical or human labour is inevitable or necessary. However, the rich and the poor or proletarians should not oppose each other as adversaries, as they need each other. (para. 19) The duty of workers is to perform the agreed-upon work, not to harm the employer's property, and to abstain from violence and disturbances. (para. 20) The "greatest of all duties" for employers is to provide workers with a just wage. Employers must "scrupulously" ensure workers are not deprived of their earnings by usury, force, or fraud. (ibid.). The encyclical requires employers to respect the dignity of workers as persons (ibid.) and to also care for the morality and spirituality of workers, which includes appropriate religious life:

"[T]o misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his

home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age.." (Ibid.)

It is essential to distinguish between the just use of property and just possession. (para. 22) While things can be privately owned as our natural right, they must be used as if they were common, and we should be ready to share them with those in need or distress.[8] These duties do not arise from justice but from Christian charity, as any legal rule cannot demand them. (para. 22)

The second key theme of the encyclical and its strategy is a just wage (paras. 43-47; Médaille 2007, 114-115). As previously mentioned, it is very important that workers have their private property. The goal of emphasising the importance of workers' property is to enable them to achieve independence. This is also why it is necessary to protect and defend private property. Leo particularly emphasised the importance of land ownership. "The distribution of land is the heart of the strategy, and a just wage is the heart of the distribution of land." (Médaille 2007, 115)

The third decisive part of the encyclical's strategy involves associations or organisations (of workers) (RN, paras. 48-61; Médaille 2007, 115-116). Leo XIII attributed great importance to them (RN, para. 48), especially to workers' associations (para. 49), which must care for the interests of workers and improve their condition and welfare and that of workers' families (para. 55). They must help each other in times of need (para. 48). The state must protect such associations, which are established on a legal basis, but should not interfere in their internal matters and organisation since their life force comes from the internal principle, "for things move and live by the spirit inspiring them", and external "rough" interference can only stifle it. (para. 55) The state cannot or should not prohibit or dissolve such associations, except when they pursue a fundamental goal contrary to honesty, justice, and the state's welfare. The most outstanding care must be taken to avoid the impression that it violates citizens' rights. Similarly,

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8   John Paul II wrote about the right to private property: "Christian tradition has never upheld this right as absolute and untouchable. On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: *the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use,* to the fact that goods are meant for everyone." (LE, para. 14). This position was already paved by Leo XIII and Pius XI. Today, it is known as the "universal destination of goods" and is a fundamental component of the Church's social teaching. Private property must serve the entire human community (Stres 1991, 142-148).

it should avoid using the pretext of the common good to impose what reason does not approve. Laws must be respected only to the extent that they align with reason and divine law. (para. 52) However, Leo was also convinced that workers' associations of his time were influenced by "secret leaders" who used methods inconsistent with Christianity[9] and the common good. Therefore, he encouraged Christian workers to join or form their unions and associations "and unite their forces so as to shake off courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression." Christian workers' own associations are necessary if we do not wish "to expose man's chief good to extreme risk." (para. 54). Although Leo had in mind something perhaps more akin to (medieval) guilds than today's unions (Médaille 2007, 115)[10], he correctly assumed that unions on the European continent were largely socialist and sought to overthrow the existing social order and Christianity, which was viewed by socialists and communists merely as an ideology or a means of preserving the existing order. Nevertheless, as mentioned, he did not deny the right and need for workers to unite to protect their interests and negotiate for themselves. On the contrary, he wanted associations to take on the burdens that both capitalists and socialists sought to shift onto the shoulders of the state.

Leo defended the importance of intermediate, mediating, and intermediary institutions in societal life. He attributed a significant but limited role to the state. It is necessary to protect the rights of all, especially the poorest. The state is the last resort for their protection. Its interventions, especially in family life, should be limited and not last longer than necessary. The same applies to the state's economic measures: they should be confined to what is necessary to protect the public order. (Médaille 2007, 115-116)

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9   Associations must be organised in such a way that they best serve their fundamental purpose, for individuals to achieve as much physical, spiritual, and material good as possible, to better their "condition to the utmost in body, soul, and property" (RN, para. 57). Pius adds in the same paragraph: " What advantage can it be to a working man to obtain by means of a society material well-being, if he endangers his soul for lack of spiritual food? 'What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? (Matt. 16:26)'".

10 Certainly, the Pope recognised the need to adapt to contemporary conditions, both generally, as emphasised earlier, and specifically in terms of workers' associations and organisations: " Such unions should be suited to the requirements of this our age - an age of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life " (RN, para. 49).

2.3.1 The "Revolutionariness" of *Rerum Novarum*

On the one hand, RN appears as a conservative encyclical: it emphasises private property as a natural right, condemns socialism directly, and calls for revolutionary and violent actions (Médaille 2007, 116). On the other hand, the encyclical possesses its form of "revolutionariness":

1. Demand for a Wage Aligned with Workers' Needs: RN demands a wage corresponding to workers' needs. Only such a wage is considered just. This contrasted with the prevailing view at the time, which held that wages were determined by supply and demand in the free market, irrespective of workers' needs. This issue sparked a controversy that continues to this day. Indeed, RN established a just wage as the core, the backbone of the Church's social doctrine (ibid.);
2. Emphasis on Subsidiary Institutions: RN places importance on subsidiary institutions, opposing both individualism, which focuses solely on the individual, and those who put everything on the state (socialists);
3. Revolutionary Shift in the Church's Approach: RN was revolutionary in moving the Church from addressing economic issues purely from a charitable and benevolent perspective, considering them as structural problems. The Church's response was no longer limited to calling for more considerable donations to charitable organisations but also demanded critical reflection and questioning of the very structures and organisations of society and the economy (Door 1992, 29). In the following century, discussions primarily concerned structural issues (Médaile 2007, 117).

With RN, the Church adopted a more defined and active social stance at the highest level and explicitly in economic theory and just society. It became more directly involved in its time's social and cultural conflicts and struggles. It is one thing to call for charity and benevolence and warn against revolution and violence, which remains relatively passive. It is quite another to start exploring and pointing out the injustices of specific social structures, propose their modification, transformation, or even abolition and replacement with different ones, criticise existing social models or (utopian) visions and organisations, and advocate for alternative solutions[11]. At that point, one becomes a direct social actor, which also applies to the Church.

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11 We must consider the words of Pius XI.: "Thus even in the sphere of social-economics, although the Church has never proposed a definite technical system, since this is not her field,

3 The "Ušeničnik" Vision of Social Renewal

At the time when *Rerum Novarum* (RN) was published, social, societal, and political issues were increasingly coming to the forefront. This trend also affected the Church. It peaked in the 1930s[12], so, unsurprisingly, this period was also marked by one of the highest points of social and political polarisation and, consequently, the culture war. Ušeničnik was one of the main ideological actors in this trend in Slovenia. Papal encyclicals had a significant impact on his writing and actions. He translated and extensively commented on QA and DR (Ušeničnik 1940[13]; 1937). He engaged with forms of workers' (co-)ownership, workers' associations, and suitable forms of "corporatism." He adopted the idea of a comprehensive Catholic renewal of society, which he believed was necessary for solving the social question. The encyclicals provided the foundation for his condemnation of socialism (QA) and communism (DR). These are just a few of the most important aspects; many more could be listed.

Ušeničnik believed that individual property or ownership rights are grounded in natural law. Its most profound ethical basis is the fact that a person is a human

she has nevertheless clearly outlined the guiding principles which, while susceptible of varied concrete applications according to the diversified conditions of times and places and peoples, indicate the safe way of securing the happy progress of society" (DR, para. 34). See also Stres 1991, 21-23. For a more detailed explanation of what the Church's social teaching "can be and cannot be" (23), see op. cit., 23-28, 260-261.

12 Slovenian philosopher France Veber, in his book *Idejni temelji slovanskega agrarizma* (*The Ideological Foundations of Slavic Agrarianism*), observed that the 1930s were a time of transition to a new, emerging cultural era that would be distinctly anthropocentric. He divided cultural history into four periods. The distinguishing feature is the conception of man: natural (antiquity), transcendent (Christianity), transitional period (including the 1930s), and the fourth, emerging era, which will view man primarily from a social perspective or the aspect of human-human relations (no longer human-nature (antiquity) and human-God (Christianity)). This was the era of the establishment of the social perspective, so it is not surprising that social and political aspects were becoming increasingly important in the 1930s. These aspects were present earlier but were subordinated to other trends (Veber 1927, 9-10; Žalec 2002, 50). Ušeničnik rejected Veber's periodisation in his review of Veber's work (Ušeničnik 1927/1928). He also accused him of neglecting the church when listing the main social units. Veber took this criticism into account in his "groundbreaking" work *Filozofija* (*Philosophy*) (1930) (Žalec 2002, 50, note 37).

13 Ušeničnik published his translation of QA - immediately after the encyclical was released - in the journal *Čas* (Pij XI. [Pius XI] 1930/1931) and added 22 pages of comments (Ušeničnik 1930/31). The book edition of his translation from 1940 is slightly modified. He considered the comments of Ernest Tomc and Ignacij Lenček (Ušeničnik 1940, 12).

being (Ušeničnik 1920, 82), and it is also important as a factor in the love of work (Ušeničnik 1920, 93). He never rejected the market economy per se. However, according to Ušeničnik, capitalism cannot be a just system. It has accumulated vast wealth on one side and significant poverty on the other. In his view, this is impossible without exploitation (Ušeničnik 1925, 41).

Materialistic socialism, according to Ušeničnik, is not really an alternative to capitalism. In contrast to materialistic socialism, Christian socialism is based on the belief that without Christianity, there is no solution on any level, including social and economic. Ušeničnik considered the "father of Christian socialism" to be the Ketteler mentioned above (Ušeničnik 1925, 78), who was convinced that "Christ is the only true Redeemer of the working people even in temporal misery" (Ušeničnik 1925, 79). Ketteler demanded the establishment of worker protection (especially for women and children) and the organisation of mutual aid for working classes: "The first word here is organisation (professional, co-operative, etc.; the goal must be corporative organisation). (Cf. A. U., Sociology, 462-473.)" (Ušeničnik 1925, 79). Ketteler's work and ideas not only found fertile ground in Germany but also spread to other countries (Austria, France, etc.), and eventually, Pope Leo XIII declared them correct. Ketteler's disciples argued that the state must also ensure the economy is subordinated to social welfare and limit capitalism through interventions, such as implementing labour laws and other measures. However, they were well aware that this was not enough. Hence, they began to form various Christian social associations and organisations to support the working classes, such as savings banks, credit unions, etc. In the Slovenian context, the Christian social movement in Austria was crucial. Special mention should be made of Vienna's mayor, Karl Lueger (mayor from 1897 to 1910) (Ušeničnik 1910a, 507-508; Ušeničnik 1925, 82). From Austria, specifically Vienna, Janez Ev. Krek brought Christian social ideas and movements to Slovenia and Croatia, sparking their flourishing development (Ušeničnik 1925, 82-84; Ušeničnik 1910a, 508-513).

Ušeničnik advocated the importance of personal interest in the economy while also pointing out that its absence is one of the most significant flaws of Bolshevik-type communist economies. Nevertheless, he imposed limitations on personal interest, as it must be subordinated to the common good. On a similar moral basis, he opposed Bolshevik-type socialism. Such socialism is unjust, as it involves arbitrary dispossession and usurpation that does not rely on social justice and does not compensate those dispossessed (Ušeničnik 1925, 115).

As mentioned, Ušeničnik greatly emphasised Pope Leo XIII's contribution to the social question. In his work *Sociologija* (*Sociology*), he highlighted three of Leo XIII.'s encyclicals: *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (*Adversus Socialistarum Sectas*) (1878), *Rerum Novarum* (*De Conditione Opificium*) (1891), and *Graves de*

Communi Re (1901). The first was published in the very first year of Leo's pontificate. It highlighted the significant role of Christian ideas in the social sphere and the great danger of materialistic socialism. The third encyclical emphasised the need for "everyone in their area to strive to help the working people, as the matter is extremely urgent" (Ušeničnik 1910a, 482).

The second encyclical, which deals with the worker question, is the most important, as it outlines the Christian social program for the working classes. In it, the Pope states that helping workers requires a combined effort from the Church, the state, employers, and the workers themselves. The conclusion is: "All to work immediately! – Primarily, a religious-moral revival is needed. – The primary principle of social work: charity" (Ušeničnik 1910a, 485). The Church must draw from the Gospels in advocating and establishing justice, love, and brotherhood. The state must enable social welfare through appropriate legislation and defend the rights of all citizens, especially workers, as they cannot do so themselves. Workers must help themselves through proper organisations. The most crucial aspect, however, is the moral-Christian revival. Without it, Ušeničnik stresses, following Leo XIII., all social work is in vain (Ušeničnik 1925, 81).

Ušeničnik believed that the evil of the modern economic system stems from the separation of labour and capital, which allows for the appropriation of others' labour. The economic forms that should transcend this division are the corporation (Ušeničnik 1920, 128-129) and the cooperative (Ušeničnik 1920, 130). In corporations, employers and workers are united; in cooperatives, there are no longer "employers." Thus, it represents a kind of self-management solution, which should not be confused with the socialist self-management of Kardelj's type, as it is based on a fundamentally different foundation.

The ultimate goal of the social economy that Ušeničnik advocated is not merely the possession of goods but the welfare and quality of life provided by the use, consumption, and enjoyment of goods (Ušeničnik 1926, 112). The supreme laws of the social economy that correspond to this goal are as follows: 1. Even in the entire economy, divine laws must prevail (the Decalogue is the highest law for the national economy); 2. The economy must focus on people and their needs, not profit (man must again become the centre of the entire economy); 3. The economy must care for the welfare of the individual in such a way that the individual's welfare contributes to the welfare of all (Christian socialism and solidarity must prevail everywhere). Only in this way does humanity fulfil the will of the Creator, who made man and said: let us make man in our image,

and let him rule over all the earth.[14] Only in this way is one following Christ's words: what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul[15] (Ušeničnik 1926, 123).

3.1 Corporatism[16] and Authoritarian Movements[17] and Regimes

From the perspective of (Slovenian) conservative political Catholicism to which Ušeničnik belonged, there were apparent affinities between conservative political Catholicism and fascism, as well as other authoritarian movements and regimes in Europe. However, it is essential to recognise that the Catholic stance towards these phenomena has evolved. The decisive factor in this shift was the views and publications of Pope Pius XI. Initially, Pius XI. considered Mussolini a "man of prudence" and supported the rightward development of European states until 1935 (Salazar in Portugal and Dollfuss in Austria, not to mention Spain). This stance was because these governments exhibited characteristics that the Church did not oppose. They were based on authority, order, and hierarchy and supported "corporatism"; they "respected" the family and attacked Freemasonry and communism (Aubert and Rogier 2000, 205). Nonetheless, Pius XI. eventually changed his position. Non-Christian tendencies inherent in fascist movements and states, such as excessive nationalism, the unconditional demand that state interests prevail over all others (encouraged by Action Française, which the Pope condemned in 1926), and racist madness (condemned by the Holy Office in 1928), became increasingly evident. In March 1937, Pius issued two encyclicals, one against communism (DR) and the other against Nazism (MbS). He began a public struggle against totalitarian tendencies on the right and left, marking a new phase in his pontificate. His warnings against communism were not new, but the progress of hostile propaganda against the faith in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the resurgence of violent persecution in Mexico from 1932, the advancement of communism in China and Indochina, the Comintern's 1935 decision to

14 Gen 1:26.
15 Mt 16:26.
16 For the history of corporatism, see Wiadra 1997 and Pinto, ed. 2017. For concise information on corporatism in interwar Yugoslavia, see Petrungaro 2017. For corporatism in Slovenia, see op. cit., 241–242; Zver 1992.
17 This article does not delve deeply into Ušeničnik's relationship with Marxism, socialism, and communism. It is an extensive topic that exceeds the scope of this article. Some have already written about it: Pirc 1986; Stres 1998; Kos 2004; Griesser-Pečar 2004.

establish popular fronts where possible, the tactical offering of cooperation in France, and especially the Spanish Civil War from July 1936 onward, gave this issue new weight and dimensions (Aubert and Rogier 2000, 205).

This evolution was also reflected in the views of Slovenian conservative political Catholicism concerning the economy. A fundamental common feature was the rejection of liberal capitalism and socialist economies. Fascists in Italy, Salazar in Portugal, Dollfuss in Austria, and Slovenian conservative Catholicism sought an alternative solution. Slovenian conservative Catholics closely studied Italian fascist corporatism in the 1930s, as they believed fascism had most concretely and comprehensively realised the corporatist model up to that point (Žebot 1939).[18] The encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* by Pius XI undoubtedly provided a decisive boost to the focus on corporatism, which led to ambiguities in interpretation (Stres 1991, 21-23, 259) and competition among interpretations, as the Pope did not explicitly state which criticisms of fascism mentioned in the encyclical he himself accepted (Dragoš 1998, 189). Ušeničnik presented his interpretation of the Pope's position in a relatively detailed comments to his translation of QA (Ušeničnik 1940). There, he not only critiqued fascist corporatism in Italy (Ušeničnik 1940, 174-175; 177-178; 181)[19] but also examined corporatism in Portugal and Austria (Ušeničnik 1940, 178-182).[20]

18 Žebot stated why he did not deal more thoroughly with Portugal (Žebot 1939): 1. Portugal is far from Slovenia; 2. Less political significance; 3. Portugal "has not yet directly changed its economic laws." The last reason coincides with Ušeničnik's observation that Portugal and Austria had generally accepted corporatism but, in practice, had not yet implemented it (see below).

19 Fascism was also criticised in other of his writings, such as in the book *Obris socialnega vprašanja* (*Outline of the social issue*) from 1938. According to Ušeničnik, fascism is characterised by the dominance of the state/state interest, while liberal capitalism emphasises individual/selfish interest. Only true corporatism serves the common good and common welfare. The common welfare is also the true purpose or function of the state. Only in corporatism does the state indeed perform (and can perform) this function; thus, the state can genuinely be a true state worthy of the name (Ušeničnik 1938, 66-67).

20 The difference between the Catholic understanding of a corporation (Pius XI) and a corporation in autocratic or totalitarian regimes can be seen in Stres 1991, 257ff. In the Catholic sense, voluntary membership is a fundamental characteristic of associations, including corporations. No one can be forced into any association. This emphasis is significant compared to associations in authoritarian/totalitarian societies. For example, fascism introduced state-mandated corporations and unions (Stres 1991, 257). Another vital claim of Catholic doctrine is that corporations do not eliminate unions as workers' associations. Unions remain necessary, but they must be accessible. Membership in them must be voluntary, and various unions must be

Ušeničnik argued (Ušeničnik 1940, 174-175) that Pius XI indirectly criticised fascist corporatism in QA by citing accusations or fears expressed by some, summarised in three points: 1. that the state would replace freedom of action; 2. that the new syndical and corporative order would be too bureaucratic and political; 3. that this arrangement would serve more specific political purposes rather than the renewal and establishment of a better social order (QA, para. 95). Ušeničnik noted that the Pope did not wish to confront fascist corporatism directly but seemed to agree with these criticisms or concerns (Ušeničnik 1940, 175). He observed that all contemporary attempts at corporatism (fascist Italy, Dollfuss's Austria, and Salazar's Portugal) were more or less authoritarian (Ušeničnik 1940, 177-178). Ušeničnik summarised the critique of fascist corporatism in three main accusations: 1. disregard for the principle of subsidiarity, 2. bureaucracy, and 3. the system being too subordinated to fascism as a political party. He pointed out that these were "fundamental internal" flaws of the system (175). In the fascist system, there is no freedom and (democratic) self-management (177). This is inconsistent with the Pope's stance that without self-management and freedom, there is no proper corporative system (175). It is important to note Ušeničnik's warning:

"The pope provides only the basic principles. From everything the Pope has said about the corporative economic and social order, it is evident that as the supreme leader of Christianity, he emphasises only the corporative principle and the basic demands of this principle. Details are a matter for others." (Ušeničnik 1940, 176)

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possible (Stres 1991, 258). Catholic social teaching, therefore, generally supports the freedom to form corporations. This stance has been consistent with RNs to the present day. However, it should be added that freedom in corporations, according to Pius XI, can still be limited if justice and the common good require it (QA, para. 86). Ušeničnik refers to this point, as well as to RN (para. 52), which allows the state to prohibit the formation of specific organisations if it is in clear opposition to the fairness, justice, and welfare of the state when he argues that papal encyclicals do not indicate that corporations should never be mandatory under any circumstances (Ušeničnik 1940, 176). He further argues that, especially with corporations, some form of "obligation" will be temporarily necessary; otherwise, due to resistance from communists and communist-influenced workers, the corporate order might not be implementable at all (177). It should be noted that at that time, unlike Gosar, other representatives of the official Catholic line in Slovenia also advocated for mandatory association: Krek (his position from the book *Socijalizem* (*Socialism*) (1901, 93) is mentioned by Ušeničnik himself (1940, 177)), Ciril Žebot, and others (Dragoš 1998, 205, n. 6).

In 1933, Austria adopted QA and recognised economic self-management in principle. However, due to the significant power of communism, it had to severely restrict the freedom of companies (Ušeničnik 1940, 178). In Portugal, a similar path was chosen as in Austria; there was, in principle, a democratic, self-managed organisation of corporations. However, due to the communist threat, corporations were under significant authoritarian pressure. The authorities established economic enterprises, determined their forms and operations, and grouped them into business chambers until people were mature enough and freed from communist influence to govern themselves (178).

According to Ušeničnik, in a purely corporative state, in the narrower sense of the word, all public life (political, economic, social, and cultural) should be organised into corporations. Economic corporations would thus be only one part of the entire corporative organisation of society. The other part would consist of non-economic organisations: public administration, defence, the Church, education, art, and health care. Through their representatives, all these organisations would also exercise full legislative power (in regional and national assemblies) (Ušeničnik 1940, 181). Ušeničnik concluded that a corporative state in the narrower sense did not yet exist, but he predicted that corporations would become the most characteristic feature of future states (182).

4 Assessment of Ušeničnik's Vision for Social Renewal

Ušeničnik was highly educated and, as such, significantly contributed to raising the philosophical, theological, and general intellectual and academic standards in Slovenian society. Undoubtedly, he was one of the most intellectually capable and industrious Slovenes ever, a brilliant mind who impressed both his homeland and abroad with his abilities. From the perspective of intellectual history, one could say that he was both a product and a key actor in the Catholic renewal movement initiated by Pope Leo XIII. This movement peaked in Slovenia before World War I and waned after the victory of the communist revolution in 1945 (Pirc 1986, 435). Ušeničnik faithfully adhered to the teachings of the Church, including its social doctrine. He embraced all the main ideas of (social) encyclicals, which he tried to implement in the Slovenian context. From *Rerum Novarum*, one can particularly highlight the understanding that both economic and spiritual (religious and moral) reforms are necessary for addressing the social question. Regarding the economic aspect, he acknowledged the importance of social structures, worker (co)ownership, and their associations for solving the social question. In the spiritual aspect, he advocated for a Catholic renewal of Slovenian society as the only way to achieve success. From *Quadragesimo Anno*,

the idea of a "corporative" organicist class society and state is noteworthy, while from *Divini Redemptoris*, the condemnation of communism stands out.

Concerning communism, the warnings proved more than justified. The situation with corporatism is more complex. The Church, led by Pope Pius XII, renounced the term corporatism, as the corporatist vision (of Pius XI) was deemed unfeasible, also due to its association with fascist and other authoritarian regimes (Stres 1991, 23, 258). However, this does not mean we must reject all aspects of corporatist orientation and its motivations or "completely disregard the values that church teaching upholds when discussing corporations" (258). The significance of professional associations and various sectoral connections remains crucial (ibid). We must strive to overcome the division between labour and capital and animosity between workers and employers and promote fair co-operation and (social) dialogue. We should aim for the protection and organisation of workers, (co)ownership in companies, and cooperative and corporative (in the Catholic sense) economies whenever possible. One effective route to ensuring fair wages for workers is having them be (co)owners of the companies where they work. Workers need ownership or access to resources to avoid unfavourable working conditions. The key is reviving the advantages of communal land and common goods. We need to discover and utilise the value of common property usage and appropriate ways to expand its distribution. The RN strategy already includes a broader distribution of property, specifically productive property. For Leo XIII, this primarily meant land, as most people at his time were still dependent on farms or came from families that were so dependent. In our time, "capital" has replaced land as the primary means of wealth (Médaille 2007, 192). Thus, John Paul II's "vision" also includes integrating workers into the ownership of companies they work for (LE, para. 14).

We must recognise that the primary source of economic growth is "human" rather than physical capital. Economist Theodore W. Schultz demonstrated over sixty years ago that capital growth can explain less than half of economic growth (Schultz 1961, 6; Mueller 2010, 83-84). So, where does the rest of the growth come from? Schultz proposed the hypothesis that it originates from "human capital"[21] (i.e., population growth and its skills (Médaille 2007, 165)), with workers acquiring knowledge and skills of economic value, which is linked to investments in education and health of workers and internal migration, allowing people to obtain better jobs (Schultz 1961, 1, 3; Mueller 2010, 84). John W. Kendrick, a

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21 Schultz is also credited with coining the term "human capital" (Mueller 2010, 151).

pioneer in economic measurement (Mueller 2010, 84), formulated this as the total capital hypothesis and confirmed it (Kendrick et al. 1976; Kendrick 1994, 16). He demonstrated that education and training of children account for 63% of growth, intangible capital (research and development) for 5%, and tangible capital for 32% (Mueller 2010, 84-85). This aligns well with the Church's[22] teaching that human labour is the source of all value and capital is merely a means, which opposes utilitarian economic neoclassicism (Médaille 2007, 165).

The fact that human capital is the primary source of economic growth demands fair wages for workers, allowing them to support their families and provide for the education and upbringing of their children, which is necessary for the formation of human capital. Therefore, from an economic efficiency perspective, the family is not an arbitrary entity but a crucial and indispensable economic factor, as only families, on a sociologically relevant level, can enable the formation of human capital. It follows that we must develop an economy directed toward the common good rather than merely the "good" of the state (fascism, Nazism, socialism) or individuals/groups (liberal capitalism), both for moral and economic efficiency reasons. Ethical and successful economies are not mutually exclusive but complementary. The economy as a whole can only be prosperous if it is ethical, i.e., socially just and oriented toward the common good. This is consistent with the Church's social teaching, from RN to the present, and Ušeničnik also adopted these assertions.

The idea of complete re-Catholicization of Slovenian society has proven less realistic and appropriate. This realisation also matured within the Church and was articulated at the Second Vatican Council, "when the Catholic Church no longer addresses its message only to the faithful and Christian lands, but to all people of good will" (Potočnik 2004, 162). The Second Vatican Council continues to recognise the intrinsic value of earthly realities, which was not the stance during Ušeničnik's time (ibid). However, this does not mean that the Church no longer emphasises the importance of moral factors. Even today, it still feels particularly responsible in this regard, but it "offers" its contribution and willingness to assist in this area (CA, para. 60; Potočnik 2004, 162), which is a different

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22 John Paul II notes in this regard: "[W]e must first of all recall a principle that has always been taught by the Church: *the principle of the priority of labour over capital.* This principle directly concerns the process of production: in this process labour is always a primary *efficient cause,* while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere *instrument* or instrumental cause. This principle is an evident truth that emerges from the whole of man's historical experience." (LE, para. 12)

tone from that prevailing in Ušeničnik's time. This is similar to the attitude or belief of contemporary (post)secular thinkers, such as Jürgen Habermas (Reder et al. 2010), who have recognised the pre-political foundations of free democracy (Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde) and religion as one of its important sources. Religion can be precious in this regard, but the societal model in which it is present must be inclusive toward it and others. Only such an arrangement is realistically possible and acceptable in modern (post)secular society.

5 Conclusion

Ušeničnik's vision for societal renewal had two components: social and spiritual, as he correctly perceived that the crisis was not only social but also spiritual. He was convinced that no social renewal could be successful without a spiritual renewal. He adopted the ideal of a "new Christian society," a gradual re-Christianization of the entire society from Leo XIII (Pirc 1990, 122), just as Mahnič had before him. Ušeničnik's fundamental social and economic orientations can be assessed as correct, even though the Church justifiably abandoned corporatism: society must develop towards overcoming the division between labour and capital, fair cooperation between workers and employers, and (co) workers' (co) ownership in companies. Worker self-defence (through labour associations and organisations) is necessary, and the state must also ensure their protection within appropriate limits.

Ušeničnik's utopian organicist vision of a society that resolves its conflicts and contradictions "only within the Christian religion or the Catholic Church" (Potočnik 2004, 163) to achieve (organic) harmony was less successful. Ušeničnik "followed the utopia that a harmonious, integrist Christian society is still possible" (Ibid). Due to modernisation and secularisation, this vision was neither acceptable nor feasible even in Ušeničnik's time, as it did not account for modern society's inherent and irreconcilable value and ideological diversity and the importance of respecting pluralism.[23] The true and realistically achievable path is not integrism and efforts toward homogenisation (Taylor 2007, 771-772) but rather the respect and cultivation of values such as authenticity, dialogue,

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23 According to Benedict XVI, cultural pluralism is the most important fact of contemporary society that must be considered by anyone who wishes to improve it. Benedict does not oppose it and does not strive to eliminate it but rejects aggregate pluralism, where different cultures coexist side by side without a genuine mutual relationship. Instead, Benedict advocates for dialogue between them, for relational and dialogical pluralism. (Žalec 2022, 114)

and fair cooperation among different groups (Žalec 2022), which presupposes pluralism (Jamnik 2017) and an attitude of (epistemic) humility and openness (Muršič Klenar 2020, 583; Strahovnik 2018; Jamnik 2021, 820).

Acronyms

CA – John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*
DR – Pius XI, *Divini redemptoris*
LE – John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*
MbS – Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge*
QA – Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*
RN – Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*

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ŽIŽEK ON KREK:
MARXIST-LIBERAL CRITIQUE
OF THE CATHOLIC ORGANICIST SOCIAL MODEL

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1 Introduction: A Brief Overview of Krek's Personality, Activities, Views, and the Challenges of Christian Socialist Stance

In this chapter, I will present Žižek's "Marxist-liberal" critique of the social model advocated by Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917). Krek was a Catholic priest[1] and an exceptionally important and influential figure in Slovenian history. He was endowed with many talents and was active in various fields: the "most famous Slovenian people's tribune" (Gržan 2006, 108), with immense charisma and energy, a pioneer of sociology in Slovenia (Krek 1895; Ušeničnik 1925/1926), a social and economic reformer, the first Catholic introducer and organiser of cooperatives in Slovenia (and in Croatia) (Lazarević 2018; Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček 2023), a "fighter for the Slovenian farmer" (Granda 2018) and workers[2], an animator of the masses ("an agitator without equal" (Jurčec 1935, 116)), a social activist, a politician (Šuklje 1925/1926; Dolenc 1925/1926; Gašparič 2018; Prunk 2018; Perovšek 2018), the founder of Christian socialism, and the "moderniser of the Catholic movement in Slovenia." He based the confrontation with modernisation on social and democratic grounds. In doing so, he

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1 For a detailed examination of Krek's complicated relationship with the leadership of the Catholic Church, which was fraught with issues and fluctuations, see Kolar and Salmič (2018).

2 Despite his strong advocacy for the Slovene people, Krek consistently emphasised the universality of the Catholic Church and the importance of the Pope as the guardian of rights and protector of all humanity, safeguarding the value of humaneness. Krek even defined the duty to humanity as the foremost social duty: "The first social duty is the duty to humanity, true humanity, or as we say in Latin, humanitas. How much this awareness of duty has disappeared among us!" (Krek 1901, 28) Respect for every person is based on the revealed truth that we are all children of one Father, brothers and sisters. Without this truth, the principle of humaneness lacks a proper foundation and will inevitably crumble to dust. (29-30) The only faithful guardian of revelation is the Catholic Church, led by the Pope, and thus, it is also the sole true protector of the principle of humaneness (31). Liberals also advocate for humaneness but should recognise that this respect depends on revelation. (29)

became the "founder of Slovenian Christian democracy" (Pelikan 2018, 146).[3]
He was one of Slovenian political Catholicism's most important ideologists and
representatives.

