

DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL THEOLOGY AND VALUE PREFERENCES IN SLOVAKIA AFTER THE YEAR 1990

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Abstract

This article focuses on the development of moral theology in Slovak society since the 1990s. It deals with the phenomena closely related to man's morality (human nature, human rights, autonomy of personal conscience, free will, values of truth, goodness, beauty, dispositions of good will, the common good, and a need for return to virtues). The first precondition for the content of this paper is the claim that only man is capable of moral life. In this sense, three questions arise: 1. What trends can be identified in moral theology in Slovakia and Central Europe in the past and at present? 2. Why is cooperation between moral theology and moral philosophy important? 3. What impact do moral theology and moral philosophy have on the growth of the common good (*bonum commune*) and on the relationship between freedom, conscience and truth?

The analytical, reflexive and comparative methods intermingle in the study. In the final conclusion, we will also use the synthesis method. With the aid of the analytical method, I will accentuate those specificities that bring the reader closer to the meaning, importance and image of a person with a »moral face«. The starting point for this assertion will be Christianity with its high sense of humanity, which was steadily formed in Slovakia in the 9th century as a result of the missionary activity of the two Thessalonian Brothers Constantine – Cyril (827–869) and Methodius (826–885). I will also use a comparative method in the text as we try to compare the traditional moral theology in Slovakia before 1990 and after 1990, when it has been influenced by secularism, liberalism, relativism and practical materialism. The method of synthesis will allow us to draw on certain conclusions, taking into account the dynamics of flexible postmodern-liberal influences, anthropological-normative and multicultural approaches, as well as the latest scientific technologies and nanotechnologies, which increase the demoralization of society by breaking the integrity of the body standards of the traditional family order. Man and society cannot exist separately because the identity of a person in society is a sign of self-consciousness and at the same time the

basis of belonging to society, nation, ethnicity, state. Since 1990, moral theology in Slovakia has strived to resist secular tendencies, especially hedonism and practical materialism, dictatorship of relativism, ethical-axiological and cultural variability, since they have no support in universal norms, but also sexual freedom without responsibility and social indifference. The above-mentioned undermining of the traditional value system, loss of objectivity, ideologization of the culture of life, degenerate multicultural approach without solid moral principles and total globalization are intentionally desired. These are the reasons why the fundamental concepts are atomized to such an extent that they become insignificant. These trends, however, are not only dangerous but also anti-human by their support of demoralization. In the concluding part, the study tries to clarify two things: Why faith should not be separated from morality? Why is the presence and living testimony of Christians important in the context of the 21st century?

Keywords: moral theology, Slovak history, moral responsibility, secularism, materialism.

Introduction

Moral theology is generally considered to be a practical science based on anthropological assumptions. Its character is both religious and humane-social. As it concerns theology, this science on the one hand postulates belief in God and therefore it offers to individuals and to society God's revealed and unchangeable demands contained in the *Holy Scripture*, since »Holy Scripture is a constant source of inspiration of the living word for a Christian«¹ and also in the rich *Tradition*. On the other hand, it also encompasses natural and reasonable normative requirements, taking into account verified values, laws, norms and rules that man creates in interaction with the outside world.

The definitive role of morality, which is at the centre of life, but never outside of life, is to bring people to a positive relational culture and to harmonize intellectual determinants and volitional abilities. The aim of morality is to show people the way to a wisely organized life and virtue perfection (*perfectio virtutis*). In this sense, moral life is a stable value. Morality is for all, but morals are always personal. People are social and they want to be with others. Sociality indicates what a person should be like. Morals are a testimony of how we can harmonize privileges of our own freedom with moral experience and responsibility. Morals postulate sociality, because in society we realize either

¹ BENEDETTO XVI, Esortazione Apostolica postsinodale *Verbum Domini* del Santo Padre Benedetto XVI. All'Episcopato, al Clero, alle persone consacrate e ai fedeli laici sulla Parola di Dio nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa. Città del Vaticano, 2010, 17.

as moral or immoral. Moral theology reminds us of the duty to be responsible for personal conduct, in accordance with the gospel teaching of Jesus Christ.

This study deals with phenomena closely related to man's morality (human nature, human rights, autonomy of personal conscience, free will, values of truth, goodness, beauty, dispositions of good will, the common good, and a need for return to virtues) and explores the specificities of the Slovak historical and cultural context. Three primary questions will be explored: 1. What trends can be identified in moral theology in Slovakia and Central Europe in the past and at present? 2. Why is cooperation between moral theology and moral philosophy important? 3. What impact do moral theology and moral philosophy have on the growth of the common good (*bonum communis*) and on the relationship between freedom, conscience and truth?

1. Historical roots of moral theology in the geographical space of present-day Slovakia

Since we would like to talk about moral theology and value preferences in Slovakia in our study, it is important that we underline right at the beginning the fact that the Slovaks belong to a large group of Slavic nations. Slavs have been present in Europe for centuries. They live in Eastern Europe (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Moldavians, Georgians), Southern Europe (Serbs, Bulgarians, Croatians, Macedonians, Slovenians), Central Europe (Czechs, Slovaks, who are generally considered as western Slavs) and Northern Europe up to Baltic (Poles). Their symbolic centre is the heart regarded as the central point of a man thirsty for the Absolute and the Truth.

The characteristic feature of the Slavs is that they always want to »adapt«, even at a price of losing the essential things. The attributes of the Slavs include a natural inclination to spiritual values and a search for a way to a proper orientation. This fact was pointed out by Czech theologian and cardinal T. Špidlík (1919–2010), according to whom the gradual adoption of Christian values by the Slavs symbolizes the »synergy with the Spirit in the heart«.² Nevertheless, Christianity in Slovakia went through several trials and challenges at different stages of history. Its roots go to the Roman period in the 2nd and 3rd centuries (some Roman soldiers at that time were Christians) although permanent presence of local Christians can be documented in the 9th century, especially in connection to the missionary efforts of St. Cyril and Methodius

² Tomáš ŠPIDLÍK, *Ruská idea. Jiný pohled na člověka*. Velehrad – Rome, 1996, 40.

from Thessaloniki. Serious challenges appeared during the invasion of the Tatars' hordes, the plundering by the Hussite and Bohemian Brethren troops, the Turkish invasions, and frequent changes in the field of religiosity (after the Protestant Reformation of 1517) under the influence of political power in the spirit of the »Cuius regio, illius religio« until the year 1683 (victorious battle near Vienna against the Turks). The enlightenment along with rationalism penetrated Central Europe, at the beginning of the 19th century; Napoleon's army swept through Slovakia, and later the Austro-Prussian War, and finally the penetration of Marxist ideas. Two world wars (1914–1918, 1941–1945), as well as a 40-year Communist ideology with thousands of political prisoners and deportations to the Soviet Gulags, have also left the marks of war devastation. Many people were deprived of their property after 1948 and expelled from their homes; young people were expelled from universities for non-sharing state ideology, and violent and systematic atheism took place in the country. All of this resulted in the »Prague Spring« in 1968, which meant, even though shortly, the restoration of religious freedom and religious life. It was at this time that western values and, with them, the ideal of democracy began to penetrate Czechoslovakia.

In the 1970s, following the intervention of the Warsaw Pact troops and after the checks in the Communist party, a further 20 years of totalitarianism followed. The Catholic Church in Slovakia and its faithful, as well as many other Christians, were forced to prove their faith in exemplary testimonies during the years of Communist totalitarianism, which resulted in a peaceful »candlelight procession« (25 March 1988) suppressed by the police, but which significantly contributed to the changes that took place a year later in November 1989.

In 1989, the citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic chose democracy. It was a peaceful coup, after which none of the Communist leaders were condemned. After intense negotiations, the Czechs and Slovaks were finally divided (1 January 1993) into two separate states. However, both nations maintain above-standard relationships. As for the direction that could be observed after 1990, liberal values, practical materialism, hedonism and consumerism should be mentioned first. Their preference enabled a gradual secularization of society accompanied by the relativization of the truth and values whose fruit is the crisis of philosophy, the moral crisis and the crisis of faith.

According to statistical data (as of 31 March 2016), Slovakia has 5, 427, 917 inhabitants. For many centuries, the Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Jews, Ruthenians, and Roma minorities have lived in Slovakia alongside the Slo-

vak majority. The religious composition of the population is predominantly Catholic. However, there are also other churches and religious denominations present, as well as irreligious people.

*Religious affiliation of population in Slovakia (1991 – 2011)*³

	1991	2001	2011
Roman Catholics	3,187,383 (60,4%)	3,708,120 (68,9%)	3,347,277 (62%)
Greek Catholics	178,733 (3,4%)	219,831 (4,1%)	206,871 (3,8%)
Catholics together:	3,366,116 (63,8%)	3,927,851 (72%)	3,554,148 (66%)
Orthodox Church	34,376 (0,7%)	50,363 (0,9%)	49,133 (0,9%)
The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession	326,397 (6,0%)	372,858 (6,9%)	316,250 (5,9%)
Reform. Christian Church	82,545 (1,6%)	109,735 (2%)	98,797 (1,8%)
Jehovah's Witnesses	10,501 (0,2%)	20,630 (0,4%)	17,222 (0,3%)
Evangelic Methodist Church	4,359 (0,1%)	7,347 (0,1%)	10,328 (0,2%)
Christian churches	700 (0,0%)	6,519 (0,1%)	7,720 (0,1%)
Apostolic Church	1,116 (0,0%)	3,905 (0,1%)	5,831 (0,1%)
Unity of Brethren Baptists	2,465 (0,0%)	3,562 (0,1%)	3,486 (0,1%)
Seventh- Day Adventist Church	1,721 (0,0%)	3,429 (0,1%)	2,915 (0,1%)
The Church of the Brethren	1,861 (0,0%)	3,217 (0,1%)	3,396 (0,1%)
Central Union of Jewish religious communities	912 (0,0%)	2,310 (0,0%)	1,999 (0,0%)
Old Catholic Church	882 (0,0%)	1,733 (0,0%)	1,687 (0,0%)
The Czechoslovak Hussite Church	625 (0,0%)	1,896 (0,0%)	1,782 (0,0%)
The New-Apostolic Church	188 (0,0%)	122 (0,0%)	166 (0,0%)
Bahá'í Community	–	–	1,065 (0,0%)
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	91 (0,0%)	58 (0,0%)	972 (0,0%)
Other	6,094 (0,1%)	6,214 (0,1%)	23,340 (0,4%)
No confession	515,551 (9,8%)	697,308 (13%)	725,362 (13,4%)
Not identified	917,835 (17,4%)	160,598 (3,0%)	541,437 (10,6%)

³ The Census results are accessible online. Available from: paulus.frcth.uniba.sk/atlas/documents/statistika2012.pdf (10. III. 2017).

This extensive introduction, with a short historical excursion, is particularly important in order to understand the vast historical changes that were conditioned by » (...) human encounters and their mutual discussions about their own life models.«⁴

The Christian religion has undoubtedly provided a »human face« to the European continent and influenced its history. Christian morality has become the backbone of European law and the measure of humanity. Christian morality and its high ideals have shown the way to justice and law and are present at the foundations of Euro-American democracy.

2. Trends identifiable in moral theology in Slovakia after 1990

Moral theology had a privileged position in Europe and in Slovakia for many centuries. It was considered an integral part of theology (together with biblical studies and dogmatics), which aimed at applying the moral principles of the Gospel to the practical life. Implantation of moral requirements is accomplished through moral instructions and through catechesis and religious education at schools. This trend lasted until the period of enlightenment.

The end of the year 1989 surprised Europe and the whole world by shaking off totalitarian governments of communist regimes and awakening an increased commitment to freedom. Christians in the Eastern Bloc countries understood, as Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI has after all said, »Believers should be in opposition to the powers that keep the truth in prison, against the walls of prejudices that hinder the view of God.«⁵ This change also hit Slovakia and represented a new beginning for the return to people. The Slovaks wanted to be helpful in creating a new Europe that would be based on Christian values.

Political changes had a positive impact on the entire civil society and meant a short-term spiritual revival. The initial euphoria of freedom, however, quickly disappeared and many people who felt the opportunity to get rich quickly changed with it. At present, most people suspect that what happened in 1990 was not a fair coming to terms with the past, but only a small cosmetic treatment. Communist governments were replaced by ex-communists, neo-communists, and liberals, who did not worry about moral values or Christian principles. The enhancement of the common good and justice for all were not accomplished. There was almost nothing left from Ivan Hoffman's most

⁴ JÁN PAVOL II, *Fides et ratio*. Bratislava, 1998, 95.