Krek was not only a theorist but also, and above all, a practitioner. Howev-
er, this should not be understood because his role as a provider of ideological
foundations was less important than his practical role (in social and organisa-
tional activities) (Pelikan 2018, 146). Krek prioritised practice over theoretical
principles when violating a principle he accepted was more beneficial in a given
situation than rigidly adhering to it. This can be clearly illustrated in the case of
the question of the separation of church and state (Pelikan 2018, 143–145). Krek
believed that, in principle, it was suitable for the church and state not to be sepa-
rated. However, given the circumstances at the beginning of the 20th century, he
found it better to separate church and state. Separation is better than an imperfect
union. In the given circumstances, from the perspective of preserving faith and
religious life among the people, it was better for the church and state to be sep-
arated, Krek argued (1908, 279). He thought similarly regarding the relationship
to political democracy, sovereignty, autonomy, social policies, etc. (Pelikan 2018,
145). While Krek formulated and accepted certain theoretical premises, ideals,
and principles, he never succumbed to rigid dogmatism in the sense of strict
adherence to a principle, even if its implementation in the given circumstances
would be harmful.

Žižek, in his critique of Krek, which we will examine below, does not con-
sider this "particularistic" aspect of common sense in Krek's thought**.** Žižek pri-
marily refers to the book *Socialism*, which is an "encyclopedic" (Pirjevec 2018,
204) and theoretical work, and based on that, he attributes to Krek the desire to
restore society according to a medieval model. However, Krek's actual activities
largely proceeded and had an impact in the opposite direction. Krek was charac-
terised by a shift from adherence to dogmatic principles and conservatism, which
looked nostalgically to the past. He was focused on addressing contemporary
social challenges in a modern and innovative way. As a result, in the conservative
environment where he promoted his ideas, he was often labelled a revolutionary.
However, in reality, he was one of the key modernisers of social thought and

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3   Krek came into serious contact with Catholic social thought during his studies in Vienna. He
    was significantly influenced by the ideas of Ketteler, Vogelsang, Lueger, and, of course, the
    papal (social) encyclicals of his time, particularly *Rerum Novarum* by Leo XIII (Juhant 2018;
    Pirjevec 2018).

practice and a founder of democracy in Slovenia. This is why both Andrej Gosar and Christian socialists could consider themselves his successors. Of course, both went even further than Krek. In this regard, the key difference between Krek on one side and Catholic conservatives like Mahnič and Ušeničnik on the other is evident, as the latter both emphasised the importance of principles and rules: "A person's principles determine their life." Mahnič was more deeply committed to "feudal" values (Kermauner 1990), unlike Krek. Žižek fails to distinguish between Mahnič and Krek sufficiently, which is one of his critique's weaknesses. Both Mahnič and Ušeničnik lacked a sense of development and reformism, which Krek indeed possessed (256). This is visible in Krek's debate with Ušeničnik regarding the separation of church and state (Pelikan 2018, 143-145). Ušeničnik, as a true successor of Mahnič, primarily emphasised ideals, their application in practice, the Pope as the foremost politician, etc. Krek responded with a simple analogy: it is better if the leg remains attached to the body. However, if the leg threatens the health of the whole body, then it is better to cut it off (Krek 1905, 127).

Krek was also a university professor (Pavlin 1925/1926) and translator of the Bible (Snoj 1925/1926), and he wrote literary works (Stanonik 2018), which, however, do not have any particular artistic value. He is extensively credited with raising the level of education among Slovenians (Šuštar 2018). He spoke many languages, for which he was extraordinarily talented. In addition to classical languages, he mastered several world languages, including English and numerous Slavic languages. Moreover, the list could go on with facts attesting to his exceptional nature. He was undoubtedly a diverse, complex, and controversial figure who operated on many levels. In some respects, he was simply brilliant. Due to all of this, it is difficult to capture him in a brief description, and general statements about him can only gain their actual substance and understanding when one becomes more familiar with his time, life, and work.

As I mentioned above, Krek's controversial nature is a notable aspect. One controversial point is the question of Krek as a socialist.[4] Due to the socialist elements in his views, some labelled him as a "red socialist in a black cassock." This was the title of an editorial in the newspaper *Slovenski narod*, the liberal organ and Krek's opponents (Jurčec 1935, 116). Due to certain principles and views

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4   Another controversial aspect, in a certain sense of a purely private nature, concerns the affair regarding the allegedly overly "intimate" relationship between Krek and the Viennese journalist Camilla Theimer (Globočnik 2018).

that Krek developed and publicly advocated, as Jurčec wrote, "a small flower of trust toward Krek blossomed in the hearts of both the most fervent and the most sophisticated socialist leaders" (Ibid.). However, Krek also harshly criticised social democracy, Marxism, and communism. The relationship of social democrats toward Krek, as well as later toward his "successors," the Christian socialists, was anything but trusting (Perovšek 2018; Prunk 1977). Some critics of socialism and communism today seriously question the possible negative effects of Krek's "rejection of liberalism and sympathy for socialism" on shaping "that Slovenian consciousness, which tragically culminated with Kocbek at the forefront, in the embrace of the communists and the OF (Liberation Front). The persistent view of humanity as primarily and solely a social being continues to hinder us to this day" (Štuhec 2018, 267). Concerning how the main ideologists and leaders of Slovenian political Catholicism (Mahnič, Ernest Tomec, and also Krek) neglected the importance and value of inner life, individuality, the complete personality, and high culture, which is not merely domestic didactic realism, many authors—besides the Ivan Štuhec mentioned above—have written, including Anton Vodnik (Juhant 1990, 23-24), France Vodnik (24-25), Ruda Jurčec (1935), Taras Kermauner (1990), Juhant (1990), and, finally, Slavoj Žižek, whose critique of Krek I will examine in more detail later. These authors defend very different, even mutually exclusive, positions on ethical, social, cultural, political, and other issues. They belong to different ideological and philosophical orientations and do not share the same views as all representatives of Slovenian Catholicism. For instance, Juhant is relatively critical of Mahnič, which certainly does not apply to Krek, about whom he wrote extensively without offering a single critical thought.

Krek's case illustrates the following "truth": It is challenging to be a freethinker. It is even harder to be a Christian socialist. However, it is most challenging of all to be both at the same time. As a Christian, especially a Catholic, neither "non-believing" freethinkers nor supporters of socialism trust you. As a socialist, neither conservative Christians and Catholics nor non-socialist freethinkers trust you. Moreover, if you are a freethinking Christian socialist, the circle of those who (politically) "trust" you narrows even further.[5] This especially ap-

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5   In Krek's thinking, we find all three characteristics: Christianity and Catholicism, socialism, and free thinking (this term should not be confused with liberalism). The same could be said for Kocbek, as well as Gosar, despite being a devout Catholic. As Bertrand Russell once noted, for a free thinker, it is not decisive what one thinks, but why one thinks it.

plies to Christian socialism in Slovenia[6] and is one of the reasons why Christian socialists in Slovenia never held political power or had the tools to achieve it, such as their own political party. Those with such power—the actual political decision-makers—allowed them to operate. They often performed significant and decisive work in areas like mobilising the masses, social services, economic activities, education, union struggles, academic work, culture, and the arts. However, they were never allowed to gain actual political power. This applies both to Krek, who stands at the beginning of Slovenian Christian socialism, and even more so to Edvard Kocbek, who represents its end, as well as to Andrej Gosar[7], who greatly admired Krek (Gosar 1936). Gosar was somewhat of a companion and partial sympathiser of Christian socialism but distanced himself from it. The more Christian socialists leaned toward Marxism, the more they eventually merged with communism. The alliance with the communists marked the end of Christian socialism in Slovenia. Despite being a minister in the government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia for a time, Gosar was never among the leading political players and decision-makers. Some Christian socialists in Slovenia did attempt to form their political party at one point. Why this was never realized remains unclear. This effort was led by Aleš Stanovnik, who, in November 1939, was preparing to establish an independent political party (Prunk 1977, 189). Stanovnik certainly had political capabilities and ambitions. During the Italian occupation of Ljubljana, he went underground, but the Italians arrested and shot him as a hostage. Many have wondered how this could have happened.

2 Žižek's Critique of "Krekism"

Slavoj Žižek presented his critique of Krek and "Krekism" in his book *Jezik, ideologija, Slovenci* (*Language, ideology, Slovenes*) (1987). Žižek primarily refers to two works: Krek's book *Socijalizem* (1901) and a booklet by Krek's follower Jurij Trunk titled *Bodi svoje sreče kovač: nauki za vsakdanjo rabo* (*Forge Your*

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6   There are significant and important differences between the political aspects, development, and "fate" of Christian socialism in various environments and countries. See Prunk 1977, 13-48.

7   All three mentioned individuals held important political positions at specific periods of their lives: Krek was a regional and national deputy, Gosar was a minister, and Kocbek also held high positions in socialist Tito's Yugoslavia. However, none of them were truly politicians in the sense of being final political decision-makers, for example, regarding specific decisions or actions of political parties.

Own Destiny: Lessons for Everyday Life) (1904). Although Žižek briefly refers to two other texts by Krek, his interpretation largely hinges on these two works. Krek was a prolific writer, a true "scribomaniac," and his work extends far beyond these texts. In this sense, one could argue that Žižek's critique of Krek is quite limited, if not scientifically questionable. The first response to this critique of Žižek might be that his analysis applies only to Krek's stance as presented in *Socijalizem*.[8] However, I believe this argument against Žižek lacks real strength, as although Krek wrote extensively, he did not significantly alter the fundamental theoretical stance he presented in *Socijalizem* throughout his life. *Socijalizem* was Krek's primary theoretical work and remained his guiding framework until his death.

Krek was much more than just a theorist, however. More importantly, he was a "practitioner" (Lukan 1992, 3)—an animator, tribune, social activist, organiser, and politician. In these practical roles, he often adapted his positions and approaches to new challenges and situations (Pelikan 1997; Grdina 2004). Nevertheless, these changes did not fundamentally abandon the core components of his understanding from *Socijalizem*, which Žižek critiques. It is also worth mentioning that both *Socijalizem* and Žižek's *Jezik, ideologija, Slovenci* were highly influential in Slovenia when they were published. This is evidenced by the fact that both works were included in the series *50 knjig, ki so nas napisale* (*50 Books That Wrote Us*), produced by Slovenian national television.[9] The series briefly presented Slovenian authors' texts, from the 16th century to contemporary works, which were most significant for developing and forming Slovenian culture, art, science, and identity, thus occupying a distinguished place in Slovenia's intellectual history.

Despite the resonance of Žižek's book, which contains his critique of Krek, the critique itself has not undergone a thorough reception or critical analysis. Besides brief mentions and comments in book reviews (Dolenc 1988; Miheljak 1988) and elsewhere, I have found no other reactions. Those who agreed with Žižek did so without further elaboration. Similarly, those who were perhaps more reserved about Žižek's positions were also brief. Those who disagreed with Žižek remained silent about his critique of Krek. Supporters felt that Žižek had already

8   The first edition of this work (1901) is titled *Socijalizem*, while the second edition (1925) is titled *Socializem* (without the j, as correctly written in modern Slovenian).
9   Janez Evangelist Krek: *Socializem*. 50 knjig, ki so nas napisale. RTV SLO; Slavoj Žižek: *Jezik, ideologija, Slovenci*. 50 knjig, ki so nas napisale. RTV SLO.

said everything necessary, and nothing more could be added. Opponents may not have even read him carefully, thinking it best to ignore his critique, or they may have considered engaging with such a misguided interpretation a waste of time. In any case, the fact remains that a detailed critical reflection on Žižek's critique of Krek and "Krekism" has been lacking despite the book being an intellectual bestseller in Slovenia.[10] One of the aims of this chapter is to fill that gap.

It should also be noted that the social model Krek presents and defends in *Socijalizem* was not Krek's original idea but rather a relatively typical variation within the framework of the Catholic Church's social doctrine at the time. Therefore, Žižek's critique does not only target Krek's stance but also the organicist and corporatist model advocated by the Catholic Church during that period.

Let us now examine the components of Krek's view that are relevant to Žižek's critique. Krek believed that every organism, including society, needs a soul. This soul is authority. The soul of the social organism must be suited to the limbs of the organism, i.e., it must be natural, as Krek wrote. "We call it - authority or power. Just as the limbs of the human body do not form an organism without being animated by the soul, so there cannot be a society without authority. The soul of society is authority or power." (Krek 1925, 15) (Žižek 1987, 16)

Krek describes the problem in the present as follows: "The individual limbs of our social organisms are fragmented, broken, disorganised because the common purpose under the guidance of a common authority is no longer respected." (Krek 1925, 19) The cause of this is "the disdain for divine laws and the authority directly established by God for their protection." (Ibid.) People "first withdraw obedience to God and to those appointed by Him as protectors of His rights, and then also – to other people." (Ibid.) Therefore, the solution to the social question is to give the Church what is due to it. (Žižek 1987, 18) The Church is entitled to moral judgment in all areas. According to Krek, moral judgment is the Church's

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10 Žižek's book was not popular solely due to his critique of Krek but also because of his critical analysis and critique of Stalinism and the socialist self-management model in Slovenia and Yugoslavia at the time. Additionally, this book can be seen as one of the most accessible and exciting introductions to certain thematic areas of Lacan's theory, which was gaining increasing interest in Slovenia, not only within narrower philosophical circles but also in the broader intellectual framework. It was becoming, or perhaps had already become, the most popular "philosophy" in Slovenia. Žižek himself was primarily responsible for this popularity. At that time, Žižek was involved in a research project funded by the state, investigating the formation of Slovenian identity. It is questionable whether Žižek would have taken up the study and writing about Krek if it did not fit into the abovementioned project.

jurisdiction. The Church is the absolute, universal, supreme, and decisive authority in moral matters. On this point, at least on a basic and principled level, Krek fully aligns with the other two most influential ideologues of Slovenian (political) Catholicism, Anton Mahnič and Aleš Ušeničnik.

Krek believed that the working estates[11] were, in importance, immediately after "those who directly govern the state." (Krek 1925, 18) The working estates "create all the state's wealth with their labour." (Ibid.) Therefore, the state must take care of them. Their stance on their importance to the state, rather than the stance of equality, can be beneficial. (Ibid.) "If they adopt the stance of equality, they destroy the state and every society and obstruct the progress of their estate. However, if they emphasise their importance to the state and their right to what is due to them according to this significance, they stand on solid ground, and their struggle cannot remain unsuccessful." (Ibid.)

Žižek accuses Krek and Krekists (Trunk 1904) of defending existing relations of social domination. (Žižek 1987, 15) Žižek points out the counter-revolutionary core of Krek's solution (22) and the destructive attitude towards civil society since, according to him, Krek demands an arrangement where individuals are not by themselves "members in the state," but only to the extent that they belong to a family, a nation, a class (ibid.). He wrote the following, citing Krek's words from the book *Socijalizem*:

"In contrast to liberalism, which wanted to abolish the estate organisation and according to which 'individuals should be direct citizens' (Krek 1925, 93), Krek demands an arrangement where 'individuals are not by themselves members in the state, but only in so far as they belong to a family, a nation, and a class. True citizens were (in the Christian era) families, nations, and classes. By protecting the rights of these members, the state also protected each individual.' (Krek 1925, 93)" (Žižek 1987, 22)

Žižek then argues that Krek is aiming at the abolition of civil society. According to Žižek, the aim of this abolition is replacing the struggle of each against all with the cooperation of the limbs, i.e., the estates, which would renounce their selfishness and demand no more and no less than what is due to them by their "nature." (Ibid.)

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11 Krek used the term "working estates," meaning labour estates, as he was referring not only to workers but also to peasants, and perhaps primarily to peasants. This understanding also applies to Krek's statement that the Slovenians are a "working nation" (Pirjevec 2018, 204).

Žižek argues that Krek's Christian socialism is a type of socialism that Marx and Engels categorised as reactionary socialism in the Communist Manifesto, labelling it as feudal socialism (Marx and Engels 1977, 482-484). He cites Krek's statement that without estate organisations, economic order is impossible and human rights are curtailed. (Žižek 1987, 22) Žižek derives from this statement that Krek aims to abolish civil society. It is not easy to see the justification for such a conclusion. Krek argues that people must organise into groups to effectively assert their interests, including in relation to the state, and that the estates must be organised. He believes this is beneficial both for them and for society as a whole. He claims that such an organisation is a human right and a natural condition for the successful struggle of workers for their rights and interests. Despite Krek's commendatory remarks about medieval society, where individuals were "citizens" only as members of certain groups, it is not accurate to attribute to Krek advocacy for a social model where individuals would not be direct citizens of the state. What Krek sees as absolutely necessary is the organisation of individuals. If individuals are not organised and connected in groups, they are powerless against the state, capital, and other forces that seek to exploit them. If they are not connected, they are left at the mercy of these forces.

At this point, it is worth noting Žižek's interpretation of "Krek's" anti-Semitism and its role in "Krek's"[12] ideology. In Krek's discourse, the term "Jews" functions as a floating signifier (Laclau and Mouffe 2001)[13] that represents all those whom Krek blames for the crisis we are in: Protestants, liberals, freemasons, and social democrats. The Jew is the figure that unites the heterogeneous block of enemies against whom we must fight and who must be excluded and removed from society. There is room for everyone except for them. Those who create or are necessary for the actual civil society are declared as Jews. They are also those outside the Church who are not controlled by the Church and criticise the Church. Thus, Krek's anti-Semitism aligns well with his opposition to true civil society and his exclusion of those who are not under the Church's control. The realisation of Krek's organicist society would mean establishing a society controlled by the Church. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Žižek compares the

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12 The term "Krek's" is placed in quotation marks because Krek was just one of many examples within the framework of political Catholicism in Europe and beyond, to which Žižek's interpretation refers.

13 Žižek addresses anti-Semitism not only in his critique of Krek but also in many of his other texts where he critiques Laclau and develops his interpretation of anti-Semitism with the help of Lacan's concept of *point de capiton*.

"civil society" in socialist Yugoslavia with the "civil society" in an organicist society. Such a comparison naturally leads to comparing the Party and the Church.

Moreover, Jews serve another function: covering up the real causes of exploitation. Instead of directing people's attention to the real causes of exploitation, which lie in the relations of production, the causes of exploitation are shifted to the sphere of exchange, finance, banking, stock market speculation, etc., which Jews supposedly control. Thus, it is not the capitalist system as such that is to blame, but the Jews. If we eliminate them, we can preserve capitalism, but with economic forms of corporations and cooperatives, where we would cultivate humane relations, we could solve the social question. Of course, the basic condition for this solution is that people be imbued with the true Catholic faith. In this way, on the one hand, one can be fiercely against capitalism, while on the other hand, one maintains it since one is ardently against those who try to abolish it, declaring them as Jews. Jews are blamed for everything, both for capitalism and for its destruction. It is redundant to emphasise how well this anti-Semitism aligns with populist rhetoric that highlights the values of Catholicism and the nation. One must be practical in politics, and sound political practitioners use a discourse that "works," even if they cannot explain why. What matters is that it works.[14]

In understanding and assessing Žižek's critique, it is crucial to consider the historical context and the "moment" in which Žižek's book was published. His critique of Krek, Christian socialism, (Catholic) organicism, and corporatism can also be viewed as a preparation for the battle against the rise of conservative forces following the collapse of socialism in Slovenia and Yugoslavia. Anti-conservatives (liberals, leftists) anticipated their rise, and the battle had already begun. This was also noted by the leftist sociologist Vlado Miheljak, who, in his review of Žižek's book, praised the book and specifically highlighted the discussion of Krek as a highly relevant and necessary warning against the dangers of organicist, patriarchal, and similar ideologies (Miheljak 1988). The subtext is that this ideology is totalitarian, as a characteristic of totalitarianism is the destruction of civil society. To some extent, this can also be applied to Srečo Dragoš (1998), who criticises organicism as (pro)totalitarian, although his main target is not Krek, whom he overall views positively and even precious (Dragoš 2001).

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14 Žižek acknowledges that Krek had genuine merits in defending the Slovenes from capitalism and preserving the Slovenian nation. However, he warns that the price of this was the establishment of an ideology where anyone not aligned with Krek's ideas was not considered a true Slovenian (Žižek 1987, Chapter on Krek's Interpellation, 25ff).

Krek essentially advocated for subsidiarity and intermediary communities, which Žižek rejects as forms of patriarchy, the dulling of revolutionary spirit, and service to monopolistic capitalism and, of course, the Church, also an ally of capital. Žižek, in a "good old" Marxist fashion, exposes Krek as an ideologue of patriarchy, capital, and clericalism despite Krek presenting himself as a Christian socialist. Moreover, Christian socialism is, in fact, the ideology of capital, clericalism, and anti-revolutionism (23-24). Christian socialism appears as a regressive gesture, a return to organic connectedness that liberalism has destroyed, and a return to patriarchal connectedness. (24) In reality, it is merely an ideological mask. Christian socialism functions as a positive factor in the promotion of monopolistic capitalism and the abolition of liberal Manchester capitalism. This serves the interests of capital, which desires stability and social peace. Christian socialism and Catholic corporatism function to support monopolistic capitalism, as they aim for social peace. Žižek points out that the criticism of Christian socialism is not directed at capitalism per se but at Manchester capitalism. The situation is further complicated because the effects of Catholic corporatism and Christian socialism vary in different contexts: in the developed West, where monopolistic capitalism was already on the rise, Christian socialism functioned as an ally of capitalism, that is, monopolistic capitalism. In the economically backward Slovenian periphery, however, at the turn of the century, only liberal capitalism was present, and there, Krek's Christian socialism and corporatism actually acted in an anti-capitalist manner, opposing capitalism. Žižek notes that this is an excellent example of how the effect of the same ideology depends on the specific environment and circumstances in which it operates (the dialectic between ideology and reality). (Žižek 1987, 24) What is merely an ideological mask in the developed West is not just a façade but a reality on the backward periphery. "This is the general fate of peripheral, 'underdeveloped' regions to 'live literally' what is fundamentally only an 'ideological mask.'" (25)

According to Žižek, the real basis of Christian social "preaching" for a return to organicity is providing social peace (which monopolistic capitalism needs). "The Catholic Church was, in fact, the first to present the model of 'social peace,' which has not yet fully exhausted its power (although it is most consistently practised in non-Catholic countries, such as Japan)." (25) However, in Slovenia, the prevailing social process was not the transition from liberal to monopolistic capitalism but rather the formation of the bourgeois class itself. "In Slovenia, it was thus about preserving pre-bourgeois social relations." (Ibid.) Žižek mentions that Krek was undoubtedly aware of the anti-revolutionary nature of the social model he advocated but does not address whether Krek was aware of other dimensions of his social model that Žižek attributes to him.

Žižek continues his argument in favour of the thesis that Catholic doctrine on the social question was part of the transition from liberal capitalism to monopolistic capitalism:

"It is no coincidence, of course, that the period when Pope Leo XIII developed the Catholic stance on the so-called 'social' question in three encyclicals (1878, 1891, 1901) — that is, the period when the Christian social movement was taking shape — was precisely the period when 'Manchester liberalism' was already declining and being increasingly displaced by forms of monopolistic capital, large corporations, and trusts; this new phase of capitalism did not correspond to the unchecked 'war of all against all,' but rather to a peculiar 'social peace,' where the great capitalist 'fatherly' takes care of the needs of his workers, in return for dedicated work, loyalty to the company, etc." (Žižek 1987, 24)

Žižek accuses Krek of half-heartedness: Krek criticises capitalism on the one hand but warns against the workers' estates seizing power on the other. According to Krek, this would be a catastrophe and the destruction of society. Krek praises labour as the creator of all wealth but accepts only the slogan "Honor to Labor!" without additional words "and Power."

The accusation by communists against Christian socialists that they work counter-revolutionarily is quite old. It was already voiced during the time of Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza (Yugoslav Professional Union, hereinafter JSZ)[15] (Prunk 1977). Various accusations are made against Catholic corporatism in the Slovenian context. Some closely associate it with fascism or totalitarianism (Dragoš 1998). Žižek is more analytically penetrating and precise here. He shows that Catholic corporatism is not fascism, as it is conservative and rejects the instability and expansiveness of fascism. Thus, Catholicism and fascism are fundamentally incompatible.

JSZ, Krek's "successors" before World War II, explicitly rejected capitalism as incompatible with Christian ethics (Prunk 1977). Other Christian socialists outside of JSZ, for example, Edvard Kocbek, also explicitly rejected capitalism as

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15 JSZ was founded on September 28, 1909, as the central body of the Christian-social professional organisations (trade unions), incorporating various professional associations. By the end of 1913, there were 61 groups in Carniola with a total of 4,772 members. After 1927, when JSZ gained new leadership, it adopted a new statute and transformed into a fully modern trade union, increasingly distancing itself from the leadership of the Slovene People's Party (Slovenska ljudska stranka (SLS)). In June 1932, JSZ officially severed ties with SLS. JSZ was dissolved in 1941 (Wikipedia)". https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jugoslovanska_strokovna_zveza (accessed 17. 3. 2024).

un-Christian. Of course, the option remains that what they intended was one thing, while the actual function of their ideology and movement was another. However, monopolistic capitalism was already present in Slovenia during the years between the two world wars. It supports Žižek's understanding that the Catholic Church abandoned corporatism after World War II and previously Christian socialism (as a term). They had served their purpose in the service of capital, as one might comment in the spirit of Marxist critique.

3 Conclusion

Krek's corporatism can be read in two ways: negatively and positively. Negatively, it is seen as a politically toothless, politically non-autonomous, and externally directed pluralism (of self-managing interests). Žižek reads it this way. The positive understanding interprets it as an effort to prevent apparent democracy, post-democracy (Crouch 2004), the inadequacy of understanding democracy as mere "selfish" assertion of purely particular interests, moving towards a relational social model. Hartmut Rosa advocates for such a model. In his advocacy, he applies his theory of resonance (Rosa 2016; 2018; 2019a; b; c; d; 2020; 2023). Ultimately, it is becoming increasingly apparent and widely recognised that we cannot leave the economy to itself alone; the state[16] must intervene, and some coordinators and mediators are needed, such as the Economic-Social Council in Slovenia, etc. These are elements of modern societies where, if I may be somewhat excessive, corporatism and relational understanding continue to live on. This applies not only to the economy but also to the political sphere and civil society, where it is clear that we must cultivate the common good and ensure its foundations and sources. Žižek's problem is that he struggles with accepting the discourse of the common good, viewing it as a mystification of some other interest, fundamentally usually capital. However, as we increasingly painfully realise and experience that abandoning the common good is unacceptable, we cannot renounce the ethics of the common good. The principle of the common good guided Krek, and in this fundamental respect, he certainly took the right direction. Of course, there are many aspects of his understanding that we cannot accept today, such as regarding the status of women and the inviolable and su-

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16 Žižek rejects the claim that we live in the era of neoliberalism precisely because states are now so heavily involved in politics.

preme moral authority of the Church. However, Žižek wants to cut Krek's model at its root and rejects its very core.

The reasons for Žižek's rejection of Krek's "friendly" attitude towards capitalist employers and his advocacy for cooperation and positive relations between workers and employers can already be found in Marx. Critics have also directed these accusations at Hartmut Rosa, who rejects merely insisting on the struggle between workers and employers but emphasises that positive relations between them are also necessary.[17] Thus, Rosa's response to such criticisms is relevant to Žižek's critique of Krek. This is not surprising, as there are significant similarities between Rosa's and Krek's views on social issues. The essence of this similarity lies in both emphasising the importance of good relations for discovering and "creating" common good and (thus) successfully addressing social issues. These relations also include those between members of different social "classes," between capitalists and workers, between employers and employees, etc. Rosa's arguments for the necessity of a resonant society of the common good indirectly highlight the positive aspects of Krek's model and the shortcomings of Žižek's understanding and critique. I believe that resonant social theory is a promising modern way to continue the healthy aspects of the "organic" relational social model.

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17 For Rosa's defence of the resonant social model of the common good and its critique, see Ketterer and Becker, eds. 2020.

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SOCIAL VISION OF PROFESSOR GRIVEC: FROM ECCLESIASTICAL UNITY TO NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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1 Introduction

Franc Grivec (1878–1963) was a Catholic priest and long-time professor (1920–1963) at the Ljubljana Faculty of Theology. He has been the leading Slovenian expert on ecclesiology, Eastern Christian theology and the missionary work of the holy brothers Cyril (died 869) and Methodius (died 885). His scientific approach is characterised by combining philology, historiography and theology. (Malmenvall 2022, 10) It is important to consider that the study of Russian culture was one of the main lines of work of this Slovenian professor, which was present throughout his academic career, from his first publications in the early twentieth century to his final period in the early 1960s. Grivec's reception of Russian culture can be divided into three parts. The first covers the history of the East Slavic space, focusing on the Russian Orthodox Church. The second part provides an interpretation of the religious and political thinking of notable nineteenth-century intellectuals and philosophers, such as Aleksey Khomyakov (1804–1860), Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) and Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900). While relating to the first two, the third part focuses on the ideational reasons for and consequences of the revolutionary ferment in Russian society at the turn of the nineteenth century. (12–13)

Grivec shaped Slovenian higher education at a pivotal time in history, i.e., after Slovenia joined a South Slavic and mostly non-Catholic country (Malmenvall 2023b, 959). Even though he was foremost a theologian and historian rather than a political thinker, the ecclesiological and historical themes he studied answered the burning social issues of his time, linking the past with the present. Before and during World War II, when Grivec studied Russia and the revolution, Bolshevism drew significant attention and was often perceived as "the Russian threat" in Yugoslav and European intellectual circles. Grivec's publications reflect both an effort for renewed unity among Christians, where the thought of Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), a Russian philosopher, is central, and a search for the ideational reasons for the success of the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, where the Slovenian author advocates religious consciousness complemented by national consciousness as a counterbalance to socialism. Among his publications on Rus-

sian culture considered in the present study, the famous monograph *Narodna zavest in boljševizem* (*National Consciousness and Bolshevism*) (1944) exhibits the most social engagement. Grivec compiled it based on lectures to Ljubljana's primary- and high-school teachers in the first half of 1944. Its content can be compared with the monographic discussion by Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948), a Russian philosopher, titled *The New Middle Ages: Reflections on the Fate of Russia and Europe* (*Новое средневековье: Размышление о судьбе России и Европы*, 1924). (Malmenvall 2023a, 101; 2023b, 959) This article analyses those and other works in line with the comparative and contextual approach of intellectual history[1] and historical theology, which provide an interlacement between historiography and consideration for the theological giving of meaning to reality.

2 Solovyov and Russian Orthodoxy

In the context of Russian culture, Professor Grivec devoted the most attention to Vladimir Solovyov. He considered Solovyov a promoter of united Christianity or synthesis between papal authority and the messianic mission of the Russian nation. (Malmenvall 2018, 953–955; 2021; 204) The Slovenian researcher showed loyalty to the official position of the Catholic Church of the time, which did not yet practice ecumenism in the modern sense of the word and advocated the so-called Uniate method, i.e., the return and integration of "eastern schismatics" into the Catholic Church as Christ's only actual spiritual organism on Earth while preserving their liturgical and legal specificities. Grivec built on this position with the idea of the connecting character of the heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodius and of (Catholic) Slavs as intermediaries between the East and West. He built all his research into medieval ecclesiastic and philological questions on this pragmatic unifying foundation. (Malmenvall 2018, 953–955; Zajc 2018, 902–904; 913; Trontelj 2019, 48–49; 51–53)

In Grivec's opinion, the most in-depth works by Vladimir Solovyov are his ecclesiological treatises *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics* (Russian: Великий спор и христианская политика, 1883) and *Russia and the Universal Church* (French: *La Russie et l'Eglise universelle*, Russian: Россия и вселенская

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1   Guiding principles of intellectual history are the study of ideas in correlation with the social-cultural background of a particular period and space and the discursive or linguistic dimension of expressing ideas. Quentin Skinner (1940–) (1969) and John Pocock (1924–2023) (1987), professors at the University of Cambridge, are considered the founders of intellectual history.