⁵ Joseph RATZINGER, *Evropa Benedikta z Nursie v krizi kultúr*. Kostelní Vydří, 2006, 88.

famous song of November (1989): »We promised love, promised to tell the truth, we promised to hold on, we promised a new day.«

The sexual revolution that expanded in the West in the 1960s and the neo-liberal revolutions of the 1970s and 1980s spread very fast among the Slovaks. There was no radical change or transformation in hearts. It was only an external correction that left the impression of justice according to the instructions of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. All those who came to power scooped again with a large spoon and the nationalization of the private sector (February 1948) was replaced by a new rampant privatization, which had nothing to do with transparency, objectivity or justice.

The mass media were once again dependent and far from moral principles. It is true that some parties with Christian inspiration (such as the Democratic Party or the Christian Democratic Movement) had emerged, but they were not able to take a more significant remedial action. All of this culminated at the start of the economic crisis in 2008, which was the result of a deeper moral crisis and which continues to deepen even now. Only the fact that people have become aware that historical stages are not an absolute horizon can be regarded as a useful moment.

Freedom remains at the centre of attention of the 21st century, but many Christian values are in contrast with liberal values. There is still a valid right for women to abortion and killing innocent unborn continues despite the efforts of Christians engaged in the »For Life« movement. This activity is opposed to the increase in the impact of new ideologies with the considerable help of non-government institutions, which, by their distorted thinking, divide Slovak society. According to the Appeal Against the Extremism of Abortion Genocide addressed to the President of the Slovak Republic, Andrej Kiska on 29 April 2017, the abortion laws of communism in 1960s allowed one and a half million of victims.⁶ Economic liberalism allowing corruption can also be counted as an amoral trend and, on the other hand, there is only very weak legal enforceability and mistrust in the legal institutions in Slovakia. There are tolerated tax havens for the rich, who are very likely to ignore solidarity and conscience.

Central and Eastern European countries got through unfreedom to liberal democracy, but it has been heading towards the crisis since the early 1990s, although not to the extent that we have experienced since 2008. European Union leaders are stubbornly pursuing a multicultural process, regardless of

⁶ Available from: www.pravonazivot.sk. (27. IV. 2017).

the risk of losing traditional European values, Christian civilization and perhaps freedom. Responsible officials speak about morality and ethics, but only formally; their words seem to have little practical significance, and they do not really do anything to increase workers' wages and benefits.

After 1990, new disturbing trends can be observed in the field of morality in Central Europe as well. In the first place, it is individualism, practical materialism, consumerism, hedonism, utilitarianism, promotion of cultural pluralism and cultural relativism, which are currently becoming dangerous dictates. As a result, most companies are forced to accept the above-standard rights of minorities, regardless of whether or not good arguments exist in this respect.

Most people, recognizing traditional family, are forced to respect gender ideology, which is just a cultural aspect based on what the subject wants and not who he is. Being a man and a woman is no longer a definitive status of nature, but a subject to individual choice that can end in any manner and sometimes even with suicide. The reason for this is the failure of relatives, close friends or colleagues at work to accept the new identity.

Identity is naturally given to people, but due to gender chaos, the boundaries between nature and culture have been vanishing. That is why it is questionable: Does anyone still believe today that it will be possible to create a single normative ethic for all cultures while accepting disparate ideas of each individual?

From the viewpoint of moral theology and moral philosophy, it seems that this ideal is unfeasible. Particularly because metaphysics is again missing in the philosophical context, and with it important notions such as person, human nature, human dignity, moral good, autonomy of conscience, as was pointed out by Italian moralist E. Chiavacci who claimed that: »Conscience is either autonomous or it is not a conscience.«⁷

In consequence of everything we have mentioned above, there is a separation of the truth from the person. Not only do the sense and the truth disappear, but also the sense and reasons of freedom and responsibility for words, decisions and deeds. Similarly, thinking disappears from practice, mistrust among people grows stronger which ultimately minimizes certainty. Individualist trends are pushing for differences between people, increasing concern and fear of the future.

The honest good (*bonum honestum*) that does man credit is no longer in the spotlight. Christian moral theology rightfully worries about contemporary

⁷ Enrico CHIAVACCI, *Teologia morale fondamentale*. Assisi, 2007, 101.

people who do not want to submit to God's authority in any way. Why is that so? Do not the postmodern people understand that they are in Bonhoeffer's words »only guests« on the earth? How come they do not see that they had been gifted, and do not understand that God does not impose his authority on them but loves them?

In this real misunderstanding is the root of all answers to why every authority is denigrated without any reasonable arguments. Moral theology, along with Christian philosophy, has always sought to respond to human disappointment through reasonable arguments, predictive decrees, encyclicals, exhortations, through constructive discussions and dialogues, or documents that are helpful in seeking the truth, hope, and the meaning of life. In this sense, morality is the revelation of God's plan with man, and the confirmation of a living experience with God.

Therefore, it is important that Christian morals again ask Christ's words: »What are you looking for?« (Jn 1: 38) and the answer has to be identified in the invitation: »Come and you will see!« (Jn 1: 39). Today's people will be able to understand Peter's answer: »Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life« (Jn 6: 68–69) only after such an experience. In the end, only after profound reflection and contemplation of the Gospel testimonies, it is possible to adopt the Jesus style: »I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you« (Jn 13:15).

Whether we like it or not, the inner peace of every person depends on one's moral state. Where there is peace, there is also joy and hope. Time and eternity cannot be stopped. Even our thinking cannot break free from time, although time gets ahead. We are powerless to our limited time as well as to the future, because as we cannot stop the present we cannot even delay the future. The only certainty is that at some point we will all meet with the one we believe in or we oppose to so that we could hear God's decision. At that moment, the invisible will become visible and our personal status definite. Thus, people should never resign from natural intelligence, or from the supernatural light of faith. Faith is not an emotion, but an agreement of intellect and knowledge. It is not passivity, but activity of spirit, fullness, self-knowledge, acceptance of something higher than a man himself. In this sense, it is possible to understand the famous statement of Russian philosopher B. P. Vyšeslavcev (1877–1954) that: »Great knowledge is a child of great love.«⁸

⁸ Boris VYŠESLAVCEV, *Serđce v christianskoj i indijskoj mistike*. Paris, 1929, 26.

Postmodern Slovaks are no longer interested in moral values. They are satisfied with compromise and a minimum of love because they want to live »by themselves«. Wilfulness has become a primary attribute of liberal democracy, like a society of consumerism, hedonism, or superficiality in questions of truth and good, which put people's consciences to sleep so much that no laxity in the field of morality disturbs anyone, just like the right to a conscientious objection. These words seem to confirm that almost everything that has been suffered during the 40 years of unfreedom has made no good use.

On the other hand, there has been an increase in alternative religiosity, with the help of which a man himself composes a mosaic of his own faith so that he could change or abolish it as necessary. Even in Slovakia, there has been a growth in occultism, magic and other destructive improvisations, such as Satanism aimed to defame crosses and desecrate sacred Christian places. It seems that Christians can now easily be accused again, exactly as twenty-five years ago. And not just in Slovakia, but everywhere in the world. In religious and moral pluralism there are no longer any points of support.

The problem, however, is that even Catholic moral theology is now quite adaptable to new liberal conditions, even though it prefers some caution. This is because it does not want to be condemned by civil society as an illegitimate moralizer. This obstructs its original role of guiding people to what is good and to salvation.

These phenomena are the reason why we can no longer distinguish the truth from falsehoods, good from evil, and essential values from insignificant ones. All current trends, whether in the political, social, legal or ethical spheres, contribute to the fact that man acts as if his freedom is unlimited, but in fact it is just an illusion. Human freedom is relative. Therefore, it is unwise to disregard moral principles, since everyone is personally responsible for moral life. Life is an opportunity for all people, and it offers a prospect of eternity.

However, many people and Christians as well are lost in the labyrinth of this world in which no safe home for anybody exists. People have voluntarily chosen an adventurous wandering without home and national patriotism. Morality is made profane so that at present there are no moral authorities. They are replaced by celebrities who are far from what morality and morals require. Depersonalized man without home no longer thinks of his own spiritual-physical integrity. He perceives himself as part of everything that exists; therefore, we speak of Europe as a post-Christian totally subordinate to global interest. If this scenario is really fulfilled, then again, without the primary sources of morality (without *Decalogue* of the Old Testament, without the gospel beatitudes which

are The Great Charter of the *New Testament*), we will return to behaviours »an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth« and ultimately to neo-paganism.

In the field of morality, frequent disintegration of Christian families and marriages that have been sacramentally married and accepted a commitment to fidelity to life is a very serious problem today. Nevertheless, these marriages fall apart after a couple of years, no matter what consequences it will bring to their offspring. Nobody reminds Christian couples of the need for unity, loyalty, or the need for sacrificial love. A postmodern society does not consider family and permanent marriage bond to be worthy values. On the contrary, it is seen rather as an anachronism and a boring stereotype. Christian values are underestimated and discriminated. That is why Christians are getting more and more into diasporas with the secular world because they cannot accept many things that are against the reason and God's commandments, that are amoral.

Freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and religious freedom are again in real danger. This is evidenced by the call of the Association of Independent Media, which has been signed by more than 650 people, and among them many leading personalities of Slovak scientific institutions, academic pedagogues, journalists, and writers.⁹

Every period has its difficulties and Christians know it. After every night of suffering the sun comes out and a new morning with it bringing the Easter resurrection. Christianity has irrevocably timeless elements in its content. In its foundations, there is the living Word of God, which means support and hope for many sincerely practicing Christians. In the history of salvation, the power of human knowledge was included in God's plans from the very beginning. »Both, the Bible and Greek philosophy, along with Hellenic culture, are two major sources of Christian theology«¹⁰, which affirm that natural reason and supernatural beliefs are not contradictory, but on the contrary, they are complementary.

3. Focus of moral theology on the relationship between the truth – freedom – justice in Slovakia after 1990

After the political change in 1990, four Catholic faculties of theology were revived, which had previously been excluded from the union of Slovak

⁹ Information on this can be retrieved from the 'Hlavne Spravy' news media, available from: www.hlavnespravysk/sloboda-slova-je-na-slovensku-ohrozena-aliancia-nezavislych-medii-adresovala-vyzvu-univerzitam/988576. Konzervatívny denník, rubrika Z domova, (2.V.2017).

¹⁰ Diogenes ALLEN, *Filosofie jako brána k teologii*. Třebenice, 1999, 1.

universities (between 1950 – 1990). The Faculty of Theology – Aloisianum in Bratislava, which was and is part of the renewed Trnava University in Trnava, was restored; the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology of Cyril and Methodius in Bratislava, which is a part of Comenius University in Bratislava and it also includes three priestly seminaries: Priest seminary of St. Cyril and Methodius in Bratislava, Priest Seminary of St. Gorazd in Nitra and Priest Seminary of St. Franciscus Xaverius in Badín – Banská Bystrica.

In Eastern Slovakia, the Faculty of Theology in Košice was renewed, including Priest seminary of St. Karol Boromejský in Košice and Priest seminary of Bishop John Vojtaššák in Spišská Kapitula. The faculty and both seminaries belong to the union of Catholic University of Ružomberok. For Greek Catholics, the Faculty of Theology, which belongs to the University of Prešov, was established in Prešov. Moral theology is, at these four faculties, along with biblical teaching and dogmatics, a pillar of study programs typical of the theological education of future priests as well as laity.

In addition to these faculties, moral theology is also taught at the Orthodox Theological Faculty, which is a part of the University of Prešov and at two Protestant theological faculties: at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Bratislava, which is a part of Comenius University in Bratislava and the Reformed Theological Faculty of János Selye in Komárno with the Hungarian language of instruction.

Apart from the theological faculties, moral theology is currently taught at pedagogical faculties, in particular in a combined study of religious education with some other major subject, with languages or mathematics, and also at faculties with a humanistic focus within the framework of systematic ethics and history of ethics, considering that since the Greek antiquity up to the modern history, transcendental values and moral values and virtues have been at the centre of ethical education. Their role was to shape people both in wisdom and in human behaviour and culture.