Церковь, 1889). For Solovyov, the central intellectual goal was always the same: to find the integrality of knowledge and life as an absence of contradictions between faith and reason. In searching for integrality, a special place is given to a desire for the reunion of the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) parts of the same universal Church. (Grivec 1960, 28; Malmenvall 2015, 348–349) As explained by the Slovenian researcher, Solovyov does not understand his ecumenic attitude in terms of leaving the Russian Orthodox Church but rather as the unification of both Church parts in the same mystical body of Christ on Earth, led by the bishop of Rome, i.e., the Pope, which would entail an expansion and reform of the existing Catholic Church (Hondzinskij 2017, 369). Such a reformed society is facilitated by the Church hierarchy headed by the Pope and a global state led by the Russian emperor, who is to become the secular "arm" of the Pope's spiritual authority. Thus, with Solovyov, the ideal of the universality of the Church translates to the universality of secular authority, which is to help believers freely realise Christian principles in social life, along with the Church. (Malmenvall 2021, 208) In this regard, Solovyov also perceives the organisation of the existing Catholic Church as a pragmatic foundation of social engagement against ever-stronger "anti-Christian forces" (Hondzinskij 2017, 382; 384). According to Solovyov, in his time, it is the "connective" Russian culture, supposedly characterised both by accepting the "best experiences" of foreign nations and by the preserved faith in God with a sense for seeking out the truth, that can establish such a synthesis within a reformed Church. (Malmenvall 2021, 208; Hondzinskij 2017, 371; Vasilenko 2004, 78–79)

Grivec notes that a turning point for Russian culture occurred in the fifteenth century when, following the fall of its former Byzantine "teacher," the Muscovite state assumed the role of the protector of worldwide Orthodoxy and consequently adopted a more rigid stance towards people of other faiths. Then, in the early eighteenth century, following the example of Protestant regional Churches, Peter the Great (reigned: 1682–1725) subordinated the Moscow Patriarchate to the state, taking away its independent initiative and "tearing it away from organic development." (1915, 126–127) According to him, even the intellectual ferment of the nineteenth century and the later revolutionary developments took inconstant and extreme forms. (134–136) As the Slovenian author explains, the extremism of Bolsheviks is an integral part of a broader mechanism of Russian cultural history, in which there were "repeated occurrences of the idea of the special Christian mission of the Russian nation" in relation to other lands and peoples,

something also discussed by Slavophiles,[2] Dostoyevsky and Solovyov. "In its own way, this idea was expressed a long time ago[3] in the belief that Moscow was the Third Rome." (108)

3 Revolution and National Consciousness

Grivec believes the most reliable path to prevent socialist revolutions is harmony between faith and social life. (1944, 10) Bolshevism thus threatens especially those nations "whose patriotic consciousness is not rooted in holy religious traditions." (14) It is worth noting his view that Slovenians and Russians share a lack of national consciousness and "excessive partisanship," which allegedly benefits the spread of communism. (Malmenvall 2023b, 964) The growth of national consciousness was allegedly hindered by two barriers: from within, Slovenians were divided by the issue of autonomy and centralism in the governance arrangements of Yugoslavia, "even the issue of whether Slovenians even constituted a nation;" externally, the unification with Serbs and Croats exacerbated socio-economic issues that "fueled the discontent of the masses and cleared the way for the socialist international." (Grivec 1944, 20–21)

The author in question is characterised by an orientation towards the early Slovenian and shared Slavic history, which he claims enables the development of a single social orientation combining religious and modern national consciousness. This concerns questions about the "contact of Slovenians" with the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius. (Malmenvall 2023b, 966) Building on this, the author draws attention to Russian propaganda literature occurring at the time, which, in its explanations of local and world history, systematically builds an image of centuries-long slavery of the masses under the yoke of the Church, state and capitalism, portraying the Christian faith and Church as allies to oppressors of humanity, whose actions necessitate a rebellion of the oppressed. "Empha-

2 Slavophiles refers to a literary and philosophical circle of intellectuals who argued that the Russian historical path was special vis-à-vis the rest of Europe and praised the "organic" (socially harmonic) character of Russian Orthodoxy. The main representatives of this circle were Aleksey Khomyakov, Ivan Kireyevsky (1806–1856) and Yuri Samarin (1819–1876). (Malmenvall 2022, 31–34)

3 An overview of the idea of Moscow as the "Third Rome" – the successor to the Byzantine Empire and the protector of Orthodoxy in the "end times" before the Second Coming of Christ – is provided in the following classical study: Stremoukhoff 1953.

sizing the slave past is psychological preparation /…/ for the dissemination of Bolshevik ideas." (Grivec 1944, 27)

Concerning the early periods of Slovenian history, Grivec considers there is a crucial linguistic, historical and theological link between the missionary work of Cyril and Methodius and the Freising Manuscripts as the earliest written monument in Slovenian as well as the oldest Slavic monument in the Latin script (Malmenvall 2023b, 967). Moreover, the Freising Manuscripts allegedly confirm that contacts with the brothers from Thessaloniki were not an "insignificant episode" at the extreme Pannonian edge of Slovenian territory but rather "stretched deep into its centre." Allegedly, the Freising Manuscripts were first compiled in Carantania. In terms of content and style, their second sermon was similar to a speech by Methodius preserved in the so-called *Glagolita Clozianus*,[4] one of the earliest miscellanies of Church Slavic literature as a whole. (32)

According to Grivec, the acts of Cyril and Methodius raise "another social peculiarity." Their "brilliant work" stresses the "charity" of Christianity, i.e., the respect of those not part of the political elite or not yet educated enough to accept the Christian faith. In this context, the Slovenian researcher asserts that the Slovenian cultural history features another person considered a "great teacher and educator," whose personality and achievements "exemplarily amalgamated" national and spiritual values. "He avidly pointed out cherished memories of the ninth century while his heart felt for the lower social classes." Here, Grivec refers to the theological professor, national awakener, writer and bishop of Lavant/Maribor, Anton Martin Slomšek (1800–1862). (33)[5] Grivec concludes the monograph in question with the reflection that national consciousness is part of the universalist Christian worldview, according to which each nation is equal before God and has an opportunity for coexistence with other nations (Malmenvall 2023b, 969).

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4   Fran Miklošič (1813–1891), a famous Slovenian-Austrian linguist (1860), prepared a reference scholarly edition of the miscellany.

5   In many respects, Grivec's praise for Slomšek's achievements in the religious and social spheres matches the previously established positive image of the Lavant bishop in the Slovenian Catholic camp during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century (Deželak Trojar 2016).

4 European History and the "New Middle Ages"

The first part of *Narodna zavest in boljševizem*, where Grivec discusses the lines
of ideas in Russian culture that contributed to the victory of the October Revo-
lution, is heavily based on the views of the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, which
Grivec mostly agrees with. Although the Slovenian author does not explicitly
refer to Berdyaev's monographic discussion *The New Middle Ages*, Grivec's
notions of the Slavic Middle Ages reflect a similarity to the philosopher's per-
ception of that time as a road to the "New Middle Ages," i.e. a new type of society
and culture. (2002, 222)

The Russian thinker finds deep reactionism in returning to the principles of
the modern era, which peaked in the nineteenth century and "are now disinte-
grating." In particular, the principles of the *passé* modern era include rationalist
education, individualism and an industrial capitalistic economic system. The
climax of the modern era is the rejection of God, with socialism appearing as
the end of this historical path and the start of a new one. Berdyaev continues that
the New Middle Ages can start – similarly to how the Renaissance could appear
as a multifaceted synthesis of pagan and Christian principles. (227–228) In this
regard, the author's call for the New Middle Ages appears as a call for a "spiritual
revolution" (229). The religion of the "true God," Jesus Christ, will not necessar-
ily prevail regarding numbers in the New Middle Ages. However, all layers of
life will be marked by religious struggle and "religious polarisation." Based on
this, Russian socialism, which involves the search for "something eternal," is no
longer part of the modern era but constitutes the beginning of the New Middle
Ages. The Bolshevik revolution has thus brought a secularised form of medieval
patterns as Russia has never given up on the dimensions of the holy and almost
directly transitioned from the vestiges of the past Middle Ages, from Orthodoxy
to the Bolshevik final truth about humankind and society. (230–231)

"Among all nations of the world, the Russian nation is the most all-encom-
passing, universal by spirit," claims Berdyaev. This is because, throughout
history, Russian culture has given in to the "worst" and diametrically opposed
temptations: the exclusive internationalism of West-oriented intelligentsia, which
aimed to abolish Russia, and the exclusive nationalism aiming for Russia to
break away from Europe. The signs of the new historical period include socialist
universalism and the efforts to join the separate parts of the Christian world.
(242) The New Middle Ages thus overcome the individualism or atomism of the
modern era – either "falsely" through socialism or "truly" through the Church

or "sobornost" (*соборность*),[6] which leads to unity among Christians. The most outstanding merit of the spirit of the New Middle Ages is the discovery of humans as beings of community who belong or yearn to belong to an "organic and hierarchically organised" community, such as the "mystical body of Christ," i.e., the Church, the ideal form according to Berdyaev. In this regard, socialism, similarly to Christianity, may even be "anti-individualistic and hierarchical" but requires individuals to totally subject themselves to political authority and be drowned in the collective, providing a twisted version of community life. (Berdjaev 2002, 248; Gilbert 2012, 146; 159)

Grivec shares a common starting point with the Russian philosopher as the works of both emphasise the decisive importance of their own moments in history. Grivec and Berdyaev advocate for a society that is coordinated between different classes and grows with the voluntary entry of individuals into the "body" of the Church. In their opinion, such a harmonious society requires the presence of religious principles in public life, i.e., overcoming the modern-era distinction between the religious and secular realities – their goal is to attain a social synthesis deriving from a holistic view of humans as persons involved in the ecclesiastic and political community. They both advocate for loyalty to one's own national community while respecting other nations, claiming all people are sons of the same Creator. The most important aspect of the Middle Ages, according to Grivec and Berdyaev, is its prioritisation of spiritual over material values, the latter being only results of the spiritual ones. In Grivec's case, the Middle Ages have an additional value. Within Slavic history, they are defined by the work and heritage of Cyril and Methodius, which provides the dimension of connecting the Christian East and West, something also pursued by Berdyaev and even more so by Solovyov, one of the main "protagonists" of Grivec's publications.

5 Conclusion

Franc Grivec was not a political thinker but a theologian and historian. However, some ecclesiological and historical themes he studied answered the pressing social questions of his time, thus connecting the past with the present. In Grivec's

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6   Berdyaev bases the concept of sobornost on the views of Slavophiles, especially Aleksey Khomyakov, according to whom sobornost refers to a voluntary reception of the heritage of the Church and an amicable connectedness of its members resulting in harmony between the hierarchy and laypeople (Homjakov 1995; Hondzinskij 2017, 172–173; 182–183; 188–189).

pedagogical and research work, it is possible to identify a specific Christian social vision that opposes both socialism and liberal capitalism. His views are expressed at the level of principles, as they provide ideational guidelines, not elaborate proposals for improving the actual circumstances. The first core of Grivec's social vision is unity among Christians under the auspices of the Catholic Church, i.e., the Uniate movement, where the thought of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) is highlighted. The second core is the national consciousness among Slovenians and other Slavs, which acts as a defence mechanism against the socialist revolution and expresses the equal dignity of every nation before its Creator. In Grivec's social vision, Russia occupies a negative and, at the same time, positive starting point for reflection – based on the exclusivity of its Orthodoxy and, at the same time, a preserved sense of the search for truth, based on the revolution carried out and at the same time experiences in preventing its spread. The Slovenian author places the two conceptual cores (Christian unity and national consciousness) within the example of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius. In this way, he establishes a mythical idea of the medieval period, thus approaching the theory of the "New Middle Ages" of the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948).

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DIVISION OF SPIRITS BETWEEN CATHOLIC AND LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND RELIGION IN SLOVENIA BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

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1 Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, at a time of social upheaval and intensive formation of Slovenian national identity, the territory of today's Slovenia was still under foreign rule, mainly of the Habsburg monarchy and later Austria-Hungary. Despite pressures and attempts at assimilation, Slovenians developed their culture, language and consciousness of national belonging. Slovenians' political awakening and cultural assertion led to intensive dialogues between intellectuals on the Slovenian language, literature and culture, national identity and the future of the Slovenian nation. Among the most high-profile was the disputation between Josip Vidmar, Aleš Ušeničnik, Anton Vodnik and Božo Vodušek, which revealed their deep divergence in their perception of art and religion.

In the 1920s, the young Slovenian intellectual Josip Vidmar (1895–1992) began to publish essays on the relationship between art and religion in Slovenian journals, and over time, he established himself as an authority in the field of Slovenian literary theory and criticism. In his reflections, he argued for the autonomy of the aesthetic criterion, which is independent of worldview frameworks. He stressed that the expression of Christianity is not and cannot be art in itself. He characterised Catholic literature as uniform, mostly national-educational and largely moralistic.

He stood for the freethinking man of letters, for whom the world and life are a mystery, to which he is deeply connected to the core of his individuality. For him, it is not the outlook that is important but the experience and mood towards the world. Vidmar believed that a free writer constantly deals with the mysteries of human nature, whereas this work is difficult for a Catholic writer.

Catholic intellectuals opposed his essays, accusing Vidmar of having a disjointed and misguided artistic outlook. They argued that this stemmed from his complete or at least insufficient knowledge of some of the basic questions concerning spiritual life and from an insufficient knowledge of the artistic material to which he referred.

Their debates were not merely intellectual confrontations but reflected broader social currents and a collective search for the direction of further development of Slovenian literature and literary evaluation. The article addresses the fundamental thoughts of the liberal literary critic Josip Vidmar and Catholic intellectuals Aleš Ušeničnik, Anton Vodnik, and Božo Vodušek on the relationship between art and religion. The article aims to trace the development of the Slovenian artistic and religious landscape in the 20th century and to examine the resonance and validity of their arguments in contemporary times. The essential arguments from their disputes are presented, comparing Vidmar's essays from the book *Meditacije* (Meditations) (1952/53) with the polemical responses of Vodnik, Ušeničnik, and Vodušek, which remained less known and were published only in older journals.

2 Vidmar on the Causes of His Polemical Struggle with Catholic Intellectuals

In his *Meditations* (1954), Vidmar published articles from 1928 to 1952. He divided them into three thematically rounded parts, introduced by a short introduction (pp. 5–8): 1) From the Diary (pp. 9–121); 2) Three Notes (pp. 123–195); 3) Polemics (pp. 197–253). In the introduction to the collection *Meditations*, Vidmar writes that among the compositions of his book, "only the polemics published in it, without the texts of the opponents with whom I have had a discussion, need some explanation [...]" (Vidmar 1954, 5). The reason for his writing of the polemics was the observation that Catholic criticism in the 1920s was biased and favoured the works of Catholic writers over others (Vidmar 1954, 5–6).

Vidmar pointed to the emergence of a new generation of "new Catholics" who wanted to bring Slovenian culture, especially literature, "with their new, 'purified' and to a modest extent anti-clerical Catholicism" into "a new, deeply Catholic era" (Vidmar 1954, 6). He counted among this generation, particularly the brothers Anton and France Vodnik, influential Slovenian poets and literary critics, and their followers gathered around the journal *Križ na gori* (Cross on the Mountain). This journal began publication in 1924 as the central journal of the movement named after it and was renamed *Križ* (Cross) in 1927. The movement was born spontaneously in Ljubljana and Maribor out of the problems of Slovenian society and the moral, social and political problems of Slovenian Catholicism. The movement's followers opposed the spiritual and moral shallowness of Christian practice at the time and advocated a personal experience of Christ's love. They were committed to the moral renewal of the Church and to finding a personal relationship with Christ. Vidmar blamed these Catholic critics for continuing older Catholic criticism and felt the need to refute their positions. He

considered the basis of Catholic criticism to be religious-ideological. Therefore, the main purpose of his criticism was to discover "the real values in our literature" and to expose "the bias in Catholic criticism" (Vidmar 1954, 6). He stressed the relative unimportance of any worldview in creating works of art (Vidmar 1954, 6).

3 Vidmar's Polemic with Anton Vodnik on the Relationship between Art and Worldview

Anton Vodnik, Slovenian poet, critic and editor (1901–1965), received his doctorate in 1927 with a dissertation on the sculptor Francesco Robba. Influenced by the poets Rainer Maria Rilke and Otokar Březina and by the anthology of expressionist poetry *Menschheitsdämmerung* (ed. Kurt Pinthus, 1919–1920; in English translation *The Twilight of Humanity*), he embraced spiritual expressionism in his work. During the Second World War, Vodnik's poetry was not prolific, as it was at odds with the assertion of socialist realism in the changed social conditions. As editor of the journal *Križ na gori*, he concentrated on creating a newsletter for Catholic youth. Although he was not a distinctly polemical writer, he showed himself as such in his polemical confrontation with Josip Vidmar, who had already denied Catholic art its highest artistic value. He revealed his views on art and religion in "The Art View of Jos. Vidmar" (*Dom in svet*, 1927) and "After Ten Years" (*Dom in svet*, 1930).

In a 1927 article, Vodnik criticised Josip Vidmar's artistic views. He notes that Vidmar's artistic outlook "does not have the character of a complete system" but is merely "a colourful collection of various insights," which often contradict and cancel each other out (Vodnik 1927, 245). In his critique, he stresses the importance of recognising the spiritual depth of faith over art as a worldview.

Vodnik also accuses Vidmar of viewing art only from a world-view point of view, "never as an autonomous spiritual phenomenon, a world complete and complete in itself, in which its own regularity operates" (Vodnik 1927, 245). He believes this narrow perspective can cause confusion and disorder in the world of values. He points out: "What is interesting is that Vidmar never speaks of aesthetic values and aesthetic – in the strictest sense – emotion in art [...]. I am thinking here of characters as bearers of aesthetic value – that is, beauty [...]" (Vodnik 1927, 245).

He stresses that, despite its autonomy, art is still in organic connection with the rest of the spiritual life, e.g. the religious and the ethical. He adds that religion, or ethos itself, is not yet a worldview in any broad sense but only one – and an essential one at that – of the elements that make it up. The irrational nature of religion is justified, among other things, by the words: "Vidmar is mistaken

when he thinks that mere artistic experience is irrational. As if the religious 'experience' of the world were rational when it is irrational, direct in its deepest essence and meaning." (Vodnik 1927, 247)

Vodnik sees Vidmar's first fallacy as the critic attributes the elementary mental world of thinking and feeling to the world of religions. In contrast, the higher spiritual world of an intuitive experience of life is denied to religion and attributed to art, which, in his view, is free from all "dogmatic" shackles and systems. He writes: "This view of his exists in the fact that he considers the spiritual world to be represented only by – art, not by religion, not by the ethos [...] of science." (Vodnik 1927, 245) Vodnik believes that art, although important, cannot fully encompass the spiritual and ethical aspects that religion contains.

He also looks at Vidmar's understanding of Catholicism. He says that the "ecclesiastical-legal and organisational side of Catholicism," which Vidmar may consider "the essential sign of Catholicism", does not in the least concern and express its religious essence. They constitute only its "extreme but sociologically necessary periphery," but Catholicism's essence is not diminished or hindered (Vodnik 1927, 250).

In 1928, Vidmar published his response to Vodnik's contribution in an article entitled "Art and Outlook" (Vidmar 1954, 199–212), in which he expressed the opinion that Vodnik rejected his outlook because he misunderstood his thoughts on the relationship between worldview and art.

In discussing the relationship between worldview and art, Vidmar stresses that the conscious worldview must be carefully distinguished from the "unconscious" or the actual relationship to the world (Vidmar 1954, 200). For him, a worldview is "a mentally formulated personal conception of the whole world" (Vidmar 1954, 200), which serves as a rudder for the person and enables him or her to "quickly and definitely take appropriate positions with regard to the phenomena and situations of life" (Vidmar 1954, 201).

Vidmar believes that a worldview "is not a reliable expression, a reliable image of personality" and "is not as important and primary an element of man's interiority as is generally thought in our intellectual age" (Vidmar 1954, 203–204). It is "only a device, only a temporary fiction which man creates for the temporary ordering of his personal life, and of which its provisionality must be constantly borne in mind" (Vidmar 1954, 204). However, since no principle has the flexibility to suffice for all the inexhaustibility of life's possibilities, he finds more valuable than any outlook "contact with his unconscious nature, which indeed often goes its ways without regard to outlook, without regard to conscious effort, and which is constantly forcing the consciousness to a new conjuring up of moral thought" (Vidmar 1954, 204).

He believes one needs insight into his views and perceptions beyond his worldview to understand a person truly. In his view, art, particularly literature, offers artists a platform to express their worldview. He believes contact with unconscious nature is more valuable than the rigid hold of a worldview. (Vidmar 1954, 202).

In 1930, in his contribution "After Ten Years" in the journal *Dom in svet,* Vodnik responded to Vidmar's justifications of the relationship between art and worldview. He stressed the necessity of dealing with a phenomenon that, at first sight, seems insignificant but can be fatal to the spiritual life of the Slovenian people. His reflection was prompted by Vidmar's report on Slovenian literature in 1929, published in the Yearbook of the *Matica Srpska*.

In the article, Vodnik criticises Vidmar for distorting the facts and adapting them to his subjective view of art to support his unreliable and fictional view. He points out that Vidmar's position is erroneous and unprovable, which Vidmar unwittingly revealed in his report of the *Matica Srpska Yearbook*. In this report, Vidmar was obliged to acknowledge the Catholic writer Ivan Pregelj as the most outstanding and original personality among Slovenian writers and his work *Regina roža ajdovska* as one of the best works of the past year. At the same time, he could not find any freethinking writers to confirm his judgement of the greater value of freethinking literature compared to Catholic literature. Vodnik also points to the neglect of aesthetic criteria in Vidmar's evaluation of works of art, as Vidmar downplays the importance of aesthetic qualities and characterises them as naked artistry (Vodnik 1930, 66).

Vodnik describes Vidmar as an extreme individualist with no sense of objective values who sees a restriction on free life in any ordered worldview. He notes that Vidmar speaks only of the Christian religious-spiritual cosmos, the depths and possibilities of which naturalists cannot understand. He points out that Vidmar does not fight openly but remains inaccessible in his disguise and, at the same time, insensitive and inaccessible to the arguments of the Catholic side. Hence, a polemic with him is fruitless.

Vidmar is waging a world-confessional struggle against Christianity and Catholicism, denying their vitality and value, Vodnik argues. He believes that any proof of the aesthetic value of Catholic literature is meaningless for Vidmar, as it cannot change his negative attitude towards Christianity. He sees the only possibility of opposing Vidmar in challenging his conception of Christianity, "which is rationalistically narrow and naturalistically shallow" (Vodnik 1930, 67), and the cultural background of his struggle, which, in Vodnik's opinion, shows a sad picture of the young Slovene freethinking, if Vidmar is indeed its representative.

Vodnik notes that the young Slovenian freethinkers are introducing into Slovenian cultural life the spirit of liberalism, which was defeated long ago. He notes

that in the struggle against a religiously based worldview, its representatives are denied the possibility and right to cultural creation and participation and are labelled "an inferior slave race" (Vodnik 1930, 67). Vodnik warns that "this delusional spirit from the past" (Vodnik 1930, 67) harms the whole of Slovenian spiritual life, as it undermines the foundations of healthy development because of its cultural insincerity and ideological reactionariness.

4 Vidmar's Polemic with Aleš Ušeničnik on the Non-spiritual Nature of Art

Aleš Ušeničnik (1868–1952), one of the most important Slovenian philosophers and theologians, was "the main Catholic philosophical and ideological authority in the 20th century until the end of the Second World War" (Žalec 2022, 956). He was the successor of the radical advocate of the separation of spirits, Anton Mahnič, who sought to make a clear distinction between Catholics and liberals and believed that it was necessary to separate Catholic thought and values from liberal and secular influences, which, in his view, were detrimental to the spiritual and moral health of society. In his article "Ušeničnik's Vision of Social Renewal, Its Context and Origins" (2022), Bojan Žalec focuses on Ušeničnik's vision of the renewal of Slovenian society, social and spiritual: "He believed – utopianistically – in the possibility of a Catholic renewal of all areas and subsystems of Slovenian culture and society. Politically, he advocated Christian democracy. Economically, he advocated cooperatives and corporations but rejected economic liberalism (capitalism) and materialist socialism or communism. He called the right way Christian socialism or Christian solidarism, or the Christian social system. […] Inspired by Leo XIII, like Mahnič before him, he advocated the ideal of a 'new Christian society' – 'the gradual re-Christianization of the whole of society'" (Žalec 2022, 956, 970).

Ušeničnik critically responded to Vidmar's reflections on the relationship between art and worldview in his 1929 article "On Free Art: In Defence of Christian Artists." Known for his voluminous works in sociology, philosophy and ontology, Ušeničnik received his doctorate in philosophy and theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and worked as a professor at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana. He edited the journals *Katoliški obzornik* (Catholic Observer) and *Čas* (Time) and advocated Neo-Thomism, emphasising self-reflection and intentionality in human consciousness.

He was particularly interested in the relationship between the beautiful and the good in aesthetics and art theory. He believed that art is subordinate to morality, as the beautiful is subordinate to the good. The aim of art must be the idealisation of the object, guided by divine inspiration, which excludes non-virtuous thoughts or emotions as the true object of art. Art must serve truth and beauty,

with aesthetic laws subordinated to ethical ones. He agreed with Anton Mahnič that art cannot be autonomous and that there is no such thing as "free art".

Ušeničnik expressed his critical attitude towards Vidmar's views by saying:

"If dogma or morality so bound artistic freedom that elementary creation was no longer possible, then it would mean that a Christian or a Catholic could not be a true artist at all. Yes, since the vast majority of humanity has a religion and the vast majority of humanity has a morality, almost all of humanity would be excommunicated from the realm of art altogether. Of course, this wonderful corollary obviously shows that not everything can be right in these claims. Surely a true Christian would rather lay down his pen, brush, and chisel than be disobedient to the highest truth and justice, his God, but he must wonder why, since he is faithful to God, the kingdom of beauty should be closed to him? [...] Thus must the Christian artist ask himself and the Christian philosopher with him. Does he not ask so justly?" (Ušeničnik 1929, 337–338)

In 1929, Vidmar responded to Ušeničnik's criticism with the article "Divine Thought and Revelation." In it, he expressed his concerns about Ušeničnik's understanding of the relationship between Christian dogma and morality and art. He stressed that the artist's instinct is not merely the desire to create beauty, but the expression of one's own life, nature and personality in a unique reality.

Vidmar defines the dichotomy between the Christian and the artist and other conflicting identities, such as the nihilist and the artist, the Marxist and the artist. He stresses the importance of the artist's recognition and expression of his inner creativity and humanity and belief in personal truth as the most sacred aspect of life. He concludes:

"One or the other. Either a Christian or an artist, but also: either a Nietzschean or an artist, either a Marxist or an artist, etc. […] Either to live intimately with oneself, listening to the often obscure voices that arise within, or to live beyond oneself, deluded in some perhaps deceptive dawn that is spilt across the impenetrable clouds of the sky. There is undoubtedly only one possibility for the artist: the immutable law of art." (Vidmar 1954, 222)

Ušeničnik responds to Vidmar's essay in 1930 with an article "Christianity and Art" (Ušeničnik 1930, 53–64). In his reply, he argues that art is not only a confession of an a priori human image but also shows the world as it is, in its actual image. He states that according to Shakespeare, the purpose of drama is "to show nature a mirror, the virtues her true characters, sin its true image, the century and the time of its being its form," and that the actors are "the mirror and the abbreviated chronicle of the century" (Ušeničnik 1930, 56). Ušeničnik says that according to Goethe, "only the artistic gift, only the capacity to see and the ability to create, is a priori." Cankar, on the other hand, said that "the

condition of all art is the artist's life and the peculiarity of his eyes born of that life" (Ušeničnik 1930, 57). From this, he concludes:

"If this is so – and it seems to be so – then it is also possible to have a "peculiarity of the eye" born of the life of Christianity, the life of Christian morals and dogmas. An artist who had an a priori artistic gift and experienced Christian dogmas and morals in himself would also receive from this life a special way of seeing, and this special way of seeing would also be expressed in his works of art. He would be a Christian artist." (Ušeničnik 1930, 57)

As Ušeničnik says, he sometimes thought there was no such thing as Christian art in the true sense of the word; the Christian artist had no unique characteristics, and Christian art was only the substance of his artworks. Now, he thinks Christianity gives the artist's life a unique way of seeing. His nature and life experience generally distinguish his artistic view. Thus, Fra Angelico would have been a Christian artist not only because he was a Christian and because he painted Christian subjects but also because of the particularity of his artistic outlook.

5 Vidmar's Polemic with Božo Vodušek on the Relationship between Art and Worldview

In his article "Are These Literary Problems?" Božo Vodušek (1905–1978), a prominent Slovenian poet, essayist and linguist, responded to Josip Vidmar's views on the relationship between art and opinion. Known for his poetry with deep existential themes and social criticism, Vodušek published poems and translations in the 1920s in the manuscript journals *Plamen* (Flame) and *Dom in svet*, thus joining the Catholic cultural circle.

In addition to his poetry, he also established himself as an essayist, known for his intellectual sharpness, ethical rigour and impartiality. He published his essays in various journals, including *Križ na gori*, *Dom in svet*, *Krog*, *Sodobnost* (Contemporary) and *Ljubljanski zvon* (Ljubljana Bell). His most comprehensive work is a critical study of Ivan Cankar. With his reflections on ethical, national, political and literary issues and his polemics with Vidmar and other thinkers, Vodušek became one of the central Slovenian essayists of the pre-war era. His originality and the far-reaching nature of his views transcended the ideological definitions of the time.

In his article "Are These Literary Problems?" Vodušek pointed out that Vidmar's questioning of whether art and Christianity, and indeed of art and worldview in general, were compatible was "theorising in a vacuum and completely superfluous because quite concrete examples show that they are compatible" (Vodušek 1929, 250). Their compatibility is evidenced, for example, by the

examples of prominent Catholics who are also great artists, e.g. Paul Claudel (1868–1955) and François Mauriac (1885–1970), as well as by the examples of the great Russian writers Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, who are "Christians and great artists at the same time" (Vodušek 1929, 250). He also explains the merging of art and Christianity in the case of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy:

"Their Christianity is expressed in the whole atmosphere of their novels; it is expressed in the Christian thinking and feeling of all persons, even those who commit acts or theories most opposed to Christian doctrines. For Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Christianity is an innate form of psyche." (Vodušek 1929, 250)

According to Vodušek, the judgement of whether something is art lies in the representation of human life. One will judge literary works based on their depiction of life and compare the depth and emotional intensity of the images presented. He will judge works that lack depth and emotional intensity as "unreal and shallow" as those that "are not art." In contrast, art is those works "which picture of life is deep, true and suggestive" (Vodušek 1929, 250–251). At this point, Vodušek asks:

"Where does J. Vidmar gets his two-dimension of the human personality, and why does he deify what he calls human nature as opposed to something a posteriori? He considers ethics and religion aposteriori, which he contrasts with an indeterminate ethos and religiosity as innate. With this notion of an ethos and a religiosity that would exist independently of any external form, J. Vidmar is still rooted in that "enlightened age" when the educated world had just shaken off Christian metaphysics and morality and was putting in their place a natural metaphysics and morality." (Vodušek 1929, 251)

Vidmar continues his polemic on the relationship between art and opinion in his article "Worldview and Art" (1930), in which he responds to the critiques by Vodušek in 1929 and Ušeničnik in 1930. In his discussion of the essence of art, Vidmar argues that the hidden driving force and essence of creation is "a priori nature and its lifelessness, not the world itself with its good and evil phenomena" (Vidmar 1954, 226). In his view, Christianity is incompatible with art. Although Christianity may appear in literary works, it is not considered a fundamental element of artistic creativity: "Christianity is then incompatible with art, in literature just as in the other arts, although it is more often interwoven in literature. Thus, it exists in many literary works, but only alongside art, not in art as an element of creativity itself." (Vidmar 1954, 233)

6 Conclusion

The relationship between art and religion in Slovenia during the two world wars was marked by the search for harmony between aesthetic and spiritual values.

Anton Vodnik emphasised beauty as the ethos of the work of art and advocated an equal valuation of religious art. Božo Vodušek judged art by the depth of its depiction of human life and recognised the compatibility of art and Christianity in the atmosphere and the Christian thinking and feeling of the characters in the literary works of Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. Aleš Ušeničnik emphasised the moral influence of art guided by divine inspiration. However, in the 20th century, different perspectives emerged to challenge these views. Josip Vidmar argued that art should have its perspective, independent of ideological, political or religious criteria, and should be judged solely by its aesthetic value and the depth of the spirit it expresses.

For centuries, theologians, philosophers and aestheticians have reflected on the overlap that seems to exist between religious and aesthetic experience as two profound ways of knowing. In the 20th and 21st centuries, there are many debates on the relationship between aesthetic and religious experience. Susanne Langer, in her *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (1953), points out: "Art does not affect the viability of life so much as its quality; that, however, it affects profoundly. In this way, it is akin to religion, which also, at least in its pristine, vigorous, spontaneous phase, defines and develops human feelings." (Langer 1953, 402) Bennett Reimer, in his "Common Dimensions of Aesthetic and Religious Experience" (Reimer 1963), stresses the common dimensions of religious and aesthetic experience and writes:

The function of religious experience is to break through the ordinary, superficial level of existence to a depth at which the unity of man and nature can be conceived and understood. […] Aesthetic experience embodies for immediate perception what religious experience points to – both make men aware of the union with one another and their common world, and this function is the highest art can serve. By symbolising the ineffable realm of human feeling, art allows man to know himself more deeply than he can in any other way, and so being able to glimpse the essential pattern of life itself - that is the underlying rhythm of organic existence. (Reimer 1963, 111–112)

In his book *Art and Religion* (2002), Jožef Muhovič explores the holistic perception of the unity of the external and the internal, of reality and transcendence in art and religion. While religion builds on the ideal and gives man a clear direction, art creates a sense of reality through form and proportion.