After 1950, the number of students in a single priest seminary in Bratislava was limited and regulated by the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Church Affairs. In Slovakia, the number of students was limited to about thirty per year. Many seminarians who were admitted before 1950 were excluded from the study. Their number increased only in 1968 as a result of Dubček's reforms. Thus, between 1968 and 1974, their number increased significantly. The Bratislava priest seminary was filled with more than three hundred students. Later, it began to decline again because of limitations by the state, specifically to 30 newcomers per year. Between 1995 and 2000, more than a hundred novice

priests were ordained annually, but in 2008 only 67 graduates (53 diocesan, 14 religious priests) and 11 Greek Catholic priests. After 2000, this situation has begun to decrease again, as well as the number of male and female monastic professions. At present, the number of novice priests is around 10 per year. The regions where priests and monastic professions still appear include mainly three areas: Spiš, Orava and the surroundings of Prešov.

A great benefit of the moral rebirth in Czechoslovakia after 1990 was the abolition of the death penalty, for humane reasons, as there were, and there are many mistakes of justice and innocent executions. Subsequently, this abolition of the death penalty was accepted by both successor states in 1993: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. To this day, the highest possible punishment in both countries is life imprisonment. However, we do not wish to say that crime has disappeared, although in the last few years it has declined slightly and the number of murders, robberies and theft has also been decreasing.

Moral theology curricula in Slovakia have always been anchored in the Ten Commandments according to Decalogue and the Gospel beatitudes from the *Sermon on the Mount*. In addition, *Tradition* (the teaching of the Church Fathers), and a living *Master's Church teaching*, which includes moral encyclicals, exhortations, and general moral lessons and admonitions, is also included in the content of moral theology. Important support for the clarification of God's intentions with man is also biblical anthropology, which points to human fragility and is seen in the light of Christ's redemption.

Moral education also clarifies the importance of knowing the values from which life-long goals heading towards the ultimate goal are derived. Theological view and philosophical arguments are justified in moral theology because the sense of life and the integrity of the human body designed for resurrection.

The mission of man in the history of salvation is determined and evident in the desire for eternal life and blissful eternity. To this mission a man needs God's grace that he receives from God so that he can cooperate with God's plan and actively participate in the sanctification of himself. Moral theology also includes moral formation of conscience, questions of human freedom as a sign of dignity, the emphasis on the practice of virtues aimed at accentuating responsibility for the elimination of personal sinful structures as well as of the life of the Church and civil society. Opposites of virtues are vices that contradict reason but become now the subject of justification for human weaknesses.

From the point of view of moral theology, good will of man, the pursuit of permanent conversion, repentance, asceticism, which influence moral

decision-making in choosing good and avoiding moral evil contribute to honest behaviour. Virtuous behaviour and good will, however, depend on the relationship of love to neighbour and to the life of prayer. Supernatural support to moral behaviour is found by Christians, especially in the Eucharist, which is »the source and the peak of the Church's life and of the whole Christian life.« The Eucharist approaches Christians to God with exceptional efficiency. According to Pope John Paul II and his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* from March 1979: »It is an essential truth, not only of doctrine but also of life, that the Eucharist builds the Church, building it as the authentic community of the People of God, as the assembly of the faithful, bearing the same mark of unity that was shared by the Apostles and the first disciples of the Lord. The Eucharist builds ever anew this community and unity, ever building and regenerating it on the basis of the Sacrifice of Christ, since it commemorates his death on the Cross, the price by which he redeemed us. Accordingly, in the Eucharist we touch in a way the very mystery of the Body and Blood of the Lord, as is attested by the very words used at its institution, the words that, because of that institution, have become the words with which those called to this ministry in the Church unceasingly celebrate the Eucharist.«¹¹ Moral life, moral law and norms, virtues, asceticism, sense of sociality, solidarity and authority, and the common good for all represent a solid basis for Christian morality.

Moreover, the objects of a special part of moral theology are human health issues, legitimate defence, murder, suicide, violence, wars, human organ trafficking, prostitution, homosexuality and specific bioethical dilemmas (question of surrogate motherhood, gender and identity changes, sweet death, etc). Abortion was legalized in Czechoslovakia in 1956. Euthanasia is not yet allowed in the Slovak Republic, but some citizens who do not want to suffer and prefer to end their lives in this way go to countries where euthanasia is legalized (Switzerland, Holland, Belgium).

Postmodern man is currently forced to think about the meaning of rationalist culture, which, unfortunately, is on the decline, but also about cultures that stand against one another. It is in this context that reflection on the continuing significance of Christian faith, Christian morality and culture can be considered, as well as how to deal with postmodern abuses that attack everything that has been considered rational for many centuries and that formed the basis of good behaviour (honesty, sincerity, diligence, truthfulness, goodwill, loyalty, trust). Considering that we live in a »fluid society« and without supporting

¹¹ JÁN PAVOL II, *Encyklika Redemptor Hominis*. Milano, 1979.

points, the above-mentioned features are absent and replaced by disrespect for man and life, dishonesty, insincerity, unwillingness to work. Many rely only on social allowances that are accompanied by sophisticated lies, as well as corruption, political intolerance, religious indifference, cultural nihilism, which proves that even Christians are not immune to what a world without God offers.

4. Analysis of value preferences after 1990 and their consequences for the common good (*bonum commune*)

The analysis of value preferences in the Slovak society after 1990 confirms that even in a typical Slovak Christian environment, liberal democracy has been gradually promoted. The fury for democracy, which has given face to European history, originates in Christian religion, but at present Christianity in liberal democracies is just a formless spirituality without life. Thus it can be noted that, after over 40 years of atheism, which has greatly influenced the spiritual structure of the Slovaks, the current trend is far more dangerous than it was in the totalitarian past, when spirituality was an ideal of free options that counted with faith. Christians are marginalized again to the periphery of the society, but only in contact with them we can meet hope, which is more than optimism.

If we look at the values from the point of view of preferences, it should be pointed out that after 1990, the boundaries between absolute values (unchangeable reminders of our conscience), moral (which make people moral) and relative (making lives more pleasant) have begun to vanish in Slovakia. People, regardless of whether they are Christians or atheists, prefer comfort and maximum conformism with a justification: everybody does it. During the period of totalitarian power, the Slovaks appreciated particularly values of faith, truth, freedom, friendship, hospitality, spontaneous directness, but this is changing today.