Contemporary debates on the relationship between aesthetic and religious experience stress that both experiences transcend the ordinary level of being and provide a deeper understanding of man and his world. In today's context, it is essential to respect pluralism and cultivate the values of authenticity, dialogue and honest cooperation between different points of view.

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SCAPEGOATING THE EXPRESSIONIST ARTIST FRANCE KRALJ IN THE CULTURE WARS OF THE 1930s

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1 Introduction

France Kralj (1895–1960) was a Slovene painter, sculptor, and graphic artist who studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (1913–1919) and created numerous expressionist works of high aesthetic quality.[1] Kralj's work was never politically agitative; his art was accordant with the principles of contemporary European expressionism, including an interest in so-called primitivism, which Kralj also linked with Christianity in some works between 1919 and 1921. He presented his worldview and aesthetic theory in his autobiography *Moja pot* (*My Path*) (Kralj, 1933), with which he aimed to encourage society to feel a sense of responsibility towards modern artists. However, the work was received with controversy. Kralj was subjected to criticism by the Catholic circle. The writer and priest Fran Saleški Finžgar protested against Kralj's *Moja pot* (Vidmar 1979, 152). At the same time, Kralj revealed his devotion to Christianity through his art, as well as in his autobiography (Kralj 1933, 8–9), while art criticism of the time rejected the idea of the possible concurrence of religious spirituality with modern art (Vidmar 1928). In addition, the rise of political ideologies in the 1930s set several challenges for modernist art. In Slovenia, political and ideological polarisation increased in the 1930s. By the end of the 1930s, two blocs had been established: one that established a common line with the communists and the other that rejected any collaboration. Their relationship grew into hatred (Čepič et al. 1995, 28–29). The left was increasingly intolerant towards art not serving the political agenda. In 1939, France Kralj exhibited his statue *Priroda* (*Nature*) in a public space in Ljubljana. The unionists first moved, broke, and poured tar

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over this work. This act was not condemned in the public discourse but was even praised as Kralj's work was accused of being an example of degenerate art, a term coined by the National Socialist German Workers' Party meant to discredit modernist art, particularly expressionism.

2 The International Breakthrough

In 1918 the Narodna galerija (National Gallery) was established as the central institution for both Slovene artists and foreign artists living in Slovenia, initially as an association. The members were also young avant-garde authors, futurist poet Anton Podbevšek (1898–1981), expressionist composer Marij Kogoj (1892–1956), France Kralj and literary critic Josip Vidmar (1895–1992). Among the principal founders, there was also the éminence grise of the cultural politics of the time, art historian and critic Izidor Cankar (1886–1958), who was responsible for expelling Podbevšek, Kogoj, Kralj and Vidmar from the association (Vidmar 1979, 158). Between 1920 and 1921, Kogoj, Podbevšek, and Vidmar established the Klub mladih (The Youth Club), an association that gradually became the main body of Slovene modernist, avant-garde artists, which in 2021 organised the publication of the expressionist magazine Trije labodje with the financial support of industrialist Vinko Heinrihar. France Kralj, a friend of Marij Kogoj, also joined Klub mladih (Vidmar 1979, 65) and became very active within this framework. France Kralj "expressed the perfect creative concept and took a leadership role among the young artists whom he later connected with the foundation of the Youth Club for joint performances at home and abroad" (Kranjc 2001, 44). Together with his comrades, Kralj organised and partly arranged eighteen international shows. Klub mladih achieved international recognition; besides modernism, Slovenianness was especially emphasised (Kralj 1996, 70). In 1922, Klub mladih prepared the exhibition for the 5th Yugoslav art show in Belgrade; in 1925, they participated at the XIth art show in Split, and in 1926, they participated in the XIIth Art Show in Sarajevo, the XIVth Art Show in Prague by the Umelĕcki Besedy, and the XVIth art show in Berlin by der Sturm, as well as the XVIIth art show in Vienna. In addition to the framework of Klub mladih, France Kralj participated also in exhibitions in Belgrade, Hodonin, Novi Sad, Rijeka, Paris, Prague, Vienna, New York, Buffalo, Chicago, London, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Brussels and fifteen times in Ljubljana until 1933.

3 Expressionist Interest in the so-called Primitivism and Empathy

1908 German art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965) published an Abstraction and Empathy monograph. *A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*. The

work was only translated into English in 1953. However, in the German-speaking cultural space, it had a significant impact immediately upon publication and was reprinted for the third time by 1910. In particular, Worringer's theory influenced the German expressionists from the circle die Brücke, founded in 1905 in Dresden. The opposite was likely the case, too: the artists influenced the theory (Kramer 1997, vii-ix). Worringer based his research on the "psychology of style" on studying the extensive collections of ethnographic art at the Paris Trocadéro Museum (now the Musée de l'Homme). At this time, the influence of African tribal plastic could already be discerned in the work of the Fauvists in France and die Brücke group in Germany. It was well known to the artistic intelligentsia. It is hardly likely that Worringer would not have been aware of this artistic development. Moreover, Gaugin used the "primitive" art of the Pacific Islands even earlier. However, Worringer did not explicitly mention these authors anywhere in the book. Pablo Picasso painted the *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (*The Young Ladies of Avignon*, confessing that it was while studying the same collection of ethnographic art from the Trocadéro museum that he experienced an epiphany.

Therefore, Worringer's study reflected the European artistic spirit of the time and where the expressionists found confirmation for their artistic aspirations. Inspired by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Worringer found a connection between modern man, who is just as lost and powerless in modern times as "primitive" man once felt (Worringer 1997, 18). Just a few years later, the artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) from the Munich expressionist circle Der Blaue Reiter in his essay *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (written in 1910 and published in 1912), similarly recognised that the inner feelings and aspirations of modern man in a time marked by the "nightmare of materialism," show in sympathy, understanding and an inner affinity for the "primitives" (Kandinsky 1977, 2). According to Worringer, the contemporary sense of alienation, expressed in the will to abstraction, was of the utmost importance to modern culture (Kramer 1997, xi).

Worringer wanted to make a unique contribution to the aesthetics of artistic plastic. He referred to pre-Renaissance art, where he recognised the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) pathos culminating in the Gothic. Here, in the case of non-harmonious people, according to his interpretation, it is precisely through the "uncanny" pathos that it is shown that the harmonic movement of the organic is not expressive enough, but an "uncanny pathos" is needed which "attaches to the animation of the inorganic," which is manifested in the "inner disharmony and unclarity of these peoples" (Worringer 1997, 77). The expressive manner that Worringer ascribed to Gothic plastic and the Gothic representation of people, in general, could also be found to some extent in El Greco (1541–1614) and certainly

in the work of German expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938), as well as in the artistic creation of France Kralj (1895–1960).

Modern artists and theorists have appreciated the so-called primitivism as an artistic impulse since the beginning of the twentieth century. In his work, *The Art of the Primitives* (*Die Kunst der Primitiven*, 1923), German prehistorian, religious scholar, art historian and philosopher Herbert Kühn praised "savages" as the true teachers of "civilised man" (Kühn 1923, 7). In 1927, the pioneer of modern anthropology, the German-American ethnologist and anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942), anthropologically examined the symbolism and style of objects and of literature, music, and dance in his work *Primitive Art* (Boas, 1955). The art historian Igor Kranjc identifies "primitivism" in France Kralj's work. Kranjc said Kralj was familiar with expressionist works (Kranjc 1995, 6).

4 Abstraction, Expressionism and New Objectivity: Empathy and the Uncanny

For France Kralj, his artistic expression was intrinsically connected to his homeland, his "native village," "the Slovenian soil", which also "protected the artist from empty internationalism" (Mikuž 1956, 1128). According to the interpretation of art historian and critic Stane Mikuž (1913–1985), Kralj acknowledged that "artistic creativity is only ethically justified when it originates from national feeling" (Mikuž 1939, 362). The folk plastic is "primitive" and ignores anatomic correctness and beauty, as did Kralj's sculptures, which aimed "towards that ultimate feeling, hidden in the deepest recesses of the heart of the peasant man" (Mikuž 1939, 362). France Kralj thus found the "primitivism" he was interested in as an expressionist, in the peasant man's sentiment and form of expression.

In 1922, Anton Vodnik (1901–1965) interviewed the brothers Kralj, France and Tone. France Kralj considered himself a modern artist, an artist of his era, i.e. of the spiritual milieu in which he worked, wherein numerous factors formed the characteristics of the era and the artist (Vodnik 1922, 317). His study of sculpture shows in his paintings, in which the figures are pretty plastic, spatial–like statues. In his early work, as in most of his works, the figure is imperative, and his figures are voluminous: at the same time, especially in his works created between 1919 and 1921, he experimented with abstract forms, which he loaded with symbolism. He did not abandon the depiction of the human figure but combined abstraction with figurality. The expressive dimension is the most essential feature of Kralj's early works of art. In this regard, art is not meant as a means to convey the feelings of the artist, but to introduce empathy (*die Einfühlung*) into his art, which was accordant with the expressionist drive of the time, which was theoretically advocated by Wilhelm Worringer, indications of which can

be found in *les Fauves* (fauvists, France, 1905–1908), but initiated in particular by the German avant-garde expressionist movements *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*, Dresden, 1905–1913) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (*The Blue Rider*, Munich, 1911–1914).

France Kralj connected expressionism with geometric forms. The expressionists brought forth the renaissance of the illustration. "Expressionist illustration takes full advantage of the entire vocabulary of Expressionist art: simplified drawing, pure flat surfaces, a denial of classical perspective, the aggressive cubic quality of fragmented and angulated structures, the collision of pointed forms and compact surfaces, a confrontation of various formal approaches, sharp black-and-white contracts, passionate dynamism and fast rhythm, disrupted proportions of figures and a disregard for natural dimensions and spatial relations" (Kranjc 1995, 10, 12), which is also all typical for Kralj's illustrations, such as the illustrations accompanying the folk song Kralj Matjaž (Kralj 1995a). His expressionism was also powerfully symbolic, which is typical for the majority of his works between 1919 and 1921, in paintings such as *Smrt genija* (*The Death of the Genius*, 1921), *Pekoča vest* (*A Burning Conscience*, 1920) and *Vizija sv. Antona* (*The Vision of St. Anton*, 1921), as well as in statues such as *Umetnik* (*The Artist*, 1919), *Skušnjava* (*Temptation*, 1921), and *Tužna prošnja* (*A Sad Request*, circa 1921).

One can also find the uncanny in the works of France Kralj. Kralj traversed from expressionism to new objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit, nova stvarnost) at the end of the twenties. However, his new objectivity has two essential characteristics. This is not the realism meant to construct the new socialist man. It is not the optimistic realism of the socialist type. There is instead the uncanny moment to be found in Kralj's paintings of the time, i.e. the uncanny, *die Unheimlich*, as defined by Sigmund Freud, which "is clearly the opposite of *heimlich*, *heimisch*, *vertraut*" (Freud 2003, 124), that "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (Freud 2003, 123), yet "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 2003, 124). Such a feeling of unease and discomfort in the context of what is familiar is to be found in several works of France Kralj, for instance, in his paintings Marija Magdalena (1921), Večer na vasi (The Evening in the Village, 1927) and especially Rodbinski portret (*Family portrait*, 1926).

The uncanny gradually enters France Kralj's work, while the empathic, expressive dimensions are relatively constant. At the time, the theory of abstraction and empathy appears in some critiques in Slovenia. However, for the most part, it appears in the writings of literary authors, particularly Anton Vodnik, "who see the horizon of their poetic imagination through the work of France and Tone Kralj without decisively drawing near to that which is essential in painting" (Kranjc 2014, 79).

5 Christianity and Art: The Numinous

In the 1920s, significant shifts appeared concerning art, and a lively discussion on the concurrence of religious spirituality and art took place in the Slovene press. The Catholic circle advocated for a relationship between religiosity and art. Anton Vodnik spoke in favour of the deep and innermost relationship between poetry and religiosity (Vodnik 1924). Josip Vidmar became the most discerning and modern literary critic. He did not appreciate Vodnik's poetry, as he wrote: "This is a soft, sweetly sad, almost tearful, erotically infused religious lyric, not a lyric, but a road itself stringing lyricisms" (Vidmar 1933, 353). Vodnik, on the other hand, criticised Josip Vidmar's view on art, arguing that Vidmar, on the one hand, supported expressionism in art and claimed that artistic experience is intuitive, irrational, and spiritual. Thus, the only proper worldview is the artistic one, while on the other hand, he neglected the spiritual character of religion. However, religion and ethos are elements of almost any worldview (Vodnik 1927, 246). Vidmar answered by examining the connection between the artist's worldview and the art. He rejected the possibility that modern art could contain Christian leanings (Vidmar 1928).

The discussion was evolving in the background of the general advocacy of modern art to be autonomous, i.e. liberated from any service to any other social domain or from any dogmatic engagement. In 1929, theologian, philosopher and Catholic priest Aleš Ušeničnik (1868–1952) answered this demand that art be dogmatically unbound and morally free, claiming that no artist can be unconditionally and absolutely internally or externally free (Ušeničnik 1929, 338). Ušeničnik defended Christian artists: "[T]he artists must be free to orient themselves according to universal human and natural religion and ethics, yet the Christian artists according to Christianity as the highest expression of ethics and religion!" (Ušeničnik 1929, 356). Vidmar responded: "I consider any design that is carried out under the suggestion of the Christian dogma or morals to be artistically incomplete" (Vidmar 1929, 484). The discussion continued with the responses by Ušeničnik, further arguing for Christian art (Ušeničnik 1930) and poet, literary critic and literary historian Božo Vodušek (1905–1978) claiming that Vidmar's argument is void as several examples demonstrate the compatibility of art and Christianity, such as, for instance, the works of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy (Vodušek 1929, 250). Vidmar responded: "Their art is not Christian art, but art despite Christianity" (Vidmar 1963, 97).

According to the interpretation of the appreciated art historian France Stele from 1925,[2] "[D]ynamism of the form corresponds to the expressionism of the content" (Stele 1925). Significant features of the art of the brothers Kralj are expressive dynamics and a tendency towards cubicity and primitivism. However, "[r]eligiosity is, which the Kralj brothers experience particularly deeply and is an inexhaustible source of ever-new impulses" (Stele 1925). France Kralj expressed enthusiasm for early Christian art because of its expressive immediacy, because it presents things as they are felt. Of all the painters, he loved Fra Angelico the most as he considered him the sincerest artist and uncorrupted by any theory. The external stimulus for religious motives lies in a "thoroughly religious education. However, this is something so common … There are moments when one cannot speak differently than with a prayer" (Vodnik 1922, 318). When asked if he felt bound by religion, Kralj answered: "A socialist phrase! The resort of the shallow-brained" (Vodnik 1922, 318).

One could even claim that France Kralj searched for the numinous in art. Rudolf Otto (*Das Heilige*, 1917) defined the other side of the numinous as lofty, aesthetic feelings, wherein the sublime is one of the stimuli for the awakening of the numinous; however, the object becomes religious and divine only when the category of the numinous is applied to them: then there is divination or admiration, which Otto defines as the recognition of something in the form of a sign, whose supernatural appearance is its mark. In Christianity, the cross is a sign that projects the numinous (Otto 1958).

At that time, modern art was, on the one hand, defended by modernist theoreticians and artists as autonomous, in an ideologically separate sphere from others, and on the other hand, there were expectations of the increasingly politically fanatical authors and politicians that art would is to serve political ideologies, as well as the context of accelerated industrialisation and the growing demand for internationalisation – all these external factors certainly did not work in favour of an artist who explicitly expressed his Christian feelings in his works of art and who favoured the "primitivism" of the rural Slovenian folk as his innermost artistic expression.

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2   In this issue of the magazine *Dom in svet* (vol. 38, no. 5, 1925), Stele wrote about the work of the brothers Kralj and four works of Tone Kralj and six works of France Kralj were reproduced, four of Kralj's works contained religious motifs: *Poletje* (*Summer*, supplement), *Oznanjenje* (*Annunciation*, p. 161), *Kristus pridigar* (*Christ the Preacher*, p. 163), *Snemanje s križa* (*Taking Down from the Cross*, p. 167), *Madona (Madonna*, p. 177), and *Jajčarice* (*The Egg Women*, p. 183).

6 Degenerate Art

In 1934, the First Congress of Soviet Writers proclaimed socialist realism as the official cultural doctrine of the Soviet Union. It mandated an idealised representation of life under socialism in literature and the visual arts. In the aftermath of World War II, socialist realism was adopted by the communist states that were politically aligned with the Soviet Union.

When The National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany seized control in 1933, it launched attacks on avant-garde and modernist art (Barron 1991). They defined modernist art as degenerate art. Degenerate Art (Entartete Kunst) was also the title of a 1937 exhibition held in Munich, consisting of 650 modernist artworks that the Nazis had taken from museums (they stripped 16,000 avant-garde works of art from museums) and exhibited together with some graffiti and text labels mocking modernism and modernist artists. The exhibition was propaganda designed to inflame public opinion against modernism. It travelled to several other cities in Germany and Austria.

France Kralj visited the International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life in Paris, where the rise of totalitarianism was presented through national pavilions. In the same year, 1937, Pablo Picasso responded to the situation in Spain with his painting Guernica (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

In 1939, France Kralj exhibited in Italy on the twentieth anniversary of his artistic practice. Čoro (Franc) Škodlar, a journalist and naïve painter, responded to the exhibition with criticism of his "spiritualised" art, the deformation of forms, and the colourism of his paintings, while he argued for the realistic or even likeable painting (Škodlar 1939a; Škodlar 1939b). Škodlar responded with severe criticism to the statue titled Nature (Priroda) installed in Muzejski trg in Ljubljana. Škodlar retitled the statue in *The Symbol of the Slovene Woman*. In his critique, Škodlar claimed people do not need such art and called those responsible to defend themselves. He said, "It is high time to reckon with such art" (Škodlar 1939c). On the night of the 14th to 15th of July 1939, unknown vandals damaged the statue: they broke the nose of the child and the woman, the head of the cow and both eyes were also damaged, as well as both eyes. A note left at the side of the statue said that the public and Slovene women deny such a symbol of Slovenian Womanhood. Kralj himself never believed that women were responsible for vandalising his statue but claimed those were the syndicalists and that the whole event had been well-orchestrated. The vandals then poured tar over the statue. The most disturbing events followed later. The first response of the newspaper Jutro was a report that the statue had been damaged, accompanied by a comment that "sober people do not allow themselves to be tricked by 'spiritualised art,'

which can be anything but art" (anon. 1939). On the 21st of July, 1939, a letter was published in Jutro, written by Boris Zarnik, a biologist and professor at the University of Zagreb, brother of a politician, and accompanied by the editor's response. In his letter, Zarnik wrote that he had not seen the statue himself, but the news of damaging the statue was the most delightful in recent years.

"In other, much larger nations, people's eyes had to be opened only with special laws and regulations, so that they became able to distinguish between proper art and the products of degenerative emotionality and fantasy of art /.../; but in our country, without any regulations, mentally healthy and conscious elements of their Slovene blood appear to deal with such artistic products which are foreign and diametrically opposed to our spirit, to our hereditary conception of beauty" (Zarnik 1939).

The editor Božidar Borko commented that the work in question is "such that it is not worth defending. Is this the last echo of that great fashion, which in some places was called 'degenerate art'" (Borko 1939).

"Behind all this lamentable persecution was an organised anti-Modernist campaign based on 'faith' in realism" (Kranjc 2014, 99) or in the increasing demand for art to become politicised – if we recall the ending of the famous essay written in 1935 by a member of the Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin, wherein he called for the politicisation of art by communism: "*Communism replies* [to the aestheticising of politics, as practised by fascism] *by politicising art*" (Benjamin 2008, 42).

France Kralj lived in Ljubljana during the Second World War and responded to the great political divide that led to a civil war. "Without pathos or provocative zeal, his works depict the tragic nature of the political schism of the nation" (Kranjc 2014, 89). As France Mesesnel wrote in 1939: "It was obvious to him that the development of the militant ideas and the events surrounding it were leading to an abyss where the 'new man' will have little baggage from the past and few artistic prejudices, and will therefore be more uncouth and authentic" (Kranjc 2014, 89). In the second half of the 1950s, at the great exhibition of the art of the Yugoslav nations, Kralj was labelled the first among the decadents, based on which he was not included in the selection.

7 Conclusion

By the 1930s, the ideological divide had deepened, and the left had become radicalised to the point of becoming utterly intolerant of those who did not ideologically share their views. Ideologically inadequate or suspect artists were existentially and professionally tortured in the emerging communist regime and were excluded from the artistic mainstream and denied teaching posts. The life

of France Kralj, one of the greatest Slovenian artists, is a case of the scapegoat mechanism as defined by Rene Girard (Girard 1986), as the founding murder of the scapegoat is essential for the constitution of the new society.

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FRANC ŠANC'S CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Stjepan Štivić, Ljubljana

1 Introduction[1]

The term culture itself is multilayered and can be approached from various aspects. The concept is one such term of our time through which we can analyse the crisis of our times—conflicts of value systems, political conflicts, language conflicts, conflicts between scientific facts and ideologies, etc. The culture has undergone severe semantic changes in our time, and the question is whether we can even speak of the same concept today as in the time of Franc **Šanc** SJ. The concept of culture is a true battleground of culture wars.

In the first half of the 20th century, the concept of culture held a significant position in philosophical circles in Croatia. Various authors, confronted with the challenges posed by the cultural movements of their time, engaged in discussions on how to understand culture, the status of national culture, and whether culture itself even exists. Within this intellectual milieu, we also encounter reflections on culture by Franc **Šanc** SJ (1882–1953), a Croatian-Slovenian theologian and philosopher who was part of the neo-scholastic movement.

2 The Concept of Culture

Today, we can identify two fundamental characteristics of the concept of culture in contemporary discourse, which can be summarised as follows: The term today is often ambiguous and, at times, incomprehensible; consequently, the domain to which the term is intended to apply is not clearly defined, leading instead to a state of inconsistency and fragmentation. This ambiguity is further exacerbated by the fact that many activities today ardently seek to be designated as 'cultural.'

The word 'culture' (lat. *cultura*) is derived from the Latin verb *colere* (from which the term 'cult,' in its religious sense, is also derived). This verb encompasses a wide range of meanings within its rich semantic field, including: 'to

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1   The chapter was written within the framework of project no. J6-3140 Slovenian intellectual history in the light of modern theories of religion: from the separation of spirits and culture war to communist revolution.

cultivate,' 'to nurture,' 'to grow,' and 'to honour' (Etimonline 2024). Originally, it was associated with improving and developing what is cultivated or processed. The concept later expanded from agriculture to a broader social level. In this context, Cicero introduced the idea of *cultura animi*, thereby also defining philosophy.

Over time, the concept of culture expanded to encompass a broader understanding of education, encompassing philosophy, science, ethics, and the fine arts and how these disciplines influence the environment. By the 18th century, language had come to be recognised as a central mediator of culture. It is important to note that throughout these developments, the term 'culture' retained a foundational semantic core, maintaining an affirmative connotation (Wahr 2000).

From a Marxist perspective, culture is not merely a collection of artistic and intellectual activities but a reflection of and a means to maintain society's economic and social structures. In this view, the ultimate aim of cultural development is to facilitate and sustain dominance over both nature and the social environment, ensuring the continuation of the ruling class's power (Wahr 2000).

Let us consider the concept of culture in its original sense. Linguistic constructs such as 'cancel culture,' 'culture of rejection,' 'culture of death,' and 'consumer culture' cannot be genuinely regarded as culture. These terms might be better understood as euphemisms or as logically contradictory expressions. This seemingly neutral use of the term 'culture' is grounded in the fact that culture is perceived as something that falls within the administrative domain of state policy or various associations that organise different cultural strategies or events.

3 Culture in Early 20th Century Croatia

Croatia's cultural and political turbulence during the first half of the 20th century exhibited distinct characteristics. However, it remained largely aligned with Europe's broader intellectual, cultural, and political movements.

During this period, a remarkable surge of Catholic intellectuals was broadly identified as part of the Catholic Movement. This era also was marked by deeply engaged Catholic intellectuals and cultural figures. Among them were diverse profiles: those focused on liturgy and aesthetics, such as Ivan Merz (Ribić 2013); those addressing concrete Christian challenges posed by various modern phenomena, including the status of culture, notably Stjepan Zimmermann (Paša 1943); and those who openly warned of the radical cultural and anthropological shifts ushered in by communism, such as Vendelin Vasilj and Dominik Barač (Macut 2015, 241-259). Their work often responded to the broader cultural crises of modernity, striving to reconcile traditional Christian values with the evolving

societal landscape. This intellectual movement significantly shaped the cultural milieu in the years leading up to World War II.

However, the cultural discourse of that era was also present in other societal circles, notably figures such as M. Šufflay, I. Pilar, A. Haller, V. Filipović, A. Bazala, K. Krstić etc., some of whom actively engaged in debates on the understanding of culture and particularly the cultural status of the national culture. In contrast, others questioned the very existence of culture. Franc Šanc was situated within a milieu aligned with the Neo-Scholastic movement, which in some way anticipated possible scenarios for the post-war period. In addition to diagnosing and critiquing his era, Šanc sought to provide a theological foundation for the concept of culture (Šanc 1926).

Following the end of World War II and the ascension of communism, a significant purge of pre-war cultural and intellectual figures occurred, leading to the systematic dismantling of the pre-war infrastructure. This process mirrored Gramsci's model of seizing cultural levers within society, resulting in a radical shift in the cultural landscape. Dramaturgist Sanja Nikčević examines this transformation in the book *Truth and Lies about the Canon*, where she explores the redefinition of both the general cultural canon and the literary canon. Nikčević argues that, after World War II, any affirmation of beauty, goodness, and particularly the sacred was systematically expunged from the literary canon. Moreover, alongside the exclusion of the beautiful (as a transcendental), those deemed undesirable were also marginalised, resulting in what can be described as a 'cultural revolution,' as evidenced by mass post-war killings.

"The prevailing state of mainstream European theatre art is a direct consequence of the triumph of a secularist (atheistic) worldview following World War II. This shift established a new hierarchy of values across Europe and positioned social critique as the sole function of art, thereby redefining the artistic canon inherited from the past. Consequently, any affirmation of beauty, goodness, and particularly the sacred was systematically excluded. As modern (and later contemporary) art, adhering to this new worldview, failed to affirm new values and instead focused solely on deconstructing the values of the previous (Christian) worldview, after seventy years of this deconstructive process, it culminated in empty (two-dimensional) performances characterised by imposed themes of negative depictions of the world or political provocation." (Nikčević 2021, 29)

4 Šanc's Anticipation of the Post-war Scenario

Franc Šanc SJ belonged to the Croatian context's second wave of Neo-Scholastic thinkers. The first wave emerged slightly before and after Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Aeterni Patris was issued in 1879. Neo-Scholasticism was a philosophical

movement in Croatia that "held relevance not only within the domain of philosophical thought and worldview but also beyond the confines of Scholastic or theological spheres." The relevance of this impact cannot be debated; moreover, the influence on historical reality in general, and particularly on cultural phenomena, was very fruitful (Posavac 1998, 112).

Šanc and other representatives of this movement were actively engaged and grappled with various philosophical directions while keeping track of developments in Europe and the world (109). They encountered two primary challenges: first, the critique of the philosophical consequences of the philosophies of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, which had destabilised classical scholastic philosophy in its time, and second, the identification of immediate and tangible dangers to the contemporary world, which were astutely diagnosed. This is particularly evident in the work of Šanc within our specific context.

However, the development of neo-scholasticism in the Croatian context, particularly its public presence, was forcibly interrupted at the end of World War II (111). Neo-scholastic philosophy became a target of the communist cultural revolution, as evidenced by the number of priests killed —263 clerics were killed after the war by the communist authorities in Yugoslavia (Baković 2007). Later, the "Second Vatican Council made a significant shift by distancing itself from (neo-)scholastic assumptions, thereby indirectly demonstrating that Christianity is not tied to any particular metaphysics" (Klun 2022, 983), which also had an impact on the Croatian context.

In discussing Šanc's perspective on culture, we delve into the insights of a figure who served as a priest, theologian, and philosopher from the 1920s until his death after World War II. A central aspect of his work on the discussion of culture is his book titled *The Creator of the World* (1935), in which he dedicates an entire chapter to the relationship between the Creator and culture. The book is divided into two parts: *On the Existence and Nature of the Creator* and *The Creator and the World*—the latter of which includes the chapter in question. The entire book belongs to Šanc's philosophy of religion. Philosophy is for him *ancilla theologiae*. This, in turn, means that he is trying to justify the scholastic position given his era's religious challenges and social and cultural crisis. In his approach, he strives to be current in the complete sense (Štivić 2022, 1058).

As Šanc noted, his work aims to help those who already have a correct understanding of God and His relationship to the world to affirm their position and to assist those who think differently in re-examining their understanding (Šanc 1935, VII). According to Šanc, there are two key socio-political problems of his era that obscure 'the question of all questions.' These are the "bread crisis" and the "peace crisis". The first refers to the existential misery caused by economic collapse, while the second pertains to the foreboding of a new world war. Šanc

believes that now, "in the time of the most terrible crisis," the problem of God is the foundation and key to all other problems (1–9). The question of God is the horizon for resolving all issues: "If God exists, then no crisis can be solved without Him, and with Him, one can emerge from the collapse of the entire world" (8). Šanc viewed the issue of culture mainly through this lens.

It becomes evident that Šanc aims to provide insights that could potentially influence the reconfiguration of cultural paradigms. Consequently, the discourse commences with the thesis that God constitutes the ultimate purpose of every human endeavour and all cultural expressions. Culture, summarising Šanc, furnishes numerous ways humanity can increasingly inherit love and goodness in God.

5 Šanc's Concept of Culture

Šanc thematises the concept of culture, acknowledging its inherent ambiguity, although not to the extent prevalent in contemporary discourse. Nevertheless, in alignment with the philosophia perennis, he asserts that the conceptualisation of culture is firmly anchored in the idea that it encompasses all elements oriented toward the divine. He articulates that "culture is impossible and inconceivable if God is ignored or denied" (221). In **Šanc's** view, culture is fundamentally linked to human existence, particularly the life of the intellect and will. Since the yearning for the divine is intrinsic to this fundamental human capacity, he posits that authentic culture must necessarily find its ultimate purpose in God.

In his view, culture is fundamentally rooted in the spirit. However, it also encompasses all materialised through the ideas generated by the spirit, including science, technology, crafts, and related fields. Šanc conceptualises culture as a sphere within which the existence of God can be discerned. He posits that all creations of the human spirit, in their manifold variability and the variability of the world in which these creations manifest, inherently presuppose God as the immutable, constant, and supremely perfect being. Šanc, provoking one's admiration, writes:

„Therefore, it is very good to observe with the greatest wondering everything that the human spirit has created over the centuries among various peoples, asking where such diversity and such abundance come from amid such variability" (221).

Šanc explicitly delineates the nature of the culture in question:

"Culture and its works have their own meaning and their own perfection, which inspire our admiration, solely because they are in some way a reflection of God's perfection. The greater the likeness to God, the greater and more valuable

the culture is for the individual and humanity. Moreover, a community in which man is separated from God or opposed to God is a lower culture." (233)

In that context, he further elaborates on the ontological status of the cultural product. Šanc elucidates this status by deriving it from the scholastic understanding of God, through which he then interprets the relationship towards creation. The following perspective aligns more closely with a Platonic interpretation rather than the Aristotelian approach typically characteristic of Neo-Scholasticism.

"Every being is, therefore, a limited imitation of the unlimited first being. The more it resembles God in likeness, the more its perfection and reality grow, and the more it loses similarity with God, the more it loses in perfection and reality, approaching nothingness. Therefore, everything we attribute to God and his creatures as unity, goodness, beauty, and truth, although true and divine and of his creatures, is only in an analogous way. All concepts attributed to God and created beings are only analogous. This is a general belief of Christian philosophy." (231)

Among the central issues is the question of cultural development. Based on the preceding analysis, how Šanc conceptualised cultural progress, including its technological dimensions, is evident. This is further attested by the following words: "Progress necessarily consists in that the one who advances becomes more like God, and every regression in that the one who regresses becomes less like God." (233)

Šanc's perspective may appear somewhat idealistic or even utopian, suggesting that such a culture has ever existed or could exist, as it is difficult to anticipate—and almost inconceivable—that every cultural worker would believe in God. However, Šanc provides a compelling response:

"It can happen that an individual, or even an entire nation, or a particular class or stratum, ignores God or even hates Him, yet still makes progress in some branch of human culture and in this respect becomes more similar to God against their will or without it. Therefore, atheistic and anti-religious culture increases likeness to God not through its atheism or its hatred against God, which are fundamentally negative, but through its positive efforts and success in which culture and cultural work are solely strived for."

6 Critical Perspective on Šanc's Approach

In his approach, Šanc integrates the model of cultura animi with a broader conception of culture that encompasses classical education and technological advancements. This includes all technical artefacts that reflect the human influence on nature for the betterment of society, such as the construction of bridges, transportation systems, film, printing, and more. Šanc primarily envisions cul-

ture as something intrinsic to the human spirit, with its material manifestations in technology being of secondary importance.

This approach presents particular challenges from a contemporary perspective—though not necessarily in relation to the prevalence of tools and technological systems in Croatia during the first half of the 20th century. Šanc asserts that "everything testifies that through culture, by which man subjugates the forces of nature, he becomes more like God." He further argues that technical innovations enhance humanity's likeness to the divine, even though man's ability to dominate nature remains confined to "an infinitely small part of things". (235) In this context, he enumerates steam and electric railways, maritime and air transport, and the telegraph and telephone as an example of such subjugation.

However, from a contemporary standpoint, it would be overly simplistic to assert that the power man wields through techno-science renders it akin to God, particularly in light of the significant risks that modern techno-scientific advancements pose to humanity. The notion that 'man is playing God' has gained traction today, a sentiment that is justified when considering the major ecological disasters, whose catastrophic scale has been exacerbated by technological interventions, or the radical ideologies that propose altering the biological structure of humans (Štivić 2023, 889-891). In this context, Šanc's admiration for this aspect of human cultivation appears overly optimistic, if not entirely naive.

Šanc appears to be deeply impressed by the positive impacts of the technological aids he is familiar with, such as photography, image projection, and sound recording. He regards these innovations as tools that significantly enhance human experience, allowing individuals to transcend the otherwise limited scope of their personal sensory and perceptual boundaries. Šanc perceives broadening the human experiential horizon through these technological means, facilitating a more profound engagement with the world.

In contemporary society, the idea of culture has undergone a profound transformation. Much of what humanity now possesses is often taken for granted, leading to a diminished sense of wonder and reflection on the marvels of human achievement. This shift has distanced culture from being a domain of awe and reverence for human discoveries, where humility and a sense of responsibility would naturally emerge. Šanc's perhaps overly optimistic view of the future of technology may stem from a sincere and authentic perspective—notably absent in our current cultural constellation. His approach, characterised by a genuine appreciation for technological progress, contrasts sharply with the more utilitarian or even cynical attitudes prevalent today, where the focus is often on the utility of technological advancements rather than their more profound implications for human existence and moral responsibility.

7 Conclusion

Šanc belonged to the second wave of neo-scholastic philosophers in the Croatian context. Together with other representatives of this movement, he engaged openly with various philosophical movements. His philosophy was actively engaged, highlighting different philosophical movements' social and cultural implications. The presence of Catholic intellectuals, including Šanc, in the Croatian context, as well as more broadly, came to an abrupt end with the conclusion of World War II. For many, this end also marked the termination of their physical lives.

Šanc's understanding of culture is alien to the contemporary individual. His conception of culture is fundamentally incompatible with modern notions of the term, which today faces a significant crisis in both meaning and application. Šanc's approach to culture was affirming, considering it intrinsic to the human spirit. Most importantly, he believed that one becomes more like God through culture, and he categorically excluded any destructive or corruptive elements that might be considered part of culture.

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CONTROVERSIES OF PHILOSOPHERS
WITH PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC AND SECULAR BACKGROUND IN THE *HUNGARIAN PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW* (1882–1891)

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1 Introduction[1]

The first series of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review (Magyar Philosophiai Szemle,* 1882–1891) was the first periodical of philosophy in Hungarian, established by a spontaneous initiative of several circles of philosophers in Budapest, with the financial support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. (The periodical of Philosophical Committee of the II. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences department also has the same title nowadays. However, its advisory and editorial boards regard themselves as intellectual inheritors of the "founder fathers". Here, we will discuss the first ten years of the periodical, when the Hungarian Academy of Sciences offered its financial support, but the editorial board was independent of the Academy. In the next period, from 1892 to 1947, this periodical changed its name to *Athenaeum* and directly belonged to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, later to the Academy and the Hungarian Philosophical Society. In these eras, the quality of the periodical did not become worse than earlier, but the structure of the controversies changed under conditions of deeper institutional embeddedness. In the following, we will focus on this periodical's first, more independent era.)

Hungarian Philosophical Review was the first and single Hungarian periodical of philosophy from its establishment until 1885. Its open-minded editors inspired the scholar community of Hungarian philosophers to use it as a forum for controversies of highly diverse opinions from strict Positivism through neo-Kantianism to the Catholic philosophy of this period. In these discussions, the religious or secular commitments of the participants had a fundamental role. A Catholic

philosopher provoked the most vivid controversy; the founder editor had a clear Protestant commitment, and it appeared as a Positivist secular worldview. However, a Catholic monk-teacher, Valér Maczki SOCist (1847–1921), represented the same generation as the founder-editor of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review;* he was a newcomer in the centre of the Hungarian professional philosophical life in Budapest, and most of his previous publications were published in the cities of Pécs and Eger, where he taught and lived. In his first publication on the scene of the intellectual life of Budapest, he proposed the redefinition of the tasks of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* and that of the Hungarian philosophers. He evaluated the actual state of Hungarian philosophy by a typical metaphor of self-orientalisation: Hungarian philosophy is like a translation of Homer into the language of the so-called 'Kaffirs' who do not want to read it. In the following, I offer an overview of the similar controversies on the pages of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* with a strong background of worldview (Weltanschauung), depending on the religious background of the protagonists. It was a unique historical moment of the Hungarian philosophical life. A few years later, the first Hungarian periodical of philosophy was founded, engaged with a particular philosophical school, neo-Thomism (*Periodical of Philosophy / Bölcseleti Folyóirat,* 1886–1906). However, it survived twenty years; only after it separate, often ephemeral forums of the different philosophical schools and trends appeared one after the other, and the structure of the scholarly communication of the Hungarian philosophical communication never became similar to the first period of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review,* again. This chapter aims to show the beginning of the relative fragmentation of the open sphere of the Hungarian philosophy within a process of a *soft culture war.*

2 Two Concepts of the Hungarian Philosophy: Program for Translation of the Classics of Modernity and Foundation of a Scholar Periodical

At the beginning of the 1880s, two innovations appeared in Hungarian philosophy: an endeavour for the systematic translation of the modern classics with critical apparatus and commentaries on the one hand and the establishment of a professional scholar periodical in its strict meaning, on the other. These endeavours represented different visions about the task and essence of philosophical thinking, incarnated in two characteristic personalities with different cultural, religious and ethnical backgrounds: a culturally assimilated but not converted Jew, Bernhard Alexander (1850–1927), and Károly Böhm (1846–1911), a culturally and in language assimilated, so-called *Zipser.* (It is a particular German-origin term for German-speaking Lutheran Saxons of a territory of Upper Hungary, or by Slovakian term, *Horné Uhorsko.* However, Böhm was born and

buried in Bankská Bistrica, now in Slovakia; his career developed in Bratislava, Budapest and Cluj/Kolozsvár in Transylvania. Here, his Budapest period will be discussed only.) These different cultural backgrounds became clear by the intellectual provocation of Father Maczki. He was not the cause or initiator of the fragmentation of the Hungarian philosophical life, just an indicator of the hidden ruptures. First, the concepts of the book series and the periodical, founded by two rivals, will be outlined; after that, I will show the controversy on the pages of the periodical with its religious background and consequences. (For a detailed analysis of these rival concepts, their historical roots, and their consequences in Hungarian, see my recent essay entitled Should We Edit *or Translate? On two Manners of the Philosophical Activities. For the 140*[th] *anniversary of the Writers of Philosophy and the Hungarian Philosophical Review,* see Mester 2023.)

3 Editorial Concept of the Series Entitled Writers of Philosophy

Editors of the *Writers of Philosophy* series asked for the support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences based on their well-developed conception of the editorial ideas. However, they were fellow students in their peregrination in Western Europe, with almost the same curricula. Bernhard Alexander was interested in the classic form of the work of a historian of philosophy; it is to understand philosophers of the past by making translations and commentaries that are useful in higher education, as well. The field of József Bánóczi (1849–1926) was the Hungarian *terminology* of philosophy, discussed more from linguistics than philosophy. His tradition is the endeavour of the *Dictionary of the Philosophical Terminology* (see: *Philosophiai* Műszótár1834), published in the Hungarian Reform Era; he extended this endeavour from the sphere of original Hungarian writings to the standardised vocabulary of the translations. It is the beginning of a systematic and conscious making of terminology, creating the foundations of the language of philosophy. The book series represents characteristic editorial conception. The symbolical beginning is Descartes, from the general point of view of the history of Western thought and the Hungarian point of view. In the general aspect, Descartes is the starting point of modernity in European philosophy; by the Hungarian glance, Hungarian Cartesians were the first thinkers in the history of Hungarian philosophy who achieved the same level as his mainly Dutch masters, and they had severe endeavours and results in the creation of the Hungarian philosophical terminology, as well. As Alexander formulated it in the *Foreword* of the first volume of the series:

"We started the *Writers of Philosophy* with the translation of the main works of Descartes. It is not only the beginning of the philosophy of modernity, but we can go to this school with utility and pleasure nowadays as well. This translation

also pays a national tribute to the great philosopher. We also thank Descartes for the first awakening of philosophical thinking in Hungary. At the University of Utrecht […], a poor Hungarian student […] decided to establish this thought in his homeland and the language of his homeland. This student was the first Hungarian philosopher, János Apáczai Cseri [1625–1659]" (Alexander's *Preface* in Descartes 1881, V.).

Several volumes of the contemporary manual books of the history of philosophy and Alexander's writings are linked weakly with the original conception. The series' posthumous edition of János Erdélyi's history of Hungarian philosophy is essential. This edition is the root of the canonisation of Erdélyi's Hegelian vision of the history of Hungarian philosophy in Hungarian cultural memory. The editors' endeavour was more ambitious; they wanted to extend the canonisation of Erdélyi's other philosophical writings by the evidence of the frontispiece: *Erdélyi's works Vol. 1,* but this endeavour was never fulfilled (see: Erdélyi 1885). In the last years of the century, the conception was partly modified with the appearance of the Greek classics: mainly Plato, the fragments of the pre-Socratics, a monograph on the Cynics, but Aristotle was represented just by his *De anima*. The Great War represented a financial break, and after that, Alexander was marginalised in the Hungarian academic scene, which was not independent from the anti-Semitic atmosphere of post-war Hungary. He tried to reanimate the series in his last years, without the academy's support, with modified editorial ideas. Two volumes of Spinoza represent the old concept and his interest as a historian of philosophy; two volumes of Bergson and a volume of Windelband and Ernst Mach represent an endeavour to modernise the canon. (For a detailed analysis of Alexander's career, especially of the post-war years, see Turbucz 2021.)

Prefaces and other manifestations of the editors demonstrate that they regard the role of the series as fundamental in the significance of philosophy in Hungarian culture. The foreword of the Descartes volume drew attention to the status of the Discourse on Method in French schools as a recommended reading. Based on the Hungarian translation, we can achieve the level of French philosophical education, in Alexander's opinion. In other words, based on a developed system of philosophical translations, the role of philosophy will gradually be the same as in the great philosophical cultures of Europe.

4 Károly Böhm's Concept on the Hungarian Philosophy and the History of the Hungarian Philosophical Periodicals

The opposite of this concept in the same epoch is the radical and principled rejection of the programme of the translations in the utterances of Károly Böhm, both

in the book reviews about Alexander's translations, published in the periodical edited by him and in his inaugural lecture as a professor:

"Several people think that we should translate foreign works and that the philosophical translation program of our Academy of Sciences was fruitful. I regard this opinion as a *petitio principii*. Understanding these works presupposes a previous philosophical education. Consequently, our endeavour must be an autonomous philosophical activity based on a critical approach. The Hungarian Philosophical Review was founded for this purpose, and we established it in 1882 to support this autonomous activity. We did not require articles on a European level, just reasonable ones based on independent research." (Böhm 1896/1941, 189–190.)

Scholar periodicals have deeper roots in the Hungarian cultural tradition than the translations. However, the first scholarly periodicals had general content, containing all the relevant fields of academic life; they generated philosophical controversies about the most important events and milestones of Hungarian philosophical life in the long 19th century. A network of Hungarian scholar periodicals was the basis of the nation-level communication of the Hungarian philosophers who were meanly teachers of the schools of different denominations. The significant periodicals were the media background of the most significant philosophical controversies. *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* (*Scientific Collection,* 1817–1841) was linked with the last period of the *Kantian Controversy* (1792–1822). *Athenaeum* (1837–1843) was the media sphere of the *Hegelian Trial,* and the *Debate on Hungarian Science* appeared on the columns of Új *Magyar Múzeum* (*New Hungarian Museum,* 1850–1860). This background was, at the same time, a quality barrier to the scholarly discourse. The *Hungarian Controversy on Kant* was incarnated in Latin books and Hungarian brochures, but its end manifested in normal (Hungarian) articles in scholarly periodicals. The low quality of the *Hegelian Trial* was connected with its laic medial background; the *Debate on Hungarian Science* discussed the philosophical question of the essence of the *historical fact* with the participation of *just one philosopher*. Its media environment determined the atmosphere of the Erdélyi–Szontagh-debate (1857–1858), as well.

5 The Establishment of the Hungarian Philosophical Review

Consequently, our next question is what changed in Hungarian philosophical life with the establishment of the philosophical scholar periodical in its strict meaning. First, we should offer an overview of the circumstances of establishing the *Hungarian Philosophical Review*. An essential prerequisite is the *Budapest Philosophical Circle*, established in the late 1870s, which organised open readings and discussions in cafés; it can be regarded as an antecedent of the Hungarian

Philosophical Society, established legally in 1901. To the memories of Károly Böhm, published just several years after the events, the idea of a philosophical periodical appeared in this circle at first, and it was the point where the ways of the most important members of the Circle divided (Böhm 1884). Bernhard Alexander considered that the Hungarian philosophical life was not ready for a scholarly periodical, and Károly Böhm was sceptical toward Alexander's programme for philosophical translations. (For the analysis of the opposite programs of Alexander and Böhm, see Bretter 2005.) They applied for the support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for their periodical and book series of translations, and the Academy managed these endeavours as two faces of the same issue. Practically, Böhm's and Alexander's behaviour was almost contrary to their doctrines. Alexander, who was sceptical toward the possibility of a philosophical periodical, became the Hungarian philosopher of his age who was the most familiar with the medial environment of the periodicals, and Böhm, who was a monomaniacal worker of the next volume of his well-planned philosophical system, became the editor of the first philosophical periodical. Böhm was known as a worker of his own unique terminology and an opponent of Alexander's translation programme. However, after Alexander published his translations of the classics, the new terminology appeared in Böhm's writings, with tacit consent, especially the vocabulary of Kantianism. The relationship between Alexander and Böhm was connected with a personal line; the first volume of Alexander's monography on Kant (Alexander 1881), which was never finished, won the same award from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, for what Böhm's application disappeared in the academic offices. Böhm blamed the Academy both for making an administrational and an essential mistake, as well; his application was an *original philosophical work*, the first volume of his philosophical system called *Man and his World* (Böhm 1883)*,* while Alexander's writing was "just history of philosophy".

   With this background, it is not surprising to see the first article of the review section of the periodical edited by Böhm, a review of Alexander's Kant-monography. The main theoretical question of the review is the relevance of the connection of biography and works of a philosopher; later, it criticises Alexander's usage of references until the accusation of plagiarism (Nemes 1882). The review is the first media environment in Hungarian philosophy where *philosophers and only philosophers* can discuss each other's works. The list of the authors represents a large scale from the point of view of their generations, fields within philosophy and opinions. Cyrill Horváth (1804–1884), who had begun his philosophical career in the Reform Era, is still active. The old professor, a founder of a peculiar system without serious works, published a lengthy article about the difficulties of philosophical thinking (Horváth 1882). A few years later, a debate about *the*

existence of his system appeared on the pages of the same periodical (Nemes 1886). On the one hand, a frequent author is József Sándor Simon (1853–1915), with his ideas about *beauty as a neural phenomenon,* and Valér Maczki SOCist, a Catholic monk-teacher from Eger, from the model-city of the Counter-Reformation, or, politically more correctly, the Catholic revival in Hungary. (For a detailed analysis of the cultural and social background of the authors of the first period of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review,* see Varga 2020.) Father Maczki evaluated the Hungarian philosophy of his age on the same level as that of the *Kaffirs* in Africa. He said, "our philosophy is like Homer translated to Kaffir language what is untouched by the Kaffirs themselves" (Macki1885, 48). Father Maczki's approach is a typical self-orientalising gesture of the Hungarian culture from a particular Catholic point of view. *Kaffir* is a classic Arabic word for all the Pagans, or gentiles, excluding the "peoples of the Books", the believers of the monotheistic religions, especially Christians and Jews. For cultural reasons, this word referred from early times to the African tribes who were not Christians. It cannot be reconstructed whether Father Maczki knew the etymology of this word, but it is in accordance with his orientalised and missionary approach. By this narrative, the products of the Western culture are just foreign, imported goods in the land of the "people of the East", from Roman Catholic Christianity to classic philosophy, and their cultivation is the task of several missionaries, religious or secular ones.

Another frequent author of book reviews and discussion papers was Jenő Henrik Schmitt (1851–1916), who later developed his system of Gnostic Pacifist Anarchism. Criticisms and debates were formulated with pointedness and were not free from personal insults. This contesting spirit of the periodical was based on the difference in the philosophical beliefs of the authors. The only standard point is to maintain the common media sphere of Hungarian philosophers. The best example is the debate between Valér Maczki and Károly Böhm about the value of the first volumes of the periodical. Here, Father Maczki wanted to formulate the task and role of the periodical from the point of view of his missionary approach. This missionary attitude is also characteristic in the utterances of Alexander and Böhm. They regarded their endeavours and the new institutions they established as a mission in a cultural desert as their vocation for the nation's development. Father Maczki's paper said more because he criticised not only the general backwardness of what is a general topic in the East-Central European national cultures but also the new, modern and secular institutions of a vivid and prosperous period of the Hungarian philosophy. The Catholic background of his attack is hidden in his papers and Böhm's answer (Böhm 1885). Böhm has never mentioned the Jewish origin of Alexander or Macki's close connection to the Roman Catholic Church. On the other side, Alexander's professor, Cyrill Horváth,

and his several important disciples were Catholic monks. The religious root of their conflict became clear just from a notion of Böhm: "We Protestants cannot cultivate philosophy in another way, just seriously". Consequently, followers of other religions are not so severe in their work of thinking and the edition of a periodical.

6 Consequences for the Present

The critiques of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* and the answers to these were particularly valuable because they appeared on the pages of the same periodical. Unfortunately, it was the last period of a common sphere for all Hungarian philosophers. In the following year, after Maczki's discussion papers in the *Hungarian Philosophical Review,* in 1886, the first Hungarian periodical appeared, which was engaged for a concrete philosophical school, the Catholic neo-Thomism, entitled *Periodical of Philosophy* (*Bölcseleti Folyóirat,* 1886–1906). The endeavour of the previous generations of Hungarian Catholic thinkers was to participate in the new, modern, national common sphere and represent the Catholic community there from the beginning of the 19th century. Cyrill Horváth was a Hungarian Academy of Sciences member and a professor at the Royal University in Budapest. He published his late articles in the *Hungarian Philosophical Review*. The members of the Catholic *fin de siècle* generation established *their own* philosophical periodical as the alternative to the *Hungarian Philosophical Review*, their own philosophical society (Saint Thomas Society, established in 1892) and their own Saint Stephen Academy (established in 1915), as an alternative of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The result was segregation that was similar to that which existed in the pre-19th century era. This situation inspired psychic and intellectual attitudes, which are also vivid nowadays.

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VIOLENCE AND DECONSTRUCTION:
THE LIMITS OF POSTMODERN DEMOCRACY

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1 Introduction

Postmodernism is often used to describe the times in which we live. For Gianni Vattimo, postmodernism is not just a contemporary philosophical trend but the dominant state of mind in Western culture today. For him, postmodernism has a positive connotation: it implies a way of thinking and promoting values that he sees as the highest stage in the moral development of humanity. Western social elites widely accept his view. Those members of society who do not subscribe to postmodern values are criticised as not being progressive. They cling to the old and are concerned with preserving and maintaining it. They are, therefore, labelled as conservative.

Since postmodern thinking directly impacts social life and the political order in Western democracies, it is appropriate to begin by examining the relationship between postmodernism and democracy. Democracy, as we know it today (apart from its historical roots in ancient Greece), is a phenomenon of modernity emerging from the legacy of the Enlightenment. This heritage, although not homogeneous, is based on the ideal of reason, which is given to each individual but, at the same time, represents a single and universal rationality. The main difference between modernity and postmodernity can be seen in their different attitudes to reason. Unlike the defenders of modernity, postmodern thinkers do not believe in a single rationality which, as a neutral authority, would provide an everyday basis for the coexistence of individuals in a democratic society. For them, the supposed universality of reason is too often used as a tool by those who wish to gain power over those who think differently. Reason is used to construct something seemingly universal that is a product of power. This is why postmodern thinkers distrust reason and argue for the "deconstruction" of what is assumed to be familiar and universally valid. The term deconstruction has thus become one of the central concepts of postmodern thought.

2 The Philosophical Background of Postmodernism and the Idea(l) of Deconstruction

One of the forerunners of postmodernism is Nietzsche, in whom we can identify fundamental traits that still characterise postmodern thought. Nietzsche ques-

tions the autonomy and self-sufficiency of reason, believing that human reason is at the service of the will to power, which is the hidden foundation of reality and the driving force of all life. Reason creates understanding according to the will of its possessor to strengthen his power. According to Nietzsche, the modern belief in a single and universal reason (as in Kant) becomes an illusion propagated by those who benefit from it. The postmodern subject must accept its finitude and renounce metaphysical illusions (including the modern illusion of universal rationality) and self-deceptive attempts to secure a firm foundation for an uncertain and contingent human existence.

The fixed concepts and principles with which reason operates and which form the basis of metaphysics are, in fact, the result of a specific "construction" motivated by the will to power. Heidegger, another thinker with a profound influence on postmodernism, was the first to use the word "destruction" to question the apparent self-evidence of traditional philosophical concepts (Heidegger 1977, 27). Destruction does not mean demolition but dismantling (German: Abbau) (Heidegger 1975, 31), which seeks to uncover the hidden origins from which certain concepts and beliefs are built (constructed). For Heidegger, it is primarily a critique of the apparent solidity and timelessness with which Western (metaphysical) philosophy has understood being. Destruction, however, is not an end but rather a step towards transforming our relationship with Being: instead of wilfully constructing our understanding of it, we should adopt a receptive attitude to respond to its call. This is the main difference between Heidegger and Derrida. Derrida's notion of "deconstruction", unlike Heidegger's destruction, is not a means to a higher end of a new synthesis or "gathering" (Ger. Sammlung), which for Heidegger sums up the essence of thinking and best translates the Greek "logos". According to Derrida, such a gathering would already be a way of forming a new identity that seeks to bring together what originally happens in the mode of irreducible differentiation. The artificial word "deconstruction" contains two opposing dimensions (destruction and construction) that do not allow unification and identity. Deconstruction is, therefore, not only a philosophical strategy that seeks to dismantle and unmask the acts that have led to the construction of an identity or apparent solidity, but it also reflects the original "essence" of the whole of reality, which takes place as an event of "differance" (Derrida 1982, 3) and the absence of any stability or peace. This is why postmodern philosophy is so often associated with Derrida, because it no longer allows for any solidity, whether in the sense of ancient metaphysics or modern reason. Any solidity or identity is a subsequent act within the original event of differance. It is a violent act because it gathers and unites the different into something identical. The power used to construct such an identity is recognised as violence. In the act of construction, the weaker elements are suppressed, marginalised, or

even denied the right to exist. This is why deconstruction, as the unmasking of violence, acquires an ethical justification: it is guided by a concern for the weak, the marginalised, and the silenced.

Here, we also see the political dimension of deconstruction and its critique of political power. Derrida proposes a conception of democracy that must be attentive to power relations in society and sensitive to the oppressed and marginalised. However, he is aware that violence can never be eliminated entirely and distinguishes between different levels of violence (Derrida 1997, 112), some of which are structural and unavoidable. The first level of violence, which is inevitable, concerns the naming ("identifying") of things and events. The second level of violence, which is also structural and unavoidable, relates to the system of laws, which are not derived from an eternal rational order but contain a moment of (irrational and therefore violent) decision (Derrida 1992, 40). It is only at the third level, in the breaking of laws, that we are dealing with violence in the ordinary sense of the word. Although this violence is unnecessary, and of course, it is not desirable, the possibility of it must exist. Otherwise, we would fall into a new totalitarian system that would be even more violent. Therefore, Derrida is aware that the ethical vocation of deconstruction to expose violence and strive for justice does not mean that violence can ever be definitively eliminated. For Derrida, there is nothing "de-fini-tive" because coming to an end (lat. finis) would stop and close the original process of difference, which is life itself. In political terms – in his "democracy to come" (Derrida 2005, 306) – this indeterminacy is expressed in a radical openness to the other and an attitude of hospitality.

Vattimo has developed a similar view of democratic society, although his philosophical premises are less radical than Derrida's, drawing more heavily on Nietzsche and Heidegger. Derrida's notion of deconstruction is replaced by Vattimo's notion of "weakening". Vattimo distinguishes between the strong thinking of metaphysics, which believes in the knowledge of fixed and eternal truths, and the weak thinking of hermeneutics, inspired by Heidegger, which accepts human knowledge's historical contingency and finitude. Hermeneutics rejects strong metaphysical claims to know the truth and allows only interpretation. Vattimo defends weak hermeneutic thinking with an argument similar to Derrida's defence of deconstruction: strong thinking, which believes in stable identities (in metaphysical Being), is violent (Vattimo 2007). It has acquired its status through violent mechanisms of power. Echoing Nietzsche, Vattimo would also argue that truth is nothing more than a particular interpretation that has acquired a special status among other interpretations through power and violence. Derrida's differance as the (anti)ontological "principle" of reality is replaced in Vattimo by the notion of event, which he takes from the late Heidegger. In both concepts, postmodernism's (anti)ontology is evident: there is no solid and stable being. Any

solidity is a later human construction with no ontological basis. Consequently, the classical understanding of truth as adequacy and correspondence (between intellect and reality) is also rejected. What our intellect (i.e. our understanding) corresponds to is nothing but an unpredictable and contingent event. Moreover, this event is no longer linked to ontology but only to language. The event is, first and foremost, one of understanding embedded in the broader narrative horizon of interpreting history. Just as with Derrida, we are dealing with mere "traces" (without an absolute referent), so with Vattimo, we are dealing with interpretations that have no ontological reference and only refer to other interpretations that come to us through tradition.

As we have already said, for Vattimo, hermeneutics is not only a philosophical doctrine but also a historical period and a way of thinking in which we live today. For him, history is not a random and aimless course of events but has an eschatological orientation: hermeneutics represents the highest stage of moral development because it demystifies strong thinking and reduces violence. The hermeneutic pluralism of interpretations, as opposed to the domination of a single truth, leads to emancipation and greater freedom for each individual. Vattimo reverses Aristotle's view that truth is more important than friendship (Eth. Nic. 1096a). The attitude of respect and friendship is more important because truth is a pretentious illusion, always susceptible to violence. Vattimo calls this attitude "caritas" (charity, love), linking it to the Christian heritage but giving it a universal meaning (Vattimo 1999, 62). Love, as the very opposite of violence, is the only principle that cannot be weakened or deconstructed. It should also be seen as the main norm of social life, or for what Vattimo calls hermeneutic democracy.

3 Postmodernity in a Social Context: Vattimo's Hermeneutic Democracy

Vattimo's concept of "hermeneutic democracy" (also called "postmodern democracy"), which is closely related to Derrida's views, can serve as an example of the application of postmodern views in a social context. Its most explicit presentation can be found in a book that Vattimo co-authored with his student, Santiago Zabala (Vattimo & Zabala 2011), primarily devoted to a hermeneutic interpretation of communism. For Vattimo, the ideal of the social order, which he calls postmodern or hermeneutic democracy, also coincides with the ideal of communism and even with the ideal of the Christian social order if both communism and Christianity are interpreted in a hermeneutic way. As mentioned, hermeneutics represents a process of deconstruction or weakening of truth, done precisely through the lenses and alternative perspectives of the weak, marginalised and oppressed. For this reason, hermeneutics is not neutral regarding politics but should be seen as a political project. "By 'political project', we do

not mean that hermeneutics actually represents a political position that no one has yet explicated systematically, but rather that it is political in itself" (77). Hermeneutics means liberation and emancipation from the violence caused by the strong thinking of metaphysics and its current metamorphoses in science and philosophical realism. For Vattimo, modern liberal democracy is liberal only in appearance: it defends the freedom of the powerful who have succeeded in imposing their understanding of society. This understanding sees itself as a *realistic* description reflecting the truth of the world and society. It promotes belief in science's objective truth and the market economy's objective laws. In reality, however, this is only an interpretation constructed by those with economic power and, consequently, political power (Vattimo here follows the Marxist critique of society) who have managed to shape or "frame" democracy according to their will and interests. Vattimo calls the existing democracy a "framed democracy", linking the negative connotation of the verb "to frame" to Heidegger's concept of "Gestell" (also translated as frame), which Heidegger uses to describe the essence of the modern technological age (Heidegger 1994, 23).

Vattimo describes the framed democracy in terms of three characteristics: "imposition (violence), conservation (realism), and triumph (history)" (Vattimo and Zabala 2011, 12) and links them to the notion of truth. Social elites or those who are powerful impose their vision of society as truth "because claims of truth are also claims of political power." (18-19) This imposition of truth is violent, although those in power want to give the opposite impression. They emphasise their commitment to dialogue, which serves as an ethical justification for the supposedly non-violent nature of the existing democracy. For Vattimo, however, this is merely a cover that serves to silence other interlocutors through an apparent dialogue. Another characteristic of framed democracy is its insistence on an objective and neutral truth, on a realism that contrasts with the supposed hermeneutic relativity. Again, we are dealing with the illusion that it is possible to describe reality objectively and determine its truth. For hermeneutics, there is no single description of reality, only interpretations. Nor is there a single rationality to which the "Western rationalist tradition" constantly refers, but which, according to Vattimo, is "just another name for metaphysics." (30) The third characteristic of framed democracy is triumphalism. The fall of communism is perceived as a victory for liberal democracy and serves as an argument for its truth. The defenders of liberal democracy see themselves as victors, vindicated in their advocacy of the "conservative moral order" of framed democracy. (37-38)

Genuine, i.e. hermeneutic or postmodern, democracy must overcome the three defects of framed democracy. First, it must renounce not only the imposition of truth but truth itself (Vattimo 2011). Vattimo writes a provocative phrase: "the end of truth is the beginning of democracy" (Vattimo and Zabala 2011, 23).

It is necessary to accept that there is no such thing as objective truth or universal values (78). Second, it is also necessary to critically question the concept of dialogue, which presupposes a universal logos and a single victorious truth. The hermeneutic alternative to dialogue is *conversation*, which tolerates and respects the plurality of interpretations without trying to reduce them to a single interpretation that would call itself truth. This is why the philosophy of realism, with its claim to attain the truth, should be rejected. Third, democracy should not favour the winners and the powerful. The touchstone of true democracy is its ability to give space to the weak and marginalised for their interpretations and visions. Alternatively, as Vattimo writes, "hermeneutic weak thought is the thought of the weak, of those who are not satisfied with the established principles imposed on them and who demand different rights, that is, other interpretations. In this politics of interpretation, conversation becomes the realm where the powerful describers of the world can listen to the requests of the weak and perhaps change their selfish priorities." (107)

Vattimo is aware of the fact that liberal democracy regularly holds elections, which allow people to influence those who will have power in society. However, he does not trust elections and sees them as framed within the existing liberal system, "which imposes elections" (57). However, how can the will of the people, especially the weak, be adequately considered in a true democracy? Vattimo seems to propose a somewhat utopian vision of democracy that brings together views as diverse as communism, anarchism and Christianity. For him, true democracy seeks the abolition of social classes and power relations, which corresponds to the ideal of (hermeneutic) communism. Democracy also embodies anarchic anti-foundationalism in its desire to maintain an open conversation that cannot be stopped in the name of some ultimate justification or absolute principle. Moreover, since the only criterion that cannot be questioned or deconstructed in democracy is love (caritas), democracy also coincides with the highest ideal of Christianity.