People are no longer interested in values; they do not differentiate their graduation, and do not ask for what is sublime, what is inevitably necessary and what is unnecessary and substitutable. And yet, only values allow us to see a reality that goes beyond our sensory knowledge. Czech philosopher Erazim Kohák claims: »Determining value is not arbitrary. It expresses the basic, indisputable dimension of the living experience that life is valuable, that something fills it better, something worse, something supports it, and something denies it. Something is good, something bad.«¹² Even in Slovakia,

¹² Erazim KOHÁK, *Zorným uhlem filozofa*. Praha, 2004, 68.

material values are now preferred, and no one thinks anymore about their sense or durability. Reliable knowledge in the current value relativism does not exist anymore. There is no distinction between science and what is officially promoted by the media, between rational and irrational. There is also an overestimation of the differences between cultures, but mutual sharing and interaction are not appreciated.

It is clear to many that relativism promotes multiculturalism, which is a celebration of diversity, but it lacks good will for mutual understanding and respect for the universal laws on which the European civilization lays. In addition, the value of human life is no longer clarified from conception to natural death, nor the value of knowledge or mutual respect. Everyone has rights but only some have duties and responsibilities as well. Chastity all but disappeared among the Slovaks, so nothing that man does is immoral. People act as if anything was allowed; only the animal status of a person who cares just for his needs is promoted. When talking about vices, everyone smiles with a remark that we are only humans. This highlights mediocrity and confirms the absence of human desire for moral perfection and holiness.

A serious problem is the instability of marriages and a relatively high divorce rate. No one asks any more what the goal of micro-relationships (family, marriage, humanity in the wider neighbourhood) is. The 1917 Code of Canon Law¹³ distinguished primary and secondary objectives. The primary goal was the birth of children and their upbringing. The secondary one was mutual help and loyalty. The Second Vatican Council examined aspects of marriage as a community of life in love, which were summarized in the Constitution of 1965 *Gaudium et spes*, highlighting the dignity and sacredness of marriage and the family, the need for marital love, the fertility of marriage, and the respect for life, as well as the efforts of all for the good of the family.¹⁴ The 1983 Code of Canon Law¹⁵ no longer has a special canon on marriage, but in canon 1055, §1 among the objectives of marriage, the good for a married couple is emphasized and subsequently fertility and raising children. Marriage is stressed as a deep communion of life and marital love, as expressed in *GS*, 48. God himself

¹³ PIUS X, *Codex Iuris Canonici, Pii X Pontificis Maximi, iussu digestus; Benedicti Papae XV, auctoritate promulgatus*. Praefation, fontium annotatione et indice analytico-alphabetico ab emo Petro Card. Gasparri, auctus. P.J. Kennedy & Sons, New York, 1918.

¹⁴ DRUHÝ Vatikánský koncil, *Gaudium et spes*. Pastoralná konštitúcia o Cirkvi v súčasnom svete (21. XI. 1964). In: *Dokumenty Druhého vatikánskeho koncilu*. Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2008, 47–52 (hereinafter: *GS*).

¹⁵ JÁN PAVOL II, *Codex Iuris Canonici [Kódex kanonického práva]*. Vatican, 1983 [Slovak translation: Bratislava, 1996].

wanted the marriage of two people, and for the sake of stabilization he treated it by law and marriage agreement, confirmed by personal consent.

Since 2000, the number of marriages in Slovakia has been around 24 to 28 thousand a year, below 30 thousand in 1994 and it has not reached this limit again. In the second half of the 1970s, when the number of marriages peaked, it was around 44000 thousand marriages a year. The minimum year was 2001, when only 23.8 thousand marriages were established. In the course of 2013, 25,491 pairs got married. The gross marriage rate reached 4.7 ‰. From the point of view of the order of first marriages in the Slovak Republic, it oscillated by about 90% in both men and women. However, there has been a gradual decline, and in recent years first marriages were at 85–87% for men and 87–89% for women. The proportion of unmarried fiancés reaches 80% of all marriages. Of course, divorce has also increased. Divorce is the legal termination of marriage. In 2013, 10.9 thousand marriages were divorced in the Slovak Republic, which represented only 2 divorces less than in 2012. At the beginning of the monitored period (in 2000), divorced marriages represented less than 9.3 thousand, this gradually increased up to the year 2006 (12.7 thousand divorces). In the next period (until 2010), the number of divorces was above 12 thousand divorces per year. Since 2010, the divorce rate has fallen slightly¹⁶. According to other statistics from 2012, 40 out of 100 registered marriages will divorce in Slovakia, but of course, it depends also on individual regions.¹⁷ In the 21st century, the model of European marriage is a problem, especially in confrontation with the Islamic model of marriage, which fails to respect civil order in relation to women but applies the Sharia law.

The role of moral theology, but also of the whole society, is to unmask the reality of the days, and see things as they really are. The distinctive Slavic spirituality with its *lumen animae* (light of the soul) is still valid for the Slovaks, but to a lesser extent. The Slovaks, as well as the other Slavs, have a Christian soul in which there is a living Old Testament righteousness, a Greek philosophy manifested in thinking, a sense of order and law of the Roman heritage, a Byzantine sense of beauty and delicate creativity, furthermore prayer, contemplation and the ability of self-reflection. The Slovaks know that spiritual life is not the same as ordinary life. Moreover, they know that the mass society is making an anthropological mistake if it denies the uniqueness and authenticity of the person.

¹⁶ Available from: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Marriages_andbirths_in_Slovakia/sk

¹⁷ Available from: <http://portal.statistics.sk> (Accessed 15. V. 2014).

Privatization of state property, which was scarcely controlled by public authorities and the public, was carried out in Central Europe. On the other hand, several foreign-funded agencies are also present in Slovakia, e.g. philanthropic *Open Society Fund*, which has influenced political development and state policy priorities. Through the third sector, which strongly supports LGBT propaganda and other obscure concepts regulating population, the traditional family breaks down and the so-called »street children« increase in number. Besides, there has been gradual liquidation of the pension system and the long-established health care system. In Central Europe, decadence of culture can be perceived almost everywhere, accompanied by arrogance, vulgarity, amorality of film products, television programs and TV shows, increasing crime, as well as a rising measure of detachment in interpersonal relationships. There has been much work in Slovakia on reforms in education, but so far none has succeeded in improving the quality of teaching content in favour of morality.

5. Towards recovering proper starting points for a healthy and meaningful life

There is no doubt that morality in what we call the Western world in general is in a state of chaos. It was accentuated by Pope John Paul II in the first years of his pontificate: »We have to admit realistically and with great pain that Christians today are largely lost, confused, helpless, and even disillusioned. In the world, thoughts that contradict the revealed and always proclaimed truths are abundantly spread, in the sphere of discipline and morality delusions in the full and true meaning of that word spread, creating doubts, confusion and rebellion. The liturgy is being experimented. Christians, immersed in intellectual and moral relativism, and thus permissiveness, are tempted by atheism, agnosticism, obscure moral enlightenment, and sociological Christianity deprived of defined dogmas or objective morality.«¹⁸ And this situation is an obstacle to finding the solutions to the problems that are related to it, or to confront what we call mysterious unpredictability. Many people today, however, still express concerns about: What could happen if there was total moral chaos in the world? Will we hate each other? Will we lead wars with one another so that the most powerful win? Will we destroy everything that we have culti-

¹⁸ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Bisogna conoscere l'uomo d'oggi per illuminare competentemente le menti. Il Santo Padre ai convegnisti di - »Missioni ap popolo per gli anni 80«, *L'osservatore Romano*, CXXI (1981) 31, 1- 2.

vated in the course of two thousand years of Christian history? In Slovakia, we also ask: How can we reconcile with the fact that religiosity and, with it, the Christian faith and moral character of the Slovaks, hard-pressed in the years of totalitarianism, have been falling rapidly today? What to do so that Europeans and Slovaks rediscover their Christian roots?

Answers to these questions are closely related to where our society is going, and to finding solutions to how moral theology could address Christians and Christian communities more effectively and play a more positive role in the process of stabilizing values in the changing Slovak society.

Our conviction is that we do not have to be too progressive in the sense that moral theology is to abandon the *Decalogue* and the requirements of beatitudes from the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:1–12, Luke 6:20–26), or even from the rational challenge of knowing values, and knowing how to orient in their hierarchy, and even the virtues (*areté*), either the supernatural (*belief, hope, love*) or moral (*conscientiousness, righteousness, courage, mildness*). Virtues are power (natural and supernatural), by dispositions they are always personal, though not permanently given.

Virtues depend on the realization of practical wisdom, which includes both faith and reason. A wise man is a virtuous man, and a virtuous man is wise. He manifests himself in dialogue with others as well as in balanced rationality in matters of truth, goodness and beauty. This tradition is well known in the European context and has its specifics in the field of moral interpretation. It relies on a narrative experience and takes into account moral practicality and free and reasoned action. We wish to say that it takes into account remarks of philosophers, theologians, ethics, anthropologists, historians, psychologists, sociologists, and culturologists. The great role of moral theologians, if they still exist, is to spread the awareness of the risks of gender theories to the intellectual development of young people, which is also a challenge for the future. The sign of a moral personality is the stability of a person, not a psychic disorder and uncertainty, in which one is carried away by crowds and popular trends.

Christianity and moral theology in the 21st century do not offer technical solutions to the world's politicians, but offer them the truth about man, highlighting the good as the only means of happiness, justice as a lifestyle, and above all love for all people. Christian moral theology offers a vision of the liberation of a postmodern man from being dependent on the Internet and on social networks, offering community instead of anonymity, a true face, and heartfelt friendship, instead of pretending to be somebody else and playing

different roles, protecting against the risk and creating the impression of alliances with feelings of impunity, as for instance fraud, theft of personal data, instigation to self-harm, or suicide.

Humanity cannot carry out humanism without God, or perfection without the stability in matters of moral good and order in the field of morals. Realisation of one's own desires and changes without value and virtue basis is an illusion. Man lives in the world, is part of it but does not belong to the world. The world is not his permanent home. Therefore, a Christian is not a hero, although he has a character resembling a hero, his pure heart distinguishes him from the heroes. For a moral man, therefore, it is typical to search for wisdom, truth, good, beauty, justice, love, which are the foundation of ethical and moral universality that presupposes a deep perception and a daily conversion to friendship with all creatures.¹⁹

What is important to see in the 21st century as very urgent and at the same time belonging to the competence of moral theology is to clarify the fact that competencies without rules and limits are ineffective. In connection with the above-mentioned, it is necessary to accentuate more thoughtfulness towards other people, to point out the unhealthy will to power, to the immaturity of adults in the field of morality (moral infantilism), to the distance from public activities and indifference. It is not enough just to criticize the bad reputation of specific governments, politicians, employers, bankers, judges, media workers and journalists, but to contribute to justice by activity. The reason for missing values is the weakening of education on morality in families and schools, but also the lack of economic and social motivations. It is possible to name unfair structures, worsening living standards and associated social difficulties, which is the result of the individualistic-hedonistic style of life of several multi-billionaires who own half of the world's wealth. Every individualism, as confirmed by the historical experience, leads to solitude which is visible not only in society but also in the religious sphere in which the loss of spirituality can be observed. Today we lack strong ideals, great personalities, a broad discussion of values and the meaning of human life, good and honorary pedagogues and educators.

The urgent task of moral theology is to help people find God reminding them of the whole truth about man as well as the possibility of justification and forgiveness. People need real ideals, but they also have to know that

¹⁹ Helena HREHOVÁ, *Etická rozprava o cnosti a dobrokráse. Aretologicko-filokalistické reminiscencie*. Trnava, 2009, 284.

getting others on board through honesty and a good example is hard. Only well-educated people who do not forget prayer and remember modesty and reverence before God, in whom the source of all good is, are able to do it. In these old-new features, we see a certain solution to the postmodern moral crisis, which is the mirror of our reality, the mirror of colossal social hypocrisy and pride. The Christian should know that humanity is preceded by personal morality and that the morality of the nation and society is the fruit of a good understanding of the meaning of life, which is a challenge for each of us to fulfil not according to our own will but according to God's will.