Vattimo's concept of postmodern democracy, guided by the idea of deconstruction or weakening, turns out to be the opposite of the concept of the state. The very name "state" (lat. status) denotes something that stands firm, that is held together, as opposed to flux and dispersion. The state results from a specific construction that holds together a particular group of individuals, which requires power and authority. The state must first be constituted: it needs structures (constitution) and institutions that "stand". These constructive elements (institutions) of the state, without which democracy cannot exist, seem less relevant to Vattimo. For him, deconstruction is more important: the state and its authority must be weakened – democratic processes aim to reduce violence. However, is it possible

to insist only on deconstruction without being aware of the need for construction and the positive role of power?

4 The Paradox of Postmodern Democracy and Its Potential for Violence

Unlike Derrida, who is aware of the necessity of structural violence in his understanding of difference and deconstruction, Vattimo's position seems more naïve since he considers love (caritas) as a possibility of pure non-violence. For both, however, it is necessary to keep deconstruction or weakening constantly alive because every end or definition means death, which for them is the highest form of violence. Theoretically, this means that every identity must remain open, undefined, and capable of accepting something different. This openness, therefore, has a temporal dimension. Nothing that exists is definite; everything is open to the arrival of something new and completely unpredictable. This is why, according to Derrida, the essence of democracy is this promise of the future, which is at once necessary and impossible. Undefinability is the principle of life; any closure is death. That is why democracy is not a given state but a "democracy to come". A similar openness to the future is also important for Vattimo, but the past (or Heidegger's "having-been") is equally important for him. The past has provided us not only with the identities that establish the horizon of our understanding and that we must weaken but also with the very idea of weakening. Vattimo believes that the historical development of the West, in which Christianity plays a unique role, represents a progressive assertion of the message of love (Vattimo 2002, 82), which should be interpreted as weakening and non-violence. In this way, the idea of weakening (or deconstruction) gains historical legitimacy and appears as human history's (almost metaphysical) goal. Postmodern democracy is seen as the realisation of humanity's ethical progress and reveals Vattimo's teleological understanding of history.

However, does not Vattimo's defence of non-violent postmodern democracy, which takes on the character of a secularised salvation, contain many violent moments? Does his weak thought not become a "strong theory of weakness" (Vattimo and Zabala 2011, 97)? I want to point out two problematic assumptions of Vattimo's postmodern democracy. The first is the categorical rejection of any foundation characterised as a metaphysical construction. This is closely related to Vattimo's rejection of ontology. Inspired by Heidegger, Vattimo reduces all being to the *understanding* of being (Vattimo 1991, 115). Every ontological event is, in fact, a hermeneutic event of understanding and language. If we take the sun as an example, it has meaning for us only as an event of understanding, while its ontological status (out there) beyond understanding should be rejected. The "ontological" sun is reduced to its hermeneutic meaning, socially constructed

through the history of understanding. Vattimo even speaks of the "spiritual-isation" of meaning (Vattimo 2002, 49) and rejects empiricism as a naive on-tology. However, is it not a kind of violence to reduce reality to mere language and understanding? All the more so since Vattimo rejects any possibility of an ontological justification. Vattimo accuses science of overestimating objective truth, but science is humble enough to accept the ontological "measure" set by reality itself. In Vattimo's hermeneutic totalisation of reality, on the other hand, there is no criterion for interpretation other than the tradition of understanding (or the history of interpretation), which must itself be subject to weakening. We can illustrate this point with the sex-gender debate. Vattimo would be in com-plete agreement with a hermeneutic interpretation of gender and would reject any ontological grounding in (biological) sex. People in their sexual identity are what they interpret themselves to be, and they can only do this if they are liber-ated from the violence present in traditional interpretations of gender (which are nothing but violently constructed identities). In the absence of an ontological (or biological) criterion, it is necessary to accept different interpretations, especially those of the weak and marginalised, in this case, those who do not conform to traditional gender identities.

This brings us to the second problematic assumption of postmodern democ-racy: the role of conversation as a substitute for dialogue. The purpose of politics is to make decisions, and in a democracy, those decisions should express the peo-ple's will. However, how can political decisions be solely based on conversations between differently-minded citizens? According to Derrida, decision-making is violent at its core (automatic or self-evident decisions do not deserve the name). At some point, the conversation has to stop temporarily because a political de-cision has to be taken and codified in law. However, this decision, which will regulate the lives of citizens, will be experienced by many as violent, or at least contrary to their interpretations. On what basis should a political decision be taken if there is no external criterion? Vattimo would argue that the criterion is non-violence, which is manifested in the treatment of the weak. In the case of gender theory, the weak would be sexual minorities, who should be guaranteed the freedom to choose their sexual identity. However, every law resulting from political decisions is a new construction that embodies a new power and brings the possibility of violence. What if, in the name of non-violence, a law *violent-ly* rejects the majority's interpretation? It becomes clear that deconstruction is insufficient because we first need construction. Of course, construction should not follow the selfish interests of the will to power. However, what else is there to follow when all external criteria or rational principles are dismissed as meta-physic illusions? The principle of non-violence is based on negation. Still, to live together in a democratic society, we also need positive criteria and principles that

bind the participants in the conversation. Otherwise, the door is wide open to authoritarianism and power violence. Vattimo's postmodern democracy, which renounces logos as the common criterion of communication and political decision-making, can degenerate into anarchic violence or to the rule of the weak (Marx called the "dictatorship of the proletariat").

5 The Search for a Way Out: A Different Kind of Hermeneutic Democracy

Although deconstruction and its analogous notion of weakening have their relative validity, the problem of postmodern thought, as we see it in Derrida or Vattimo, lies in giving deconstruction or weakening an absolute status. According to Derrida, there is initially no identity (beyond the differance), and according to Vattimo, there are no ontological facts (beyond interpretations). We firmly believe that nothing in reality has an ontological identity and that any talk of reality should be brought back (i.e., reduced) to the constitution of the meaning of that reality in human consciousness or language. However, this extreme view is a *belief* that needs to be justified. The fact that any stability and identity can be subjected to deconstruction, just as any ontological reality can be subjected to its givenness to human consciousness (and reduced to an event of understanding), does not lead to the logical conclusion that there is nothing solid "out there" or that there is nothing outside of consciousness or language. At such a fundamental level, we are dealing with beliefs that cannot be proven because they themselves determine what can even function as proof or evidence at all. Is it not more justified to believe that there is a "reality" (whatever we call it) that is independent of us and is capable of confirming or refuting our interpretations? Or that not all interpretations are equally rational and that there are laws of reason that cannot be deconstructed? In fact, Western metaphysics was born from the insight that such solid and "indeconstructible" laws are accessible to human thought, which, in retrospect, made people marvel at the ability of their minds to transcend the finitude and limitations of human existence. Indeed, the traditional metaphysics carried too far its belief in knowing the inner laws (or the inner "order") of every being (what is metaphysically called the essence), resulting in an essentialism that was violent towards the diversity of individuals sharing the same essence. From a postmodern point of view, metaphysics did not discover the ontological order but constructed it according to its will to power. Metaphysical essences are violent constructions that can only be produced by suppressing primordial differences. However, should the criticism of the violent character of metaphysics lead to the rejection of metaphysics in general? Or do we have good reasons for retaining metaphysical faith in the ontological order that governs reality? Modern science is still based on such a belief, although it operates not with the concept of (static)

essence but with the concept of (dynamic) function. Derrida and Vattimo would reject the belief in any ontological order that could serve as an external criterion outside of the play of differences (Derrida) or interpretations (Vattimo), but this is also a belief. Is it not more convincing to believe in a transcendent order, whether in the ontological sense or the sense of universal logical rationality? Is it impossible to compromise between the heavy metaphysics and the apparent postmodern lightness?

The compromise between the metaphysical belief in a transcendent order and the creative freedom of human understanding can be traced back to Gadamer, who developed an understanding of hermeneutics that differs considerably from Vattimo's. Gadamer's hermeneutics does not see itself as a weak thought or opposed to metaphysics. His hermeneutics is born of the desire to understand as faithfully as possible the transcendent meaning or sense hidden in a given medium (especially the written text, but also in other creations). The necessity of interpretation does not imply a renunciation of the belief in a transcendent (and, in this sense, "objective") meaning. Still, on the contrary, this belief drives the interpreter, despite the awareness of his limited and finite understanding, to discover and understand this meaning as fully as possible. Interpretations are not arbitrarily constructed but respond to an external "measure". Of course, hermeneutics does not believe in the assumption of classical metaphysics that our understanding and its propositions can directly reflect the metaphysical order without any need for interpretation. For Gadamer, interpretation is how human understanding functions (Gadamer 1990, 477), and it is never a simple mirror of reality. Nevertheless, it refers to a transcendent measure – "the language of things" (480) – by which it judges the adequacy of its interpretations.

Such a metaphysical understanding of Gadamer's hermeneutics is advocated by Jean Grondin (2010), who is critical of Vattimo's "Latinisation" of hermeneutics (Grondin 2007). It can also be fruitfully applied as an alternative understanding of hermeneutic democracy. Democracy must remain hermeneutic because this means recognising citizens' formal equality as interpreters with different interpretations. The word interpretation emphasises the recognition of the limits of one's understanding and the need to tolerate the various views and understandings of our fellow citizens. However, pluralism of interpretation does not mean abandoning the notion of truth. We can still acknowledge the formal laws of universal reason and believe in a transcendent truth of reality, even if it is accessible only through interpretation. One of the central messages of hermeneutics is that interpretation should be understood positively: not as a deficient mode of understanding compared to absolute knowledge, but as a positive human capacity to understand at all. Truth can only come to us through interpretation. We can illustrate this point with historians who give different accounts of historical

events but who all take historical truth as an external criterion that can decide the adequacy of their interpretations. Alternatively, to apply this line of reasoning to the question of gender theory, freedom of interpretation in the concept of gender cannot discard the external criterion of natural givenness and biological sex. This metaphysical or ontological truth is not a construction of the powerful who are violent towards others, but the belief that man does not create the measure and does not make the laws, but that he receives the measure and discovers the laws. This is perhaps the most significant difference between the postmodern and the metaphysical position because man's freedom alone is the measure in the former. In contrast, in the latter, man receives the measure from something transcendent. Of course, in a democracy, this belief in a transcendent criterion must not serve as a mysterious legitimation of power or as a cover for the domination of the powerful but as a regulative idea capable of facilitating social communication in a positive, i.e. "constructive" sense. A shared belief in logos (and thus in dialogue), which is above the individual and his egoistic interests, and a belief in an ontological truth that no human being can subjugate but which remains accessible despite the limitations of human interpretations, can constitute the minimum of democratic consensus capable of saving democracy from its dissolution in the postmodern deconstruction.

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BRIDGING DIVIDES:
NAVIGATING TENSIONS BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE AND CHURCH TRADITION THROUGH THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN LITURGY

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1 Anthropological Features of Worship Service

The anthropological dimension of worship is fundamental for comprehending the profound essence of divine rites (Senn 1983, 1). The liturgy is not simply a set of predetermined rituals carried out as a duty; instead, it is a vibrant, human-focused activity intended to connect with the intricacies of human life fully. The primary purpose of worship is to serve the needs and desires of individuals rather than the other way around. This fundamental fact emphasises the importance of creating liturgical experiences that use all human senses. This ensures that participants fully engage in a comprehensive spiritual encounter that enhances their intellectual and spiritual well-being.

Humans, with their complex physiological and psychological composition, exhibit various responses to divine communication. An effective liturgy must engage multiple senses to establish a deeper connection between the sacred and the human. Worship services that only prioritise one sense, such as hearing, decrease the overall quality of the experience and a less efficient communication of spiritual truths. Hence, symbols, art, and music are crucial components of worship, acting alongside spoken words to actively involve worshippers and enrich the spiritual connection.

A liturgy that genuinely focuses on human experience recognises that rituals and practices are intentionally crafted to benefit individuals (Mitchell 2002, 407). The system acknowledges the intricate nature of human existence and adapts its approach to embrace the whole human experience. Within the setting of a church service, sermons stimulate intellectual thought, while hymns and visual focal points like the cross stimulate emotional responses. This integration of auditory, visual, and sensory elements ensures that worship becomes a complete spiritual encounter.

Symbols, art, and music in the liturgy are highly significant. These elements serve as intermediaries connecting the divine and human realms, transforming abstract theological concepts into physical and easily understandable forms. The cross, for instance, represents the act of sacrifice by Christ and functions as a

powerful point for contemplation. Religious art, like Michelangelo's frescoes, teaches and inspires by vividly portraying biblical narratives, enabling worshippers to engage with stories of the faith visually. During Eucharistic services, the act of partaking in bread and wine stimulates the senses of taste and smell, enhancing the personal experience and confirming the spiritual themes being communicated. Using candles, incense, and visual art establishes a sanctified ambience that strengthens the manifestation of the divine, enhancing the encounter's immersive and spiritually expressive nature.

Carl Jung's examination of human psychology provides more understanding of the significance of symbols and rituals in religious devotion. Jung's theory of the collective unconscious claims that symbols, dreams, visions, and myths play a crucial role in how humans communicate and make sense of their experiences (Jung 1958). He observed that those who do not have symbolic or mythic significance in their life are more vulnerable to mental disease. This study highlights the need to include symbols and rituals in worship, as they serve as an essential structure for individuals to connect with the divine and generate significance in their spiritual existence.

The interconnection between myth, ritual, and cult within the liturgical framework is crucial. Humans are inclined to arrange their experiences into coherent patterns, sometimes called myths and rituals (Mitchel 2002, 407ff). Although contemporary understandings of these concepts frequently associate them with negative implications, they actually hold major meaning within the framework of religious devotion. Myths, regarded as sacred narratives and rituals, which are symbolic activities, collaborate to communicate profound truths about the human experience and the divine.

Cultural and theological traditions delineate myths as not mere stories but sacred chronicles that communicate the universe's origins and humanity (Laughlin et al., 1990). Within the Christian faith, the Gospel serves as a treasured narrative, a model for human behaviour, and a story of divine affection and sacrifice. Even though these myths frequently depict events from long ago, their purpose is to provide significance and direction for modern life, surpassing the constraints of time and place (Senn 1997b; Chupungco 1998).

Rituals, however, are systematic and symbolic behaviours that are performed regularly. They lack flexibility but resist change, expressing moral or spiritual directives that must be adhered to. Rituals function as instruments of social integration, offering consistency and steadiness in the presence of change. They play a crucial role in safeguarding the community's collective beliefs and values, guaranteeing the transmission of religious traditions from one generation to another (Senn 1997b; Chupungco 1998; Mitchel 2002, 408).

Mircea Eliade's classification of rituals based on their role in the sacred aspects of existence further highlights the significance of ceremonies in religious worship. The rites of baptism, Eucharist, and liturgical seasons are crucial for establishing a connection between the community and the transcendent. The repetition of these rituals provides reassurance to participants that the positive and joyous experiences they have had in the past will be repeated, strengthening their belief in the ongoing presence of the sacred in their lives (Eliade 1957, 61-65)

The Christian liturgy thus serves as a bridge between the divine and the human, converting a mere sequence of rites into a profound experience that profoundly connects with human experience. It enhances worshippers' spiritual connection by activating all human senses, enabling them to encounter the divine. This approach, which focuses on individuals' needs and experiences, guarantees that liturgy remains meaningful and influential.

2 Relationship between Ortodoxia and Orthopraxia

In Christian theology, the core principles of orthodoxia and orthopraxia are crucial foundations of religious activity, offering separate yet interconnected perspectives on the believer's life. Orthodoxia, originating from the Greek words "orthos" (meaning correct) and "doxa" (meaning belief), highlights the strict commitment to accurate teachings within a religious tradition. It emphasises maintaining the established doctrinal principles defined by tradition or authoritative sources. Orthopraxia, derived from the words "ortho", meaning right and "praxis", meaning practice, emphasises the importance of expressing one's views through correct behaviour, rituals, and ethical conduct. This involves publicly and actively embodying one's faith (Schmemann 2003, 14; Senn 1983, 60).

These ideas deeply impact modern Christian worship, shaping the format and content of communal worship experiences. The presence of Orthodoxia is apparent in the creedal affirmations, such as the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed, which clearly express and strengthen fundamental theological ideas, establishing a cohesive faith identity within the community. This orthodoxy is further disseminated by delivering biblical sermons, in which Scripture and tradition are elaborated upon to reinforce accurate beliefs within the congregation.

Liturgical components play a vital role in expressing orthodoxia. The prayers, hymns, and readings are carefully selected to align with orthodox Christian theology. Additionally, sacraments like baptism and the Eucharist are used as tangible symbols of God's grace, highlighting the need for accurate belief as more than just intellectual agreement but a lived experience.

Orthopraxia is achieved by collective worship rituals that encourage moral conduct and dedication in religious observance. Singing hymns, praying togeth-

er, and participating in rituals promote communal cohesion while motivating worshippers to manifest their religious beliefs via acts of benevolence, empathy, and fairness in their everyday lives. The expansion of orthopraxia outside the confines of the church, manifested via acts of service and mission, highlights its importance in the practical manifestation of religion.

Furthermore, engagement in liturgical rituals and sacraments involves certain behaviours and movements that communicate theological principles and establish collective identity, reinforcing common convictions and principles within the Christian community. Orthopraxia enables believers to transition from passive recipients of divine favour to active partners in God's work, expressing their faith via tangible and powerful actions.

Incorporating orthodoxia and orthopraxis in Christian worship is essential as it guides believers in comprehending accurate beliefs and manifesting faith through ethical conduct. This confluence yields worship services that are not only intellectually rigorous and doctrinally solid but also dynamic manifestations of Christian identity and dedication.

The fundamental nature of liturgy is intensely expressed in the teachings of traditional Christian Churches (Roman Catholic Church - Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC); Lutheran Churches – The Augsburg Confession (AC), Article VII). They highlight the constant presence of Christ in the Church, particularly during liturgical ceremonies. This presence is evident in various aspects – reading of the Scripture, administering the Sacraments, and communal prayer.

The primary focus of liturgical practice is the interaction between God and the community of believers. God's initial act of grace, when He came down to earth and made a sacrifice for the salvation of humanity, establishes the fundamental, descending structural line of the liturgy. The community of believers collectively and corporately responds to this supernatural inspiration by expressing and articulating their faith via songs, petitions, and thanksgiving. This expression is known as the anabatic liturgical structural line (Atkins 1999).

Comprehending the significance of liturgy requires recognising it as a reciprocal conversation between God and the worshipers. This dynamic interplay promotes a vibrant manifestation of worship, with the Eucharist as its central element, providing a constant wellspring of vitality and spiritual activity. The significance of preserving this essential component is emphasised by its capacity to revitalise the Church's vitality and the community's vibrancy.

Hence, integrating orthodoxia and orthopraxia within the liturgical framework is essential. It guarantees that worship is a dynamic and devoted involvement in the practice of faith, rather than just confirming the accuracy of doctrines but rather immersing oneself in them profoundly. This integration highlights liturgy as a potent means of articulating the Christian community's identity, engaging

believers in more profound connections with God and one another, and cultivating a dynamic tradition that upholds theological accuracy and Christian existence's moral obligations. The continuous interaction of principles in worship not only maintains but also enhances the collective and spiritual life of the Church.

3 Cultural Relevance and Liturgical Change

Within the diverse realm of Christian worship, the concepts of orthodoxia and orthopraxia play a crucial role in effectively navigating the ever-changing cultural dynamics of modern society. These societal, financial, or governmental changes profoundly impact the way religious rituals are performed, making it necessary for worship to stay culturally relevant to avoid becoming static and disconnected from the congregation's real-life encounters. An evident illustration of this adaptation is the assimilation of contemporary Christian music into Western worship settings, indicating a more inclusive embrace of contemporary musical genres.

The contemporary approach to evangelisation now strongly emphasises cultural sensitivity, a significant shift from previous practices that frequently imposed Christian values without considering local traditions, resulting in opposition. Currently, evangelisation promotes a cultural adaptation approach, in which the Gospel message and liturgical practices are carefully adjusted to fit local contexts by utilising indigenous languages, artistic expressions, and modern communication tools. This is done to improve the impact and acceptance of the Gospel.

Nevertheless, embracing cultural diversity presents difficulties, especially in upholding the authenticity of the Gospel's universal message, as there are concerns that excessive adaptation may weaken its fundamental nature. Discussion about religion involves a nuanced process of maintaining integrity in religion while addressing societal developments.

Churches have created alternate worship services to accommodate the desires of modern congregations, which are designed to appeal to contemporary sensibilities. These services frequently incorporate modern music and simplified liturgical structures to appeal to young individuals and those who desire meaningful spiritual encounters. In addition, incorporating multimedia elements into worship services utilises the visual, auditory, and physical senses to produce immersive and captivating divine experiences for attendees.

Anthropological and sociological research supports adapting worship to worshippers' needs and preferences. This research emphasises the power of actively involving worshippers in personal and experiential ways. Contemporary young people are especially drawn to worship encounters that activate their senses and emotions, reflecting the broader educational shift towards hands-on learning.

An essential aspect of effective modern worship is the idea of a liturgy that focuses on the human experience and aims to include worshippers fully. This strategy employs sensory stimuli, such as the captivating scents of the Eucharistic ceremony or the surrounding soft light emitted by candles, to surpass audible experiences and welcome worshippers into a multi-dimensional interaction with the sacred. Symbols, art, and music are essential in this process because they serve as vital channels that connect the earthly with the transcendent, enhancing the worship experience with complexity, subtlety, and profound emotional impact.

The correlation between liturgy and theology has substantially changed in the contemporary period due to innovative investigations that enhance our comprehension of worship. Contemporary theological discussion regards the "theology of liturgy" as more than just an academic field but rather as a thoughtful effort by successive generations of Christians to connect their worship experiences with everyday life. This integration accentuates the liturgy's connection to Scripture, originating from the ancient Jewish-Christian heritage, and emphasises Jesus Christ's crucial position as the exclusive intermediary between God and humanity (Senn 1983, 60).

The practical consequences of this theological tradition have a direct impact on the way Christians worship. It ensures that the practices of the Old Testament are connected, not just in terms of scripture and language but also in the way rituals are carried out. The preservation of this continuity is essential since the liturgical practices of early Christians were not simply passed down but absorbed and reinterpreted in accordance with their collective and individual beliefs.

Christian liturgical history's core acknowledges the inseparable connection between the covenant and the rite. Rather than being a stage for God, liturgy is a venue for God to communicate with himself and for humans to share the divine gift. This interpretation views the liturgy as a means of accessing and embracing the significant moments of salvation associated with God's presence in history (Schmemann 2003, 10ff; Senn 1997a, xv).

The liturgical dimension is evident in three main aspects: historically, as it relates to the sequence of events leading to salvation; communally, as it sets the community at the core of worship; and mystically, as it forms the moment of redemption. These elements highlight the interdependent relationship between faith and worship, further examined in modern liturgical theology.

Contemporary liturgical theology seeks to elucidate how the Christian congregation genuinely communicates its beliefs about God through symbolic actions and verbal expressions, thereby expressing the community's concept of itself and its perception of the world. This theological investigation highlights the importance of liturgy as an active practice that reflects the dynamic connection

between belief and community life. This is encapsulated in the theological principle of lex orandi, lex credendi, which means that how we pray reflects what we believe. This principle is also extended to lex agendi, which means how we act is inherently linked to how we pray (Ratzinger 2018, 60-64).

Liturgical experience is not simply a reflection of theological claims but a dynamic and historical tradition that brings Christ's mystery to life and adapts the Church's collective identity. By skillfully adjusting to societal changes, liturgy continues to be a significant manifestation of the Church's faith, combining theology and practice while unwaveringly maintaining the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine and practice.

4 Fundamental Constants in Worship - Maintaining Theological Integrity

During periods of societal transition, the worship service stands out as a significant and relevant aspect of the interaction between cult and culture. Significant transformations, whether social, economic, or political, always profoundly impact the sacred aspects of liturgical practice. Therefore, upholding the cultural significance of worship services to avoid stagnation and guarantee that they continue to be relevant to the congregation's real-life experiences is crucial.

Nevertheless, the church must meticulously maintain a delicate equilibrium between cultural relevance and the unwavering commitment to the Gospel's all-encompassing mission. Theological discussions consistently wrestle with this equilibrium, addressing apprehensions that excessive adjustment may diminish the Gospel's fundamental nature. This emphasises the significance of preserving religious consistency in changing societal norms, guaranteeing that fundamental beliefs are not compromised.

Churches have created alternate worship sessions to meet the demands and preferences of modern individuals and appeal to their contemporary sensibilities.

In this setting, symbols, art, and music convey theological ideas and facilitate spiritual reflection. Icons such as the cross surpass language borders, communicating profound religious principles and rendering intangible ideas physical for worshippers. Religious art enhances the worship area by portraying biblical narratives and important events, encouraging a more profound connection with the divine. Music and liturgical art amplify the emotional impact and sacred atmosphere of worship, establishing the mood with solemn chants or uplifting melodies that elicit a range of emotional reactions and cultivate a feeling of reverence.

The constant devotion to key theological truths is the foundation of this nuanced balancing. These beliefs act as guiding beacons amidst the complications of cultural adaptation. To prevent the dilution or distortion of important elements,

worship activities must remain firmly rooted in these fundamental principles, such as the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, although worship may undergo superficial changes to align with modern sensibilities, its fundamental nature remains firmly rooted in the timeless principles of Christianity.

Churches face an ongoing problem in balancing the conflict between tradition and innovation to remain relevant in a continuously evolving society. It is crucial to strike a delicate equilibrium between safeguarding religious legacy and adjusting to modern cultural situations. This requires continuous introspection and discussion within religious communities, combining the knowledge from the past with the understanding gained in the present to form future rituals and ceremonies.

In countries characterised by pluralism, where various cultural perspectives come together, preserving the uniqueness of the Christian message is increasingly important. Churches must confront the task of incorporating cultural variety while maintaining the fundamental principles of the faith. This intricate equilibrium necessitates insightful judgment and elegance since it requires skillfully managing the principles of inclusion and theological soundness.

The main purpose of Christian worship services is to enable God's actions, establishing an environment where God's service to the community generates a reaction from both individuals and the community as a whole—a reaction characterised by admiration and reverence. God initiates the divine encounter, extending grace and an invitation for participation. Worship services should mirror this dynamic by audibly and publicly expressing faith in response to God's actions.

The liturgical structure further demonstrates the bond between God and the community, which represents an ongoing dialogue—a sacred interchange where divine grace intersects with communal reaction. This architectural design facilitates the church's outer manifestation of its public and social activities, exhibiting its internal development and external purpose.

Christian worship is a dynamic and collective response to God's continuous involvement with the world rather than a solitary or unchanging action. Through this dynamic engagement, the worship session becomes a live expression of faith, constantly evolving while firmly grounded in the fundamental principles of Christianity (Senn 1997a).

5 Conclusion

This analysis delves into the intricate relationship between orthodoxia (correct belief) and orthopraxia (correct practice) in Christian Liturgy. It explores the ongoing conversation between established ecclesiastical tradition and the ev-

er-changing aspects of modern culture. This study argues that the liturgical practices of the Christian Church, by incorporating modern societal norms while maintaining sacred tradition, not only reflect the tensions that arise from the intersection of faith and modernity but also actively work to reconcile them.

The liturgy, possessing both sacramental and symbolic complexity, surpasses mere procedural purpose, emerging as a guiding light of metamorphosis and divine communion. In this environment, liturgy serves as a channel for profound spiritual sustenance and development, enabling symbolic, fundamentally genuine, and transformative interactions. These experiences allow Christians to participate in the mysteries of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, promoting a stronger connection with Christ by conscious and active engagement in the sacred rituals.

In light of ongoing technological progress, societal transformation, and cultural variety, the Church is compelled to adapt its liturgy, which at the same time must remain meaningful and applicable. This necessitates a skilful and delicate balancing act, where the Gospel's authenticity is preserved while also adjusting liturgical practices to adapt to the requirements and sensitivities of modern worshippers. This equilibrium guarantees that while the methods of worship may change throughout time, the Church's fundamental truths and theological principles remain unwavering and unchanged.

This paper has analysed specific liturgical tensions, such as incorporating contemporary music and digital media in worship services. It demonstrates how these modern elements can be integrated into traditional forms without compromising the sacred nature of the liturgy. These adjustments are not just compromises with modernity but rather chances to enhance the worship experience, making it easier to understand and more significant for the different demographics of today's congregations.

Furthermore, the Church plays a complex role in this process, serving as custodians of theological traditions and facilitators of spiritual involvement. The Church's role goes beyond simply organising liturgy; it entails an immense pastoral dedication to the spiritual development of the faithful. This involves ensuring that the liturgical practices are not only historically and theologically accurate but also lively and captivating, capable of fostering the spiritual well-being of individuals and communities alike.

This discussion has also focused on the current difficulties that result from a culture saturated with technology, where there is a constant risk of losing the profound significance of religious symbols and rituals. The Church must try to counteract the intrusion of spiritual worldliness, exemplified by Gnosticism and neo-Pelagianism, which challenge the community and grace-infused essence of liturgical activity. By promoting genuine engagement in the liturgy that encom-

passes intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects, the Church can oppose these tendencies and strengthen the liturgy's ability to bring about profound change within the faithful community.

The study suggests that Christian Liturgy provides a compelling framework for the Church to manage the complexity of religion in a modern setting. This framework pays homage to the diverse and intricate traditions while efficiently interacting with modern culture. By adopting this dual commitment, the Church not only reconciles the differences between the ancient and the modern, but also reinforces its identity as the embodiment of Christ, characterised by vitality and the ability to give life. As we explore the intricate nature of the liturgy, we are reminded of its ability to not only mirror but also influence the aspects of Christian existence, urging us to actively connect with the profound mystery that lies at the core of our belief. Therefore, the liturgy continues to be significant and essential, serving as a sacred space where the timeless meets with the fleeting and where the congregation can discover harmony and comfort in the existence of the transcendent.

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BELIEVING WITHOUT BELONGING?
DETRADITIONALISATION OF THE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY
OF YOUTH IN SLOVAKIA

Mária Kardis, Prešov

1 Introduction

Modernity, therefore, has not removed religion but has caused its decomposition, the pluralisation of its forms and often its transfer from the institutional framework of identity to the subjective world of religious experiences and sensations. Religiosity represents social reality's basic cognitive and axiological components (Voegelin, Berger, and Luckmann). The term „religiosity" is used in this paper as a general umbrella term for various religious and spiritual identities.

The relationship and connection between religion and post-modern civilisation interest many researchers, especially sociologists of religion. Due to its dynamics, place and role in people's lives, culture and civilisation, religion has been a focal point of interest and a broad field of research for many different scientific disciplines since the beginning of time. In modern societies, often referred to as post-modern, institutionalised religion is losing its direct influence on social and especially political life. Many individuals' decisions fall outside the sphere reserved for the sacred. Religion has many competitors in modern societies in explaining and interpreting social life, so it is losing its former credibility as the only source of meaning in life. It does not disappear in society but only changes its social forms. Visions of humanism without religion, with some undefined spirituality, are unrealistic. Today, besides the secularisation theory, other theories are gaining importance - the theory of the religious market, the theory of individualisation, the theory of pluralisation, the theory of dispersion, the theory of deprivatisation and others (Mariański 2010, 12-14). The changes that are taking place in contemporary religiosity cannot be understood solely in terms of secularisation but more broadly as transformations. Based on this, it can be argued that religiosity is still present in some form in all areas of human life (Mariański 2010, 150-152).

Grace Davie since the mid-1980s. She has explored the connections between religion and modernity in Britain and Europe. She then began to examine the forms of European religiosity in a global context. She is the author of several works from which substantial theses will be presented. Davie's scholarly thought goes beyond theory and research findings to create new methodological tools for

studying religion. Davie is aware that the social phenomena she studies are dynamic and that methodological tools quickly become obsolete or useless amidst constant social change (Trzebiatowska, Socjologia religii, 11-12).

Based on her research, Davie concludes that pluralisation and individualisation significantly articulate the processes of transformation of religiosity; they represent new and important, to some extent, alternative and competing models of religious and spiritual life. According to her, the new religiosity and the new spirituality do not have to be alternatives to each other, much less in conflict with each other; they can complement each other and reinforce each other to a certain extent. Moreover, it is precisely this phenomenon of modern religiosity that the British sociologist of religion points out based on her research. She also points out that the assumption that modernisation inevitably leads to secularisation is erroneous and outdated, mainly because religion still retains an essential role in late modern societies. The theory of secularisation, which has its roots in Europe's specific nineteenth-century socio-economic context, has gradually taken on the form of theoretical dogma. Moreover, as Western Europe became the dominant model to which the rest of the world was compared, modernity and secularisation came to be treated as synonymous terms. Davie puts it briefly: theory dominated or became more important than empirical data (Davie, Sociology of Religion, 13; Výjimečný případ Evropy 2009, 26-34). In her view, the decline of religion in social life is not a necessary consequence of modernisation and economic development (Davie 2000c, 26). It is uncertain whether the secularisation trend will continue in Europe, and the future of religion is difficult to predict (Davie 2006).

Based on research conducted in Britain, Scandinavia, and the United States, Davie concludes there has been no decline in the spiritual element in contemporary Western society. According to her, there is invariably an element of spirituality in society, although the way it manifests itself - religiosity - is changing. Davie (2006, 27-29) notes a profound change in modern European societies' nature and understanding of religion. We have moved from a culture of religious obligation or commitment to one of consumption and individual choice. What was handed down or inherited has become a matter of personal preference, what we call the atomisation of faith and the privatisation of religion. According to Davie (2013, 61), the atomisation of belief reflects the lack of a transmission process and the breaking of the chain of collective memory. He argues that churches have ceased to be able to guarantee the collective religious memory that is essential to community dynamics. She follows Hervieu-Léger, who claims that modern societies are less religious because of their inability to maintain the collective memory that is fundamental to their religious existence. As a result, individual societies are unable to keep their identity. He coined the term "amnestic societies" to designate them (Hervieu-Léger 2000). Consequently, it can

no longer be assumed that religion is transmitted among community members through relational chains. The church begins to be understood de facto as an institution of voluntary membership in individual choice. Against this background, it is relevant to note that if, on the one hand, the level of authority, influence and religious loyalty among individual church members decreases, the tendency towards belief without affiliation and vicarious religion increases. However, Davie points out that, on the other hand, this downplays religious organisations and their services of mediating the sacrum (Davie 2002, 30-32; Botelho Moniz 2017, 398-399). These are used according to individuals' pragmatic, utilitarian and not necessarily religious desires.

She says weakening institutional religiosity does not mean most people abandon religious beliefs or adopt an ambivalent attitude. She argues that the decline in membership of churches and faith groups is evidence of a decrease in the willingness to participate in formalised religious institutions, not a decline in faith. Moreover, Davie emphasises that the phenomenon mentioned is only one of many ways in which the tendency to avoid association that is common today manifests itself. Thus, we are dealing with the occurrence of a broad trend which, at the level of religion, manifests itself in a decline in membership of churches and other religious institutions (Davie 2002). Building on this insight, Davie developed the notion of believing without belonging, according to which people continue to believe but do not inscribe their faith in any institutional framework - 'believing but not belonging'. For Davie, religion is not strictly linked to the institutional aspect. Hence, discussing religiosity without belonging to a religious institution is possible. Taking this perspective, it is possible to speak of a situation in which participation in religious practice decreases significantly, and faith moves further away from Christian orthodoxy but does not disappear (Davie 2000, 116).

She emphasises that religious practice encourages believers to resist elements contrary to Christian teaching. In the face of a marked decline in practice, such resistance diminishes. However, faith persists, increasingly contaminated by elements inconsistent with, even contradictory to, Christian teaching. According to Davie, this disconnection of faith from ordinary practice and its sociological implications is a far more significant challenge to the churches of Western Europe than the supposedly secular society in which we live. At the very least, it requires the sustained attention of sociologists. Another aspect of research that is related to this is religious transmission. According to her, the demographic differences are most relevant, as they show the fundamental importance of generational change in religious transmission and the contrasting roles of men and women in this process (Davie 1994, 24-26).

The author herself indicates that the terms "believing" and "belonging" should not be considered too rigidly. The distinction between the two is intended

to capture a mood, to suggest an area of enquiry, a way of looking at the problem, not to describe a detailed set of characteristics. Operationalising either or both variables too severely is bound to distort the picture (Davie 1997, 18). By 'faith without belonging', Davie means a situation in some European societies where people profess to believe in God, but only close to 10 % regularly attend church. Davie partly explains this state of affairs by a general decline in involvement in all voluntary, including non-religious, activities (e.g. membership of political parties and trade unions). He thus shows an analogy between the changes that are taking place in religious and secular forms of involvement.

An important phenomenon observed in contemporary Western societies is the weakening influence of religious institutions (manifested in the loss of these institutions' ability to exercise social control over the faithful). In light of Davie's conception, we are dealing with the emergence of alternative forms of religiosity, which can be regarded as evidence of the continued need for the sacred (e.g. New Age). The presence of alternative forms of religious life creates a market for religious traditions. In postmodernity, religion is no longer imposed on anyone or inherited; like other ideas, religion becomes an object of consumption. Everyone can choose the religious tradition that suits them, and each individual determines the degree of involvement. (Davie 2004, 78-80). On this assumption, it can be concluded that those institutions will survive whose religious offerings are willingly chosen by their adherents - the consumers - and this will determine the continuity of the church or faith group.

For this reason, he suggests that if the definition of religion is broadened to include issues related to individual and social health, the meaning of existence, the future of the planet, and humanity's responsibility to people, we may find an entirely different pattern of religious behaviour among young people. It seems at least plausible that younger ages may respond to these profound ecological, moral, ethical, and religious issues much more constructively than to traditional religious beliefs. Moreover, their response may be more optimistic than older people's (Davie 1994, 26; Voas and Crockett 2005, 12). The broadening of the definition of religion makes it all the more possible to accept the concept of believing without belonging.

2 Context of Slovakia and the Religiosity of Slovak Youth

Grace Davie's scholarly thought provides a springboard of sorts, raising questions that often make us think and even question tried and tested methods of analysis. In other words, whether one agrees or disagrees with her point of view, Davie's scholarly thought sustains further discussion about the study of religiosity. Based on Grace Davie's concept of *believing without belonging* transformations of re-

ligiosity, I will briefly present a survey of the religious life and religious beliefs of the Slovak population. Even though the territory of Slovakia, with its size and population, is a small country, its cultural, ethnic and religious diversity is not insignificant. According to information provided by the last population census (2021), there are 14 ethnic groups living in Slovakia (https://www.scitanie.sk/ obyvatelia/zakladne-vysledky).

Slovakia is characterised for various reasons by a specific religious environment - the Cyril and Methodius tradition, multiple forms of popular piety, and the experience of totalitarian rule. Since the political transformation in Slovakia, several studies have been carried out to diagnose the religiosity of Slovaks, some of them targeted exclusively at young people.

Tížik argues that at the beginning of the 21st century, Slovakia can be considered one of the moderately religious countries in the European space, i.e., a country with a high declarative religiosity and an average level of church attendance. At the same time, it delineates five phases of transforming the relationship between religion and state in Slovakia since 1989 (Zachar Podolinská et al. 2019, 12-13).

Sociological research points to a change in the cultural mentality of Slovaks, which also affects Christians. Today, it is a mistake to assume that a well-formed Christian is a person whose passions are internally subordinated to reason and who lives in a society that facilitates or does not hinder the perception of the correct order of values and moral goods. Today, we face a wounded humanity to which the Gospel needs to be proclaimed anew. Often, these are baptised passive Christians, and their cultures and different understandings of values must be reckoned with (Csontos 2019, 194-150). The change in cultural mentality has not bypassed the traditionally religious Slovakia. The results of sociological research on the religiosity of Slovaks show this. In the following section, I will present in a very general way the individual dimensions of religiosity in the studied population of Slovak youth based on the results of the sociological research carried out.

The positive connections between religiosity and people's attitudes and behaviour are indicated by data from nationally representative sociological research on religiosity, which has been carried out by Jozef Matulník and his team for a long time. The first sociological research was conducted on a representative Slovak population aged 18 to 60. Primary data collection was carried out using standardised interview techniques in 2007. The sample consisted of 2020 respondents, 1298 Catholics (Matulník et al. 2008).

The second empirical research focused on youth religiosity. It analysed the associations between religiosity and young people's attitudes towards studies, leisure activities and substance use, family environment and attitudes towards co-habitation (Matulník et al. 2014). Data collection was conducted in the 2012/2013

school year using a questionnaire technique, and the sample consisted of 1968 third-year students from all types of secondary schools. The basis was the research on the indicator of the religious practice of young people (frequency of attending religious services, frequency of praying and accessing the sacraments) and its relation to the aspects mentioned above of life. In the analysis of religious practice, four empirical types of religious practice of young Catholics were discerned: practising, individualistic, neglecting, and passive. The practitioners are characterised by high levels of religious practice across all items; high values on the prayer indicators characterise the individualistic, but below-average values on the items related to church attendance and participation in religious services; the neglectful are characterised by low, below-average values on the prayer indicators, but above-average values on the indicators related to church attendance and access to the sacraments; the passive show overall shallow values of religious practice. (Matulník 2014, 38-43)

Of the 1,968 respondents contacted, the majority - 1,242 respondents - said that religion was essential to their lives, while 762 respondents said they did not subscribe to any existing churches. Respondents who subscribed to an existing church were then asked to indicate how important religion was to them in their own lives. This research, subsequently published in *Analysis of the religiosity of young Catholics in Slovakia*, confirmed that religion still plays a vital role in today's society in Slovakia, as it still influences, albeit to a lesser extent, the thinking and living of today's people.

The research also aimed at gaining insights into the links between religiosity and family behaviour. It focused on analysing the connection between religiosity and young people's family environment and between religiosity and their attitudes towards extramarital sexual relations and cohabitation (Kratochvíla 2014, 119-155). The impetus for such a research focus was the significant changes in demographic and family behaviour and the significant weakening of the institution of marriage in the last decades in Slovak society.

Matulník argues that the findings regarding the interrelationships between religiosity and family environment and attitudes related to family and demographic behaviour bring with them the question of the direction of causal interaction between these variables in Slovak conditions. It should be pointed out that the results of this research on youth religiosity point to the possibility of reverse causality (data on differences in indicators of religiosity between young people who live with their fathers and young people who do not live with their fathers). In this case, the family environment also acts as an independent variable about religiosity.

Thus, religiosity can function as a dependent variable, and the family's characteristics and environment can function as independent variables (Matulník 2019, 33340-41).

The data provided by the 2001, 2011, and 2021 censuses of population, houses and flats in Slovakia reflect a rather alarming situation, i.e. that religion in society is gradually declining. While in the 2001 census, 84% of the total population of Slovakia subscribed to religion, in 2011, it was 75.97%, and in 2021, it was down to 69.72%. However, what does this mean? It indicates the fact that the number of people with no religion or no religion identified is increasing - in 2001 - 12.96%/ 2.99%; in 2011 - 13.44%/ 10.59%; in 2021 23.79%/ 6.49% (https://www.culture.gov.sk/posobnost-ministerstva/cirkvi-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti/registracia-cirvii/registrovane-cirkvi-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti/).

The decline between 2011 and 2021 is relatively high, indicating that society is thus orienting itself away from the religious sphere. The results confirm a trend that is taking place across Europe. Many experts point to the fact that dechristianisation is currently taking place in Europe. The 2014-2016 European Social Survey, evaluated by Stephen Bullivant of St Mary's University of London in a report entitled Europe's Young Adults and Religion, showed that the number of young people in Europe aged 16 to 29 who do not identify with any religion is on the rise. In Austria, for example, only 37% of respondents identified themselves as non-religious, compared with 67% in Hungary, 75% in Sweden, 81% in Estonia and 91% in the Czech Republic. By contrast, in Poland, 83% of respondents declared themselves Christian.

Indicators of private religious practice were frequency of prayer and reading of the Holy Scriptures. Indicators of public religious practice were frequency of attending Mass, recognition of the obligation to participate in Mass, frequency of confession and receiving the Eucharist, recognition of the importance of baptism, church weddings and church funerals. Parameters of religious community were ascertained using indicators such as the frequency of seeking priests from the parish in addition to attending Mass and administering the sacraments. Parameters of religious ethics were ascertained using indicators such as abstaining from work on Sundays and holy days and avoiding Sunday shopping.

This research has also shown that the political, cultural or social views of practising and non-practising Christians differ markedly in many cases, even though both groups share a common Christian identity.

The research shows that religiosity in Slovakia is not on the decline, as has been assumed with regard to secularism; quite the contrary. What is changing is the content of faith, as it is much less tied to the institutionalised church.

One more research on youth religiosity was conducted in Slovakia in 2006. Ondrej Štefaňak conducted it, and the main research aim was to describe the

religious attitudes of the Spiš diocese youth and try to establish the demographic, religious and social characteristics that condition these attitudes. It was quantitative research, and its basic population was the youth of the Spiš Diocese (663 people) aged 17-18 years. The main research problem was to describe the religious attitudes of the Spiš Diocese youth and attempt to establish the demographic, religious and social characteristics underlying these attitudes. Štefaňak distinguished the religiosity of the studied youth into five types - religiously oriented religiosity (18.6%), traditionally oriented religiosity (10.8%), selective religiosity (29.3%), doubting religiosity (26.1%), indifference to faith, and disbelief (15.3%) (Štefaňak 2009a). Subsequently, in 2011, he conducted further research on the morality of Slovak youth (again using the example of the Spiš diocese). The main goal of the mentioned research was to describe the school-leaving youth's moral values and the effort to point out the demographic, social, and religious features which differentiate those values (Štefaňak 2015, 169).

The characteristics of the most representative form of selective religiosity are the willingness to proclaim one's faith, less frequent religious practices regarding specific moral issues, and an increasing tendency to prioritise personal choice over church doctrine can be observed. Consequently, the characteristics of doubtful religiosity include the absence of automatic acceptance of institutionalised religion, an abundance of questions, doubts, and indecision regarding religious matters (Štefaňak 2012, 70-79).

Based on the research results obtained in the socio-cultural context of Slovak society, it can be concluded that the religiosity of youth is selectively and hesitantly oriented. The examined indicators of religiosity point to the fact that although Slovak youth perceive the Church as a community of believers (53.9%), only 22.1% consciously cultivate a religiosity guided by the teachings of the Church. As many as 54.4% of the surveyed youth define their religiosity by the statement: "I am religious in my own way". The results point to a selective religiosity ("I am Catholic, but...") rather than a strict religious individuation since 58.7% of those surveyed identify with the Church on various levels. The individualisation of religiosity of the studied youth is confirmed by the low level of their involvement in religious associations and the difference between the views on the contribution of priests in society and the willingness to have a priest in their own families (Štefaňak 2015, 165-166; Caban 2017, 72-73.) The results of this research confirm the results of Matulník's research that when evaluating their religiosity, the youth 4 times more often declare its decline than its deepening. Let us compare the religiosity of youth with the religiosity of their parents. We can see the phenomenon of "heredity of faith" and its weakening in the young generation.

The results of the research presented above confirm not only the model of religious stabilisation and the model of progressive secularisation (e.g. the de-

cline in the indicators of frequency of participation in religious services or the sacrament of reconciliation, the so-called church religiosity or involvement in religious associations and movements), but also partly the model of religious revitalisation (e.g. slight increase in indicators of belief in the existence of God, the importance of prayer, watching religious television or websites, and believing in God, as well as being religious or believing in God's help in times of trouble), a model of religious or worldview pluralisation (e.g. a slight increase in indicators of belief in reincarnation or seeking sensual values outside of faith), and a model of religious syncretism (e.g., an increase in indicators of religiosity "in its own way" - selective, private, or syncretic) (Štefaňak 2021).

3 Conclusion

Therefore, modernity has not removed religion but has caused its decomposition, the pluralisation of its forms, and often its transfer from the institutional framework of identity to the subjective world of religious experiences and sensations.

Grace Davie's concepts accurately describe only part of the transformations that are taking place in the religiosity of contemporary British society. An exciting and important field of further research may be the relationship between declared faith and religious activity and their consequences for religious institutions (Davie 2000, 30). Elements of this concept can also be used to analyse the changes in Slovak society. This concept is appropriate and helpful in interpreting the development of youth religiosity in Slovakia, but we should consider different cultural and social contexts.

To conclude, *"believing without belonging"* highlights the changing nature of religion and spirituality in contemporary society. It challenges us to rethink traditional notions of religious affiliation and community and to explore new ways of expressing and practising our beliefs. While it presents challenges and opportunities for religious institutions and individuals alike, it ultimately reflects the evolution of human spirituality and the diverse ways we seek meaning and purpose.

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CULTURAL DIVISION IN POLAND: POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND NORMATIVE DIFFERENTIATION

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1 Historical and Socio-Economic Context

This paper aims to discuss discernible shifts in social life between eastern and western Poland within the Durkheimian perspective on the significance of social solid bounds in diminishing social disintegration and anomie. At the very outset, it needs to be stated that the adoption of normative systems across Poland is deeply intertwined with the country's turmoiled history over the last 200 years and the 20th century's socio-economic evolution. Polish normative differentiation manifested in various aspects of life, including political alignments, religious adherence, and broader social behaviours, creating a mosaic of cultural identities that often led to political clashes within a seemingly uniform population (Grabowska and Szawiel 2000; Grzelak and Markowski 1999). For instance, the over 150-year-old legacy of partitions and changes of state borders after the Second World War has left a profound imprint on Poland's social fabric. The partitions, which saw Poland divided among Russia, Prussia, and Austria, created divergent socio-economic and cultural development paths. These historical divisions are still evident today in economic metrics, social attitudes, and community cohesion. Historically influenced by Prussian governance and industrialisation, Western Poland contrasts sharply with Eastern Poland, which was under Russian and Austro-Hungarian rule for significant periods. These historical partitions have left an enduring impact on regional development, economic structures, and social norms. In western Poland, the pace of industrialisation and capital penetration was markedly different from the east. Western regions experienced earlier and more intensive industrial development, fostering a culture of economic pragmatism and a comparatively secular worldview. In contrast, with its agrarian economy and strong ties to the Catholic Church, eastern Poland maintained more traditional and conservative social norms. According to several studies, these historical legacies contribute to the current economic prosperity and infrastructure development disparities between the two regions (Zarycki 2004; King and Sznajder 2006).

Post-World War II migrations further complicated the social landscape. The resettlement of populations, particularly the relocation of people from the east-

ern territories annexed by the Soviet Union to the newly acquired western and northern regions, led to significant social dislocation. These new settlers, often displaced from their ancestral lands, faced the challenge of rebuilding their lives in unfamiliar environments. This resettlement process led to atomisation and anomie, particularly in the western and northern regions, where social bonds were more fragmented than the more cohesive communities in the east. The social disorganisation observed in Poland's western and northern parts was further exacerbated during real socialism. The communist regime's policies, including collectivisation and state control over economic activities, disrupted traditional social structures and community networks. These policies led to further atomisation in regions already experiencing weak social cohesion due to recent migrations. In contrast, with its stronger pre-existing social bonds and more homogeneous communities, eastern Poland managed to maintain social cohesion even under the pressures of real socialism. This relative stability in social structures has had lasting effects, contributing to the eastern regions' more conservative and community-oriented nature today.

Eventually, the normative systems adopted in different parts of Poland have shaped individual decisions and collective behaviour over decades, influencing various lifestyles, including attitudes towards deviant behaviour and political choices. For instance, western Poland tends to support liberal and progressive political movements, while Eastern Poland often aligns with conservative and nationalist parties. This political dichotomy is not merely a reflection of contemporary issues but is rooted in these regions' distinct historical experiences and cultural evolution (Raciborski 1997). Religious involvement also varies significantly, with eastern Poland exhibiting higher religious participation and church attendance levels than the west. This religious divide is a powerful determinant of social attitudes and behaviours, influencing everything from family structures to educational aspirations and gender roles.

In addition to cultural normative differences shaping the different horizons of Poles' religiosity and politics, another factor differentiating Eastern Poland from Western Poland is the state of public safety and social disorganisation. This factor is influenced by normative systems that control deviant behaviour. Criminological research conducted over extended periods consistently identifies a higher number of crimes committed in western Poland compared to eastern Poland (Bąk 2015). The higher crime rates in Western Poland significantly indicate social disorganisation. This phenomenon is further evidenced by higher rates of divorces and a more significant number of single mothers raising children, which suggest greater social disintegration in this region compared to eastern Poland, where such social problems are less prevalent (Szukalski 2016). Socialisation in organisations that exert normative pressure or traditional religious communities,

which are numerous in eastern Poland, as expected, had a more significant impact on mitigating deviant behaviour (Lim and Putnam 2010). This Durkheimian tradition of research primarily emphasises the degree of integration of members in moral communities, which play a crucial role in reducing the potential for anomie and performing the function of social control over individuals. Robert Putnam's studies of selected regions of northern Italy exemplify this concept, showing that communities with strong social integration and more significant social capital resources not only had relatively low crime rates but also exhibited high levels of civic engagement, mutual trust, and cooperation among individuals (Putnam 1995).

Naturally, deviant behaviour is a complex phenomenon that defies single-factor explanations. This work narrows the discussion to a neo-Durkheimian interpretation based on a deficit of social capital resources as a determinant of social disorganisation. The significant deviant behaviour recorded in western Poland is assumed to correlate with smaller social capital resources. Conversely, more significant social capital resources are accumulated in eastern Poland. According to this concept, social capital resources effectively control deviant behaviour, emphasising the importance of uninterrupted, multi-generational socialisation processes that maintain relatively well-integrated communities (Ford and Kadushin 2002).

This paper will detail the state of the arts and the realms where the normative differentiation in Poland is apparent. It will then discuss the interpretative frameworks, explaining how these differences impact antagonistic relations in contemporary Poland.

2 Center-Periphery Perspectives

A meaningful discussion on regional political differentiation has been carried out from the perspective of the centre-periphery theory (Zarycki 2002). As applied to the Polish empirical data, this theory typically emphasises the more significant modernisation potential (capital, services, technologies) influencing the western part of Poland and metropolitan areas. According to this line of inquiry, these areas have benefited from higher levels of investment, advanced infrastructure, and a more dynamic economy, which aligns with left-wing political ideologies that often prioritise progressive social policies and economic modernisation. Conversely, the less developed part of eastern Poland is characterised by lower levels of industrialisation, a slower pace of economic development, and a social structure that retains many pre-modern forms of social capital. This has been presented politically as inhibiting the modern processes of functional differentiation and the rational allocation of resources (Zarycki 2004, 2008). This world-

view tends to emphasise traditional values, national sovereignty, and a resistance to rapid social change, which can be seen as a reaction to the perceived threats posed by modernisation and globalisation.

In this interpretative perspective, the liberal-left option in Western Poland expresses aspirations for modernity in its dominant form of liberalism found in Western core countries. This modernity encompasses economic progress and social liberalism, including greater tolerance for diversity, support for secularism, and progressive social policies. The aspiration to align with Western European norms and values is a significant driving force behind the political preferences in these regions. On the other hand, the right-wing preferences in eastern Poland are often rooted in a desire to preserve traditional values and social structures. This includes a strong emphasis on the role of the Catholic Church in public life, conservative social policies, and a cautious approach to social and economic changes. This worldview serves as a cultural and political anchor for communities that feel marginalised by the rapid changes occurring in more urbanised and economically advanced regions.

An important variable, positioning respondents in the right-left binary in Poland, is the level of declared religiosity, especially the declaration of involvement in systematic religious practices. In other words, a statistically significant indicator of the normative differentiation dividing Poland into two symbolic parts is the local population's level of religious involvement and secularisation tendencies. The indicator of religious involvement, mainly related to the Catholic Church due to its dominant position in Poland, is measured by regular church attendance and individuals' attachment to selected tenets of faith (e.g., belief in the existence of hell, belief in the existence of God, or adherence to Catholic teachings on sexual ethics) (Hall 2012; Marody 1996). Studies consistently show less religious involvement in western Poland compared to the east. This lower religious practice and belief correlates with more secular and liberal political views. In eastern Poland, high levels of religiosity are reflected in regular church attendance and firm adherence to Catholic doctrines. This deep religious commitment is intertwined with conservative political views, particularly on social issues such as abortion, where there is a solid pro-criminalising attitude.

The contrast between "post-communist economic transition winners" in the West and "post-communist economic transition losers" in the East, along with the dichotomy of "secular, rational individuals" versus "religious bigots," has sometimes been described as a post-colonial discourse employed by liberal elites, which orientalises eastern Poles as morally and civilisationally inferior compared to western "rational inhabitants" (Buchowski 2006). Buchowski (2006), among others, criticised this symbolic violence against eastern Poles by identifying social exclusion mechanisms that have perpetuated social inequalities between the

East and the West. This discussion highlights implicit shaming strategies used by proponents of Western superiority in implementing modernisation approaches related to the logic of nesting-orientalism of Polish liberal elites. According to this logic, Eastern Poles were often defined as "non-European" or, at best, "European in statu nascendi," needing a substantial re-education to embrace modernity. Naturally, this approach triggered counter-reactions from the side of Polish conservative elites, who accused liberal elites of betraying a genuine national identity. The confrontation between right-wing and liberal forces regarding adapting European values has been a stable reference point in Polish cultural politics since 1989.

Naturally, as Zarycki (2002), among others noted, it should be noted that right-left cleavage should be understood as an ideal type because the adaptation of right-wing and left-wing ideological content in post-communist Europe does not necessarily correspond strictly to the classification system developed in Western countries, which is based on the stable class stratification. In Central Europe, political conflict is conditioned by the logic of mixed (status and class) stratification. The structure of political division generally refers to cultural and normative differentiation (Kitschelt 1992; Zarycki 2004; Eyal et al. 1998). In this context, the political conflict in Poland is essentially a dispute focused on ethical issues such as the criminalisation or decriminalisation of abortion or the place of the Catholic Church in public life. This dispute shows regional variability: in eastern Poland, there is the most significant number of citizens who favourably assess the influence of the Church on politics and maintain a pro-criminalizing attitude towards abortion. Conversely, the inhabitants of western Poland are more sceptical about the presence of the Church in public life and tend to support the decriminalisation of abortion and other progressive social policies.

3 Discussion

Some of the mentioned currents of discussion are guided implicitly by Durkheim's intuition (Durkheim 1951, 1957) that the state of anomic individualism is reduced in communities where there is stronger group integration and more robust social control over members of a given group. Several studies have tested the conventional state of knowledge about normative differentiation between the inhabitants of Western Poland and the inhabitants of Eastern Poland in a narrow perspective of the analysis of declarations of the accumulation of social capital. This line of research sought to understand whether regional differences in Poland impact the political beliefs, state of civic awareness, and social integration of respondents in ways that align with the conventional accumulation of social capital in these regions. Specifically, it has been assumed that respondents in eastern

Poland should declare a stronger affiliation with moral communities, measured primarily by strong integration with kin groups and significant involvement in civil society organisations. In the case of western Poland, it was assumed that there would be a greater declared distance from membership in moral communities, particularly kin groups.

Discussion about the conditions of modernisation in Poland, influenced by the varying social capital potential across regions, brought surprising conclusions and ambiguous interpretations (Smoczynski 2024). On the one hand, they showed that social capital, which encompasses the networks, norms, and social trust facilitating coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit, varies significantly between the two regions. In eastern Poland, social capital is often linked to close-knit kin groups and religious communities, which provide strong social support and a sense of belonging. This integration into moral communities correlates with conservative political views, particularly on public security and moral behaviour issues. In Western Poland, however, social capital tends to be more diffuse and less centred on traditional kin groups. Here, civil society organisations play a significant role, but the overall level of social capital is lower, reflecting a more individualistic and less community-oriented social structure. This aligns with the more liberal and progressive political views commonly found in the region. One significant thread in this discussion concerns the atrophy of civic institutions and the privatisation of social bonds during communist rule, particularly in the Western lands. Some researchers argue that eastern Poland retained significantly greater social activity spanning family and state structures (Siellawa-Kolbowska 2000). Living traditions of religious mobilisation played an important role here, influencing individual and collective decisions and transforming communities into moral communities characterised by trust and cooperation over the long historical perspective.

However, as Zarycki (2002) pointed out in his comprehensive discussion of the relevant literature, advocating for the unique role of productive social capital in eastern Poland has faced multi-threaded criticism. Firstly, opinions suggesting that Western Poland is a sociological vacuum have yet to be confirmed by empirical material. According to researchers, civil society activity in western Poland is significant and, in some aspects, even more prosperous than in eastern Poland. The lack of multi-generational roots, higher social mobility, secularism, and geographical proximity to Germany favour innovation and entrepreneurship in western Poland. In contrast, critics argue that significant social capital resources in eastern Poland may create the effect of "bad social capital," manifested by excessive group uniformity, opportunism, hierarchical relations, and limitations on innovation (Portes 1998). These communities often force imitation based on traditional behaviour patterns, authoritarian group control, and exclusion of

strangers, thereby limiting individual privacy and resisting modernisation processes. Excessive social capital can be corrupt due to the poor agency of intermediating institutions. Critics claim that the model of civil society in eastern Poland is also defective because it is based on mechanical solidarity, where family ties dominate, sometimes taking the form of "amoral familialism," which reduces general social trust (Kurczewska et al. 1998). Additionally, critics argue that the Catholic Church does not necessarily mobilise civil society activity in eastern Poland. Greater religiosity is associated with the petrification of static, patriarchal social relations, blocking social differentiation and rational allocation of social and economic resources. This critique contrasts with modern society's organisational logic, exemplified by Western Polish individualism. Here, relations are mediated by formal institutions, and professional and social advancement is determined by competencies rather than informal networks, friendships, or family ties. Anomic individualism in western Poland favours the progress of modernity, positioning the western regions as the entrance gate to the dominant logic of social stratification. This stratification is based not just on economic capital but also on rejecting pre-modern forms of social capital and compensatory cultural capital characteristic of the Polish intelligentsia (Grabowska and Szawiel 2001).

4 Conclusion

The normative differentiation within Polish society, influenced by historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors, has led to distinct regional identities and political preferences. The centre-periphery theory provides a helpful framework for understanding these differences, highlighting the impact of modernisation and economic development on political alignments. The ethical disputes that dominate Polish political discourse reflect deeper regional divides rooted in varying levels of religious influence and attitudes towards social change. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending modern Poland's cultural conflicts and regional disparities. Durkheim's perspective on anomic individualism adds another layer to this understanding, emphasising the role of social integration and control in shaping political and social norms. The variations in social capital and religiosity between Western and Eastern Poland illustrate the complex interplay of historical legacies, socioeconomic development, and cultural values in shaping the contemporary social landscape. Additionally, the differences in public safety and social disorganisation between the regions underscore the importance of social capital in mitigating deviant behaviour and maintaining social cohesion. Critics argue that the significant social capital in eastern Poland may lead to "bad social capital," characterised by excessive group uniformity, opportunism, and resistance to innovation. They also argue that the Catholic Church's influence

may hinder the mobilisation of civil society activity and the rational allocation of resources. Western Poland, with its higher social mobility, secularism, and proximity to Germany, is seen as more innovative and entrepreneurial.

However, the contrast between "transition winners" in the West and "transition losers" in the East and the dichotomy of "secular, rational individuals" versus "religious bigots" reflects a post-colonial discourse of liberal elites that often orientalises eastern Poles as morally and civilisationally inferior compared to western "rational inhabitants." Thus, the persistent east-west divide, framed by the contrasting narratives of progress and conservatism, continues to shape the political landscape. Recognising and addressing these regional disparities and the associated symbolic violence is essential for fostering a more inclusive and cohesive Polish society.

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ALGORITHMIC CULTURES AND SOFT POWER: THE NEW BATTLEGROUNDS OF GLOBAL CULTURE WARS

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1 Introduction

In this work, I examine a lesser-known aspect of the 'Culture Wars'—AI-driven algorithms on social media. Striphas (2015) correctly emphasises that these algorithms shape how culture is done, experienced, and understood today. They have created a new elite-driven influence that discreetly shapes popular discourse and deepens ideological differences. Social media platforms amplify various views, creating echo chambers that reinforce existing opinions and increase social divides, according to Holley (2015). Whenever we like a post, share a meme or pause a video on social media, an AI system watches. This system tailors content to our tastes like a digital butler. Unlike a neutral servant, this algorithm affects our digital lives. It develops our inclinations like a gourmet master seasoning our digital diet, sometimes improving or worsening it.

Why bother? Because algorithms are more than code. They design our online interactions, gently altering our perceptions, values, and behaviours. Ferrari and Graham (2021) remind us in their study that algorithms manage digital labour and content creation by subverting and disrupting public perception. Lawson et al. (2023), among others, underline how online social pressure can normalise deception and spread fake news (Gillespie 2018).