Conclusion

In addition to paying attention to economic and geopolitical realities of the contemporary globalized world we also need a focus on the deep crisis of values that we are witnessing around. This cultural and moral crisis has two faces: indifference on one hand, and irresponsibility on the other. These two postmodern vices cause the crisis on the level of relationships, resulting in a wider social crisis marked by dishonesty, loss of sensitivity, even apathy towards others. There is only a step from this to corruption and a lack of respect for nature (black dumps, eco-mafia, deliberate non-separation of waste and environmental pollution, industrial smog, and Internet as energy drainage) that might finally amount to a slow suicide of humanity. In Slovakia, quantity today replaces quality and indifference replaces moral responsibility.

Yet, we are not the lords of life, nor earth, water, soil, or solar energy. In order for man to become aware of this, he needs an inner awakening, as mentioned by St. Augustine, when he stated that: *In interiore homine habitat Veritas*. Such characteristics of man also include authentic modesty with respect to natural resources, which subsequently manifests in social justice. Love is an unconditional gift and is always concrete. In every man it has its own history and without it life would be sterile. It is related to the willingness to offer help to others and especially to the poor. »Love *caritas* will always be needed even in the fairest society. There is no righteous state organization that would make service of love unnecessary. Whoever wants to get rid of love is deprived of himself as a person«²⁰ Charitable activity must also be seen in the light of service in love that is different from social work for its theological character. If it is not so with love, then it is only one of many empty slogans

²⁰ BENEDIKT XVI, Encyklika *Deus caritas est*. Trnava, 2006, 28.

that offer self-redemptive solutions. For every Christian, the source of love is God (1 Jn 4:16). Human love in synergy with God's love is no longer measured by activity but intensity, but it always begins the same way – meeting with the Person of Jesus Christ, offering a whole new horizon through *metanoia* (transformation of self-thinking) to self-fulfilment in love that does not replace justice, but goes »beyond it«.²¹

Man is morally responsible for all his actions. His job is not only to ensure a higher quality of life, but also to seek to escape from the existing evil through righteous laws, and above all with the help of supernatural grace. Only then does one have a chance to enter into a supranational sphere of knowledge of the truth, which truly liberates by giving meaning to human existence. People generally think that a world without God has no meaning or future. A future that does not rely on values, honesty and morality, that is, if it does not rely more on testimony than on preaching, is uncertain. Moral life is a walk to high ideals, a holiness of life that is not unrealistic but real. It is the day-to-day rejection of the lowness, the vision of others in their dignity that results from »*imago Dei*« and means the care of the common good and the ability to act for the benefit of life.

Sažetak

RAZVOJ MORALNE TEOLOGIJE I VRIJEDNOSNE PREFERENCIJE U SLOVAČKOJ NAKON 1990. GODINE

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Ovaj se članak usredotočuje na razvoj moralne teologije u slovačkom društvu od 1990-ih. Bavi se fenomenima usko povezanim s čovjekovim moralom (ljudskom prirodom, ljudskim pravima, autonomijom osobne savjesti, slobodnom voljom, vrijednostima istine, dobrote, ljepote, dispozicijama dobre volje, općim dobrom i potrebom za povratkom vrlinama). Prvi je preduvjet za izlaganje sadržaja ovog rada tvrdnja kako je samo čovjek sposoban za moralni život. U tom smislu postavljaju se tri pitanja: 1. Koji se trendovi mogu prepoznati u moralnoj teologiji u Slovačkoj i Srednjoj Europi u prošlosti i

²¹ BENEDIKT XVI, *Encyklika Caritas in veritate*. Trnava, 2009, 3.

sadašnjosti? 2. Zašto je važna suradnja između moralne teologije i moralne filozofije? 3. Kakav utjecaj moralna teologija i moralna filozofija imaju na rast općeg dobra (*bonum commune*) i na odnos između slobode, savjesti i istine? U studiji se implementiraju analitičke, refleksivne i komparativne metode. U konačnom zaključku također ćemo se poslužiti i metodom sinteze. Pomoću analitičke metode naglasit ćemo one specifičnosti koje čitatelju približavaju značenje, važnost i sliku osobe s »moralnim licem«. Polazište te tvrdnje bit će kršćanstvo s njegovim visokim osjećajem za humanost, koje se u Slovačkoj trajno formiralo u 9. stoljeću kao rezultat misionarske aktivnosti dvojice solunske braće Konstantina Ćirila (827. – 869.) i Metoda (826. – 885). Također ćemo u tekstu uporabiti komparativnu metodu kada ćemo pokušati usporediti tradicionalnu moralnu teologiju u Slovačkoj prije i nakon 1990. Godine, kada je na nju utjecao sekularizam, liberalizam, relativizam i praktički materijalizam.

Metoda sinteze omogućit će nam da izvučemo određene zaključke, uzimajući u obzir dinamiku fleksibilnih postmoderno-liberalnih utjecaja, antropološko-normativnih i multikulturnih pristupa, kao i najnovije znanstvene tehnologije i nanotehnologije, koji povećavaju demoralizaciju društva razbijanjem integriteta tijela i norme tradicionalnog obiteljskog reda. Čovjek i društvo ne mogu postojati odvojeno, jer je identitet osobe u društvu znak samosvijesti i istodobno osnova pripadnosti društvu, naciji, etničkoj pripadnosti i državi.

Od 1990. moralna teologija u Slovačkoj nastoji se oduprijeti sekularnim tendencijama: posebice hedonizmu i praktičnom materijalizmu, diktaturi relativizma, etično-aksiološkoj i kulturnoj varijabilnosti, stoga što one nemaju potporu u univerzalnim normama, ali isto tako i seksualnoj slobodi bez odgovornosti te socijalnoj ravnodušnosti. Spomenuto podrivanje tradicionalnog sustava vrijednosti, gubitak objektivnosti, ideologizacija kulture života, degenerirani multikulturalni pristup bez čvrstih moralnih načela i potpuna globalizacija namjerno su prikazivani kao poželjni. To su razlozi zašto se temeljni pojmovi atomiziraju do te mjere da postaju beznačajni. Ti trendovi, međutim, nisu samo opasni nego su i protuljudski zbog svoje podrške demoralizaciji. U zaključnom dijelu studija pokušava razjasniti dvije stvari: zašto se vjera ne bi trebala odvojiti od morala i zašto je prisutnost i živo svjedočanstvo kršćana važno u kontekstu 21. stoljeća.

Ključne riječi: moralna teologija, povijest Slovaka, moralna odgovornost, sekularizam, materijalizam.