This paper will examine how these algorithms can watch and forecast our behaviour and potentially puppeteer it. The battlegrounds of global culture wars have migrated to algorithmic cultures, where soft power is exercised through carefully curating material across multiple digital platforms. To investigate the impact of algorithmic cultures on global culture wars, this study takes a multidisciplinary approach, relying on sources from cultural studies, media theory, and political science. To provide a theoretical framework, I review the existing literature, including significant publications by Striphas (2015), Holley (2015), Ferrari and Graham (2021), and Lawson et al. (2023). In addition, I undertake a comparative case study of the content curation tactics adopted by TikTok and Douyin to demonstrate the unequal exertion of soft power in Western and Chinese contexts (Yang 2022; Liang 2022; Yang & Ha 2021; CBS News 2022, https://youtube.com/watch?v=0j0xzuh-6rY). My analysis is reinforced by a study of the literature on algorithmic governance, which investigates how these algorithms

influence public discourse and cultural narrative. I attempt to frame the findings within broader conversations about digital work, social media dynamics, and global political agendas.

2 Global Culture Wars: Key Actors and Dynamics

Transnational companies that control social media platforms and state actors that promote their cultural, ideological, and political narratives are significant players in global culture wars. These entities shape current cultural conflicts, not just participate in them.

Let us start with global firms. These firms and their political friends keep regulations favourable to their business strategies. Their social media domination gives them a substantial public impact. Striphas (2015) claims these businesses use algorithmic culture to construct elite narratives that quietly shape public opinion and widen ideological differences. Their algorithms drive cultural trends and reflect them, cementing their control over digital conversation. The other side is state actors. Their primary purpose is to spread their political, intellectual, and cultural narratives. In their Tea Party research, Parker and Barreto (2013) demonstrate how social media has become a key instrument for mobilising and propagating disinformation, which promotes political and cultural polarisation. State actors often use social media to influence public opinion with strategic disinformation campaigns. These geopolitical moves highlight the intricate relationship between technology and ideology. State actors use the same channels to shape the narrative while companies maintain digital market supremacy. This dual influence asks how corporate interests shape digital narratives and global cultural dynamics.

A case study of TikTok and Douyin's automated curation and content control approaches (see below) illustrates these interactions. These platforms accommodate China's and other countries' different expectations, customs, and regulations. This case study will show how these channels transmit cultural narratives and beliefs worldwide and entertainment. The goal of digital soft power may be worldwide cultural supremacy.

For the final definition of 'Algorithmic Culture,' Ted Striphas (2015) describes how computational processes increasingly sort, classify and organise information, changing how culture is practised and understood. As technology mediates cultural narratives and beliefs, this shift has significant repercussions.

3 The Contemporary Attention Economy and its Ambiguities

3.1 Introduction to the Attention Economy and Its Implications

Like air, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are crucial to our everyday existence in the digital world. Our faces and brains are permanently attached to our smart devices, turning us into digital zombies. These platforms rule our days, from waking up and grabbing our phones to the final swipe before bed.

Welcome to the "attention economy," where human attention is a scarce resource and actively contested. In a world full of information, attention is more valuable than content. Social media firms compete for this attention because their income streams—primarily advertising—depend on it. Companies get more money when consumers stay on a platform and view more adverts (Frey, 2019). This competition has led to advanced algorithms and design features that maximise user engagement. Notifications, news feeds, and autoplay videos promote urgency and FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), making consumers check their devices frequently and stay online longer. These design choices are intentional to keep consumers' attention on the platform.

3.2 Psychological Underpinnings of Engagement

This attention economy relies on a profound understanding of human psychology, notably reward and reinforcement mechanisms. Social media is supposed to be seductive, not simply engaging. These platforms use our brains' reward areas to keep us coming back. When you get a like, remark, or share on social media, your brain produces dopamine, a happy chemical. You want to replicate the behaviour that triggered this dopamine burst. The anticipation of these rewards motivates repeated platform use. Social media networks have mastered giving these incentives intermittently and unexpectedly, like slot machines. You never know when your next post will get a wave of likes or a comment that makes you smile, so you keep checking, scrolling, and engaging for social validation. The unpredictability of these networks keeps users waiting for the following digital confirmation, making them addictive.

3.3 The Exploitation of Novelty and Rapid Content Dissemination

Another draw of social media is its potential to satisfy our novelty needs. Social media networks have capitalised on humans' innate attraction to new things. The omnipresent "pull-to-refresh" feature in social media apps is a fantastic illustration. Swipe to see more content, creating a loop of expectation and reward.

This process exploits our demand for novelty to keep us searching for the next exciting post, tweet, or video. In addition to exploiting our love for fresh content, social media platforms have transformed information and opinion dissemination. Anyone with an internet connection can broadcast their voice by instantaneously sharing thoughts, photographs, and videos with a global audience. This quick diffusion appeals to our need for instant gratification, a basic human need. Likes, comments, and shares trigger psychological cravings for validation and social acknowledgement. This loop fosters sharing and engaging with content and supports our desire to participate in social conversations. Thus, social media satisfies our need for connection and novelty, keeping us hooked on fresh content and instant interactions.

3.4 The Competitive Nature of Engagement and Content Personalisation

Social media platforms are not just places to consume content but arenas where users compete for attention. These platforms encourage users to generate content that stands out, gets likes, and gets interaction by amplifying competition. Snapchat streaks, Instagram likes, and YouTube recommendations are not just fun—they tap into our competitive and comparing nature. Algorithms that prioritise engaging content fuel this competition. Users are typically encouraged to adopt visibility-optimized tactics and habits, even if they sacrifice depth or authenticity. The race for attention can create a performative culture that aims to outshine others in a crowded digital area.

The significance of these platforms goes beyond competitiveness. They employ advanced algorithms to personalise material for each user. These algorithms analyse massive quantities of data—every click, like, and share—to forecast and deliver information that matches individual interests and historical activities. This tailored content maximises engagement by presenting users with content that matches their interests and biases. This may sound beneficial, but it has significant downsides. Social media platforms generate extremely addictive ecosystems by personalising user experiences. Users are surrounded by stuff that promotes their opinions, making it hard to leave the platform. Personalisation can constrain perspectives by sacrificing content diversity for interaction.

4 Assessing the Impacts of Social Media Platforms

Social media offers undeniable benefits, but these come with significant costs that impact various aspects of our lives—cognitive, emotional, social, moral, political, and even environmental. We will explore these impacts in greater detail below:

4.1 Cognitive Costs: Fragmented Attention and Fatigue

The persistent demand for attention on social media and its intermittent benefits can significantly impact our cognitive abilities. The desire to stay connected and the fear of missing out result in fragmented attention, constantly dividing our attention between different tasks and stimuli. This split attention can impair our capacity to focus on a particular task and reduce overall cognitive function (Firth et al., 2019). Furthermore, social media platforms frequently promote multitasking, which depletes our cognitive resources. Switching between different types of content and tasks causes the brain to constantly reorient itself, resulting in cognitive fatigue and decreased quality of our work and social relationships.

4.2 Social Costs: The Impact on Presence and Mindfulness

The power of social media over our attention impacts our ability to be present and attentive in our daily lives. The allure of digital contacts frequently draws us away from in-person talks and real-world experiences, lowering the quality of our social relationships and engagement with the current moment. The constant influx of notifications and the habit of checking our devices can interrupt moments of reflection, relaxation, and connection with people, stopping us from truly interacting with our surroundings. This disruption negatively influences our mental health and ability to create deep, meaningful relationships (Turner & Lefevre, 2017; Keles, McCrae & Grealish, 2020).

4.3 Psychological and Moral Costs: Distortion of Self-Perception and Desires

Social media also distorts our self-perception by constantly comparing ourselves to idealised images of other people. This tends to result in a gap between our true desires and those adopted from social media influencers and peers, a phenomenon known as "mimetic desire," following the seminal work by René Girard on this topic (Girard 1965). Mimetic desire implies that our desires are reflected rather than fundamental; we want something because we perceive others wanting it. This issue is exacerbated by social media, which provides a wide range of curated content as well as visibility into the lives and accomplishments of others.

The repeated exposure to others' achievements frequently leads to feelings of inadequacy and a relentless pursuit of comparable wants, not for their intrinsic value, but because they are wanted by others (Latane, 1981). This results in a culture driven more by staged, inauthentic aspirations than ever before, with social media catalysing this intensification. According to research (Bardus et al. 2020), this circle of dissatisfaction leads to a never-ending cycle of imitation

and comparison, in which achieving mimetic aspirations fails to provide fulfilment, prompting the pursuit of new desires. This constant comparison leads to mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The concept of 'Facebook Depression' highlights the psychological influence of social media, with users feeling depressed symptoms as a direct result of their interaction (Richards, Caldwell, & Go 2015; Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilan 2019). Furthermore, the amplification of mimetic desire has important cultural implications. It leads to the standardisation of wants, as individuals worldwide mimic similar ideals of success and happiness, frequently overshadowing traditional practices and regional cultures. This creates a paradox: while social media connects us to the larger world, it also isolates us in our wish bubbles, cutting us off from the tangible realities of our lives (Twenge et al. 2018).

4.4 A Crisis of Authenticity

In today's digital ecosystem, individuals increasingly struggle to distinguish their genuine tastes and values from those embraced by online identities. This leads to a life focused on externally determined goals rather than internal fulfilment. The pressure to maintain an idealised image stifles originality and self-acceptance, replacing them with constant performance and comparison (Bardus et al., 2020).

4.5 Influence on Autonomy and Free Will

Through content curation and personalisation, algorithms quietly but effectively impact users' perceptions, views, and behaviours. This can lead to a loss of individual autonomy, as users assume their choices are self-directed and fail to recognise the manipulative patterns used to keep them engaged.

4.6 Emotional Manipulation and Behavioural Influence

Social media networks frequently promote content that elicits strong emotional responses, such as rage or happiness. This reinforces specific emotional states and behaviours, resulting in a feedback loop in which users are constantly exposed to content that matches their emotional triggers. It also often leads to increased anxiety, polarisation, or even radicalisation (Ntoutsi et al., 2020).

4.7 Impacts on Moral Decision-Making and Critical Thinking

The quick transmission of information and the echo chamber effect of social media obscures ethical nuances, making it difficult for individuals to engage in critical moral thinking. Simplified narratives, aided by social media algo-

rithms, might perpetuate biased attitudes or impulsive decision-making while ignoring deeper ethical issues and the different viewpoints required for educated moral judgments. According to recent millennial research (Bail et al. 2018), social media platforms serve as agents of conservation (conformity and safety) and self-enhancement (power and achievement) rather than agents of personal growth, which is linked to community development and a meaning-conferring narrative (religious, national, or ideological). Furthermore, disseminating misleading information and amplifying harmful content by AI algorithms can have severe societal consequences, undermining trust in institutions and sources of information.

5 The Strategic Use of AI in Cultural Propagation: TikTok and Douyin Case Study

Tristan Harris, a former Google employee and social media ethics advocate, has pointed out the glaring discrepancies between TikTok's Chinese and Western versions. In an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes," Harris revealed how Douyin, TikTok's Chinese counterpart, is designed to encourage educational and patriotic content, particularly among users under the age of 14 (CBS News 2022, https://youtube.com/watch?v=0j0xzuh-6rY). This version limits children's app use to 40 minutes daily, including material such as science projects, museum exhibitions, and instructive movies. In contrast, the Western version of TikTok is intended to be more entertaining, flamboyant, and addicting, with a lesser emphasis on education. Harris also highlighted the potential long-term ramifications of these discrepancies. For example, a survey of pre-teens in the United States and China found different aspirations: while most American pre-teens wanted to be social media influencers, their Chinese counterparts wanted to be astronauts. These variances in substance and usage represent the various courses that these societies may follow in the future.

TikTok and Douyin demonstrate how AI-powered digital platforms adapt to varied cultures and regulations. ByteDance owns both platforms and focuses on short-form video content; their content and engagement techniques differ due to their consumers' cultural values. Douyin targets customers who enjoy practical and informational content, including cooking courses, dance routines, and make-up transformations. Conversely, using editing tools and effects, TikTok creates visually appealing videos for amusement and artistic expression. This contrast reflects cultural preferences: Douyin attracts users who prioritise education and functionality, while TikTok attracts creative and entertaining users worldwide (Yang 2022).

User demographics also differ between the platforms. Douyin targets 18-45-year-olds in China's wealthier cities. This shows Douyin's profound incorporation into urban Chinese life, engaging people of all ages. However, TikTok has a diversified global user base, including many US users aged 35 to 55, proving its broad appeal across demographics. The platforms also handle e-commerce differently. Douyin's powerful in-app purchasing mechanism, enabled by live streaming and KOL marketing, is well-suited to China's unique digital ecosystem, where social commerce is firmly ingrained. TikTok's e-commerce strategy emphasises content engagement over straight purchases (Meng & Leung 2021).

TikTok and Douyin are heavily influenced by regulations and data privacy. China's strict content and data constraints force Douyin to carefully manage content to comply with government directives and ideological agendas. TikTok must balance user privacy with content engagement. Douyin is officially aligned with Chinese government goals, yet TikTok may implicitly promote consumerism and individualism.

These distinctions show how TikTok and Douyin use soft power. Douyin's instructional content and severe usage limits reflect China's ideological purpose of teaching young people to be well-informed and patriotic. TikTok's entertainment-driven strategy promotes individualism and self-expression, like Western consumerist values. This gap shows the internet age geopolitical conflict between authoritarian and liberal democratic ideas. Douyin promotes Chinese state-favored culture and ideology, while TikTok emphasises rapid pleasure and superficial participation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to understanding algorithmic cultures and their significance in the global soft power conflict.

6 Conclusion

The hijacking of human attention by social media platforms is a distinguishing feature of the attention economy, with far-reaching consequences for our cognitive functions, social well-being, and general societal cohesiveness. To counteract the negative impacts of this dynamic, it is critical to create solutions that allow people to regain their attention and build better connections with social media. Key proposals include encouraging digital well-being, increasing media literacy, regulating algorithmic transparency, and building deeper human connections. Practical approaches could include developing tools promoting moderation and self-regulation, such as scheduling social media use, turning off non-essential notifications, and participating in activities encouraging mindfulness and presence. Furthermore, a growing movement is pushing for technology that values human attention and well-being by limiting addictive habits and encouraging meaningful social interactions.

The role of governments and supranational organisations, such as the EU, in regulating social media platforms is crucial yet complex. Effective regulation is required to prevent companies from using their influence to unfairly affect public debate. However, a delicate balance must be maintained; excessive restriction may limit freedom of expression and innovation. With its stringent content governance and explicit ideological objectives, the Chinese method starkly contrasts Western firms' more profit-driven, albeit ostensibly 'woke,' policies. State regulation of social media and artificial intelligence algorithms is a double-edged sword. It can also protect the public from harmful content while at the same time ensuring openness and ethics in operations.

On the other hand, excessive regulation can potentially violate personal liberties and create a surveillance state. Ferrari and Graham (2021) state that algorithmic authority is inherently partial. It can be contested by users, emphasising the significance of regulating systems that account for the dynamic nature of algorithmic governance. Furthermore, Bail et al. (2018) believe that exposure to opposing opinions on social media tends to worsen political polarisation, implying that regulation must strike a delicate balance between content management and preserving diverse perspectives. We must remember that, besides their obvious negative impacts, social media have the potential to be an effective tool for resistance and counter-hegemony. By allowing for autonomous content creation, these platforms can empower marginalised voices to question dominant ideologies, whether elitist, neoliberal, or socialist. This democratising potential emphasises the importance of a sophisticated approach to regulation—one that promotes free expression while minimising the risks of manipulation and deception.

We must design solutions that balance regulation and freedom as we think critically about algorithmic cultures' complexity and their impact on global culture wars. Promoting digital literacy, increasing algorithmic transparency, and cultivating a more ethical AI environment are critical steps toward reducing these technologies' manipulative potential. Empowering users to engage critically with digital content and facilitating autonomous content creation might help counteract the hegemonic tendencies of both state and corporate entities. Understanding and tackling the various effects of AI algorithms will help us go through the new battlefields of global culture wars and move toward a more informed and equitable digital society.

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ABSTRACTS

Aleš Maver
Peculiarities of the Culture Wars among Slovenes

The early Slovenian "Kulturkampf" did not have the characteristics of the more intense characteristics of the more intense "Latin" culture wars in Italy, Spain or France. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that Catholic monopolies had worried the liberal minority from an early stage, as the first so-called "small" culture war had already taken place around 1870 when the cultural-political situation of the Slovenes was still comparatively weak. This article sees the decisive turning point as the result of two developments. The first was the increasing equation between adherence to Catholicism and the Catholic political party, especially in Carniola, and the second (and perhaps more important) the change in the state framework after the First World War. Unification into the Kingdom of Serbia, where not the Catholic Church but the Orthodox Church was predominant, finally gave the Slovenian culture wars some essential characteristics of the German one. The sudden existence of an ecclesiastical-political alternative simultaneously weakened the role of Catholicism as a self-evident characteristic of Slovenes. In the outlook, the paper also briefly discusses the development of the Slovenian culture wars after 1941.

Bojan Žalec
Social Question and Religion: Context and Origins of Aleš Ušeničnik's Solidarism

Aleš Ušeničnik (1868-1952) was the leading Catholic philosophical and ideological authority in the 20th century until the end of World War II in Slovenian lands. This article deals with his vision of the renewal of Slovenian society. It presents its main components and purposes. It places it in a broader context and sheds light on its origins. In the end, the author gives its assessment. Ušeničnik's vision of renewal has two main parts: social renewal, the goal of which is to solve the social issue, and spiritual renewal along the path of Christian religious and moral revival, which for Ušeničnik concretely means the (re)Catholicization of Slovenian society. Ušeničnik was convinced that spiritual renewal is necessary for any successful solution to a social issue. The author outlines the relevant broader context and ideas that influenced Ušeničnik. Among these, he highlights papal

(social) encyclicals. He pays special attention to the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. The author notes the correctness of Ušeničnik's fundamental social directions, even though the Catholic Church rightly abandoned the "corporatism" that Ušeničnik advocated. He assesses Ušeničnik's conception of a Christian harmonious society as less felicitous.

Keywords: *Aleš Ušeničnik, the vision of social renewal, context and origins of the vision, economic and social renewal, spiritual renewal, social teaching of the Catholic Church, assessment of Ušeničnik's vision.*

Bojan Žalec
Žižek on Krek: Marxist-liberal Critique of the Catholic Organicist Social Model

The speaker in the paper critically presents Žižek's "Marxist-liberal" critique of the social model advocated by Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917). Krek was a Slovenian Catholic priest and a significant and influential figure in Slovenian history. He was endowed with many talents and was active in various fields: a popular tribune with immense charisma and energy, a pioneer of sociology in Slovenia, a social and economic reformer, the first Catholic promoter and organiser of cooperativism in Slovenia (and in Croatia), a fighter for Slovenian farmers and workers, a mobiliser of the masses, a social activist, a politician, the initiator of Christian socialism, and a moderniser of the Catholic movement in Slovenia. Krek founded Christian democracy in Slovenian lands and was one of Slovenian political Catholicism's most important ideologists and representatives. He was a university professor who also theoretically substantiated his attitude and activities. He wrote an extensive and encyclopedic book, *Socijalizem* (Socialism) (1901), in which he presented the theoretical foundations and (principled) bases of his stance and actions. This work is the main subject of Slavoj Žižek's critique in his book *Jezik, ideologija, Slovenci* (Language, Ideology, Slovenians) (1987). In it, he criticised the organicist social model of the class society advocated by Krek and the Catholic Church of that time. In this critique, one can observe Marxist and liberal points emphasised and advocated by Žižek. It is particularly worth mentioning concepts and themes such as the Catholic (organicist and corporatist) social doctrine in the function of capitalism development, power and authority (as the "soul" of society), civil society, anti-Semitism, understanding of Slovenian identity and national interpellation, the relationship between Catholicism and fascism. The speaker places Žižek's critique within his broader opus, the historical context of its appearance (the time of the imminent collapse of socialism and Slovenia's transition to liberal democracy), and the broader frame-

work of the opposition between the relational cooperative social model and the (Marxist) model of (class) struggle among social agents.

Keywords: *Slavoj Žižek's critique of Janez Evangelist Krek, social doctrine of the Catholic Church, Marxist-liberal critique of the Catholic organicist social model, capitalism, civil society, anti-Semitism, Slovene national identity.*

Simon Malmenvall
Social Vision of Professor Grivec: From Ecclesiastical Unity to National Consciousness

Franc Grivec (1878–1963), a pioneer in systematic research of Eastern Christianity in Slovenian academia, answered the pressing social questions of his time in some of his ecclesiological and historical works. The first core of Grivec's social vision is unity among Christians under the auspices of the Catholic Church, where the thought of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) is highlighted. The second core is the national consciousness among Slovenians and other Slavs, a defence mechanism against the socialist revolution. In Grivec's social vision, Russia occupies a starting point for reflection – based on the revolution carried out and, at the same time, experiences in preventing its spread. The Slovenian author places the two conceptual cores (Christian unity and national consciousness) within the example of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius. In this way, he establishes a mythical idea resembling the "New Middle Ages" theory of the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948).

Keywords: *Franc Grivec, ecclesiastical unity, national consciousness, Bolshevik Revolution, Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev.*

Irena Avsenik Nabergoj
Division of Spirits between Catholic and Liberal Intellectuals on the Relationship between Art and Religion in Slovenia between the World Wars

During the interwar, Josip Vidmar's views on art and religion sparked debates among Slovenian Catholic intellectuals. He advocated for the autonomy of aesthetic criteria in art and emphasised individual experience and mood over religious doctrine. His views contrasted with those of Catholic intellectuals like Anton Vodnik, Aleš Ušeničnik, and Božo Vodušek, who criticised him for elevating art above religion and ethics. They defended the spiritual depth of faith and the connection of art with other spiritual aspects. The debate reflects the clash between liberal and Christian views on artistic expression, worldview, and religious

belief in Slovenian cultural discourse at the end of the 1920s. These discussions shaped the development of Slovenian literature and cultural evaluation, reflecting broader social trends. The article also touches on contemporary findings that highlight the profound impact of art and religion on human understanding and emotional depth, emphasising their close interconnection throughout history.

Keywords: *Slovenian literature, art and religion, culture war, Josip Vidmar, Aleš Ušeničnik, Anton Vodnik, Božo Vodušek.*

Polona Tratnik
Scapegoating the Expressionist Artist France Kralj in the Culture Wars of the 1930s

By focusing on the case of France Kralj, the chapter highlights the ideological closeness of the national socialist and the communist perspective on modernist art in the late 1930s. France Kralj (1895–1960) was a Slovene painter, sculptor, and graphic artist who studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (1913–1919) and created numerous expressionist works of high aesthetic quality. Kralj never produced politically agitative works. With the rise in political ideologies in the 1930s, the political climate in Slovenia saw increasingly less tolerance of modernist and especially expressionist art. In 1939, unionists moved, broke, and poured tar over his statue *Priroda* (*Nature*). This act was not condemned in the public discourse; on the contrary, it was even praised, as Kralj's work was accused of *degenerate art*, a term coined by the National Socialist German Workers' Party meant to discredit modernist art, particularly expressionism.

Keywords: *France Kralj, expressionism, modernism, degenerate art, primitivism, uncanny.*

Stjepan Štivić
Franc Šanc's Concept of Culture

In the first half of the 20th century, the concept of culture held a significant position in philosophical circles in Croatia. Various authors, confronted with the challenges of the cultural movements of their time, engaged in discussions on how to understand culture and whether culture even exists. In this context, we also find reflections on culture by Franc Šanc SJ (1882–1953), a Croatian-Slovenian theologian and philosopher. The concept of culture has undergone significant semantic changes in our time, raising the question of whether we can even speak of the same concept today as in the time of Šanc. The concept of culture illustrates how the meaning of terms becomes a battleground in cultural conflicts. In this

presentation, we analyse Šanc's understanding of culture, critically examining the contemporary concept of culture.

Keywords*: culture, Franc Šanc SJ, contemporary culture, culture wars, comparative analysis.*

Béla Mester
Controversies of Philosophers with Protestant, Catholic and Secular Background in the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* **(1882–1891)**

The first series of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review (Magyar Philosophiai Szemle)* was the first periodical of philosophy in Hungarian, established by a spontaneous initiative of several circles of philosophers in Budapest, with the financial support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. (However, the periodical of philosophy of the Academy has the same title nowadays, as well; it will be discussed here just the first ten years of the periodical when the Academy offered its financial support, but the editorial board was independent of it.) The single Hungarian periodical of philosophy and its open-minded editors inspired the scholar community of the Hungarian philosophers to use it as a forum for controversies of highly diverse opinions from the strict Positivism through the neo-Kantianism until the Catholic philosophy of this period. In these discussions, the religious or secular commitments of the participants had a fundamental role. A Catholic monk-teacher, Valér Maczki (SOCist), provoked the most vivid controversy; the founder editor had a clear Protestant commitment, and it appeared to be a Positivist secular worldview. It was the situation until the foundation of the first Hungarian periodical of philosophy, engaged for a particular philosophical school, namely neo-Thomism (*Periodical of Philosophy / Bölcseleti Folyóirat* 1886–1906). This paper offers an overview of the controversies on the pages of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* with a strong background of *worldview (Weltanschauung).*

Keywords: *Catholic philosophy, Hungarian Philosophical Review, Hungarian philosophy, neo-Kantianism, neo-Thomism, Positivism, public philosophy.*

Branko Klun
Violence and Deconstruction: The Limits of Postmodern Democracy

The philosophical thought of deconstruction derives its moral legitimacy primarily from the critique of violence. Understood as a movement of liberation and emancipation of all that has been oppressed and deprived of its otherness, deconstruction has far-reaching political implications. Derrida and Vattimo, for

example, argue for a new understanding of democracy. For Vattimo, "postmodern democracy" requires the unmasking and renunciation of the commonly held firm beliefs or imaginary "truths" that characterise today's "framed" democracy. He even suggests abandoning the very notion of truth and accepting a postmodern plurality of interpretation. However, such a deconstruction of all that is solid, firm, and powerful becomes blind to its violent character.

Keywords: *deconstruction, violence, postmodern democracy, truth, interpretation.*

Katarína Valčová
Bridging Divides: Navigating Tensions between Contemporary Culture and Church Tradition through the Mystery of Christian Liturgy

The paper examines how the Christian Liturgy upholds the Church's faithfulness to its origins in a society where modern values deviate from traditional ecclesiastical ideals. The argument states that the interaction between orthodoxia (correct belief) and orthopraxia (proper behaviour) within the liturgy is crucial in resolving the conflicts between contemporary cultural norms and traditional Christian positions. The study investigates how these liturgical acts can go beyond being ordinary rituals to enable a deep divine experience, functioning as a reflection of and a connection beyond cultural differences. This demonstrates how combining modern and traditional aspects in religious rituals may promote introspection, conversation, and harmony, enabling the Church to manage the intricacies of a contemporary religious environment. The paper argues that a profound involvement with liturgical mystery might improve comprehension and embrace of many viewpoints within the Church, confirming its function as a cohesive entity of Christ in a complex world.

Keywords: *Christian Liturgy, Orthodoxia, Orthopraxia, Christian Church, Contemporary Challenges.*

Mária Kardis
Believing without Belonging? Detraditionalisation of the Religious Identity of Youth in Slovakia

The purpose of my paper is to present selected contemporary theories of religion in relation to modernity and late modernity. As well as their application in the Slovak social space. For this purpose, we will analyse contemporary dates. Davie's "believing without belonging" concept has led to several exciting debates and discussions among religion and sociology scholars. Some argue that this

trend represents a decline in religious participation and an erosion of traditional religious values. In contrast, others see it as a positive development that allows for greater diversity and individual expression within religious and spiritual traditions.

This article aims to analyse the basic assumptions of Grace Davie's concept and its application as a conceptual key to explain the transformation of religiosity in contemporary Slovakia, especially youth religiosity. The concept of "religion without obligation" applies to analysing the dynamics and evolution of religiosity in contemporary Slovakia, especially among youth. The aim here will not be to discuss her works in detail but only to present a few selected theses that seem relevant to the thoughts of the scholar in question. This article uses content analysis and desk research.

Keywords: *religious identity, religiosity, religious participation, religiosity of Slovak youth, detraditionalisation.*

Rafał Smoczyński
Cultural Division in Poland: Political Conflicts and Normative Differentiation

Though ethnically homogeneous, Polish society exhibits considerable normative diversity, particularly evident in comparative studies of political inclinations and religious engagement between Western and Eastern regions. Diverse normative frameworks, alongside socio-economic variables, significantly influence individual choices and collective behaviours, shaping varied lifestyles and attitudes toward deviance and politics, thus highlighting a symbolic divide between Eastern and Western Poland. Beyond normative conditions, factors such as disparate rates of capital penetration, regional wealth disparities, industrialisation levels, and infrastructure development contribute to this cultural schism, rooted in the historical trajectories of Western and Eastern Poland, notably shaped by over 150 years of partition and border shifts. This paper examines, among other aspects, the processes of atomisation and anomie, particularly among descendants of post-World War II settlers in Western and Northern Poland, whose social ties, unlike those in Eastern Poland, experienced greater disintegration and social disorganisation under real socialism. A critical analysis of regional differentiation through the lens of centre-periphery theory underscores the disparities in modernisation potential, with Western Poland and metropolitan areas benefiting from greater access to capital, services, and technology. At the same time, Eastern regions lag with less industrialisation and reliance on pre-modern forms of social cap-

ital, hindering functional differentiation and rational resource allocation. This presentation investigates whether discernible shifts in social life exist between Eastern and Western Poland, where conventional differences in normative beliefs regarding religion, political preferences, and social integration, as measured by family ties and civil society affiliations, are noticeably diminished.

Keywords: *Poland, cultural division, political conflicts, critical analysis.*

Michal Valčo
Algorithmic Cultures and Soft Power: The New Battlegrounds of Global Culture Wars

Social media channels have become the epicentres of world culture wars in the digital era, as AI-driven algorithms powerfully shape public opinion and cultural narratives. This article investigates the idea of "algorithmic cultures" and how these algorithms—especially on platforms like TikTok and Douyin—affect users' values, beliefs, and actions. Through an analysis of the variations in algorithmic content curation between China and the West, the paper exposes how soft power is applied via digital channels, gently reshaping public opinion and supporting ideological divisions. The study also discusses the attention economy's problems and algorithmic government's moral consequences. Ultimately, it advocates a sensible approach to control that advances responsibility, openness, and the preservation of many cultural points of view.

Keywords: *algorithmic culture, soft power, social media, digital platforms, cultural narratives, content curation.*

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REVIEWS

The monograph *Culture Wars: Past, Present, Future*, edited by Bojan Žalec and Stjepan Štivić, is the work of twelve researchers from Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. In thirteen chapters, they explore various topics, all of which are connected to the themes of culture wars, social conflicts, tensions, and divisions, most of which are, in one way or another, related to religion.

The phenomena they analyse are examined from the perspectives of theology, religious studies, philosophy, intellectual and literary history, cultural studies, and sociology, giving the book an interdisciplinary character.

In terms of time frame, the book focuses on the period from the late 19th century to the beginning of World War II in Slovenia. Still, some chapters extend beyond this timeframe, even into discussions about culture wars in the context of the digital age.

Geographically, most chapters focus on Slovenian intellectual history, while some authors explore events and processes in Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, and Hungary.

The authors apply concepts and theories from contemporary humanities and social sciences (including hermeneutics and deconstruction, Žižek's (Marxist) critique of Krek and Christian socialism, Girard's mimetic theory, and others), which further enhances the originality and novelty of the insights and perspectives presented in the book.

The monograph *Culture Wars: Past, Present, Future* is a significant and original scholarly work that fills numerous gaps in the understanding of Central European (intellectual) history by skilfully connecting it to the present, illuminating it through contemporary theoretical frameworks, and applying new approaches to its study. As such, it represents a significant scholarly contribution to the humanities and the social sciences and an incentive for further research along its innovative path.

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The book *Culture Wars: Past, Present, Future*, edited by Bojan Žalec and Stjepan Štivić, addresses a topic that is crucial for understanding our past and is increasingly shaping both our present and future. The authors are distinguished researchers from academic institutions across Central Europe.

While most discussions focus on individuals and events from Slovenian intellectual history, the book also encompasses broader themes, including events in Croatia, controversies among Hungarian philosophers with religious underpinnings, the management of tensions between tradition and modern culture through liturgy, the detraditionalisation of religious identity in Slovakia, cultural divisions in Poland, and the emergence of new battlegrounds in the culture wars driven by the development of modern technology and artificial intelligence.

The book offers new perspectives on these topics, grounded in in-depth research. Religious aspects are at the forefront, but the authors place them within a broader context, giving the book an interdisciplinary character. While it presents detailed studies on Slovenian intellectual history, it also includes and enables comparative analysis, deeper understanding, and interpretation of this history in a broader framework.

The book meets a high scholarly standard in methodological rigour and precision of terminology and language. As an original scientific work, this monograph will be an invaluable resource for further research. It will contribute to advancing the humanities and social sciences within the Central European context and beyond.

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