

KANGRGA, “WE” AND “THEY”. CRITIQUE OF EVERYTHING IN M. KANGRGA AND DISRUPT DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND MARXISTS IN CROATIA

Bruno Matos – Josip Oslić

Pontifical Gregorian University
Philosophical and Theological
Institute of Society of Jesus
bruno.vtz3@gmail.com
Catholic Faculty of Theology
University of Zagreb
josip.oslic@kbf.unizg.hr

UDK: 1 Kangrga, M.
2-436:2-675:272:329.055.5
<https://doi.org/10.34075/cs.57.4.10>
Preliminary communication
Received 3/2022.

Abstract

A public communication between the Catholic Church and radical left in Croatia today is burdened with misunderstandings that are reflections of a deeper ideological confrontation that has historical and sociological background. In this paper, we considered a philosophical work of Milan Kangrga, representative and one of founders of Praxis school to confirm an assumption that we need to reestablish a dialogue between the Church and political left since the pre-war dialogue between the theologians and Marxists had his lacks. The dialogue between the Church and Marxists before the war had certain success, although the open and constructive discussion about themes that could be relevant for both sides did not continue after the war, not only due to the war conflicts and its consequences, but political polarization also. We considered the critique of political and social situation in Croatia by Milan Kangrga since his opinions were widely misunderstood, and taken in context of ideological conflict, although we presented how in certain questions regarding the relation toward modernity, civil rights, freedoms, and rule of law, he was not far from critical voices in Catholic Church. The dialogue between the Church and political left can be reestablished and continued in which we need to observe how to overcome a barriers that were, during the long time unnoticed and neglected.

Key words: Dialogue, Marxism, society, state, freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Do we need to reconsider, or read again a philosophical opus of Milan Kangrga, in intention to continue a dialogue with Marxists as before the war? Marxist ideology as was before a war, even in a critique of philosophers of Praxis school, including Milan Kangrga, is present in modern Croatian politics only in tracks, although we have left politicians, who promote academic or political activism, manifested as opposite to that which is publicly regarded as *right politics*. Although a mission and public role of a Catholic Church is apolitical and unideological, there is imposed image about the Church as religious institution in conflict with radical leftists who are progressive, open-minded and socially aware. We had opportunity to witness that in public discussions on referendum initiatives, or institutional collaboration between a state and ecclesial facilities of higher education, expressly between the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Theology. Firstly, the dialogue between the Church and political left need to be reestablished because of ideological divisions present in Croatian society, which has its history in prewar political and social circumstances. Secondly, the dialogue must be guided with the purpose to overcome a wall of verbal conflict, to be close to the truth and not to burying in ideological trenches.

Gunjević thinks that dialogue between theologians and Marxists, like one between Bošnjak and Škvorc need to be continued, not only because that this kind of dialogue is present in European circles (as between Milbank and Žižek), however also, when it comes about Croatia, this dialogue would be initiated in “Christian” space of discussion.¹ A space of discussion, one that we can regard as Christian, thirty years after the Communist rule, is Christian since the Catholic Church has returned hers rights of public thinking and speech, as major religious community, and from that reason, she must acknowledge the same right to those who have different opinions. Only then it can be the space of public speech that we could define as *Christian*, which includes also the critical opinion of Milan Kangrga that we mentioned earlier. Before we consider why philosophical critique of M. Kangrga is relevant for dialogue between Church and political left in Croatia today, we shall briefly return to certain problems of prewar dialogue, and position of religion in philosophy or, exactly, philosophical ethics in work of Milan Kangrga.

¹ Boris Gunjević, Sukob na teološkoj ljevici. Ili marksist i kršćanin ponovno u dijalogu nakon četrdeset godina, *Filozofska istraživanja*, 28 (2008) 3, 649-656, 654.

1. PREWAR DIALOGUE OF CHURCH AND MARXISTS: EXPECTATIONS AND BARRIERS

The prewar dialogue between the Church and Marxist was guided in accordance with social and inter-ecclesial changes. The Second Vatican Council encourages theologians, firstly for ecumenical endeavors, and inter-religious dialogue, especially with religions of Abraham. However generally, the dialogue with Marxists had his ups and downs. In countries of the Eastern block, where the authoritarianism was ruling, this dialogue was difficult to began and continually hold since the Church was from the start in unfavorable position. In countries on the West, political left was still on margins of public political life, although significant shift was made. When we speak about Croatia, it is relevant to recognize in same scope, expectations and barriers on track to a better understanding.

1.1. Expectations of Church

What Croatian theologians were expecting from the dialogue with Marxists? An influence of Praxis school as new and critical direction in Marxist theory that revalues its dogmatic standpoints has brought among the theologians certain enthusiasm when their engagement is considered. They believed that opening to dialogue would effect on public valuation of religion, in effect that would not be treated only as "private issue" of individual. Jordan Kuničić states, that individuals among the Marxists are leaving the assumption that Marxism is in itself atheistic, and above all, they recognize a positive historic and social role of Christianity² From Marxist point of view, there were individual thinkers who tried, thru public engagement to affirm Marx as philosopher who tolerated religion. According to Esad Ćimić, older Marx was more rebellious, more inclined to anarchistic and anti-theistic thinking of Bruno Bauer, while in later period he becomes more tolerant towards religion, but as form of private religiousness, not as ideological foundation of future socialistic society.³ Nevertheless, we need to distinct the perception on Marx and interpretation of his concept of religion as alienation related to state, stumbling rock between the Marxists and theologians.

² Jordan Kuničić, Tražeći prostor za dijalog između kršćana i marksista, *Crkva u svijetu* 1(1971) 6, p. 21-33, 22.

³ Esad Ćimić, *Marx i marksisti u odnosu prema religiji*, Institut za društvena istraživanja Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 1986, p.42.

Praxis philosophers are entering in dialogue in order to affirm Marxist theory about the state who acts as inclusive not exclusive institution, although for “original” Marx, it is not the purpose of state. Furthermore, according to Tomo Vereš, as eminent expert of character and opus of Marx, private liberty of religion is not comes from the guaranteed separation of religion from the state, since the religion in that manner becomes a *substitution* of weakness of state, and somehow, even the state becomes a form of religious belief that must be overcome in socialistic arrangement.⁴ Seems difficult to reconcile this paradigm with promotion of Yugoslavian national identity in coherence with establishing of strong bureaucratic apparatus. Further on, how to evaluate this commune space of practical engagement in purpose to help mankind if the interlocutors are not equal? Kuničić thinks that Marxists and Christians can find the common grounds on the field of active participation, but problem is, that religion first of all changes the interior of individual person in relation to exterior social reality,⁵ social state could be highly productive and functional, but in that habitus, man can still remain alienated. Sure, our theologians were defending the possibility of mutual work in practice, but in reality, government has confiscated from Church facilities as hospitals, charity and schools, then we ask ourselves in which sense and under what circumstances the social practice could be acknowledged as common goal of dialogue. Since the dialogue need to be realized, in this conditions it could oblige only one side that is capable to do it, surely one that disposes with instrument of political or institutional power. Church had restricted liberty to be involved in public engagement, let alone that she possessed these instruments of the certain public influence.

1.2. The dialogue among Marxists “inside” and “outside” Party

Which kind of valuation on religion Marxists were holding on when they entered in dialogue with theologians? As Maštruko describes, political theory of Marxists had to leave a close minded system in order to develop, and it would be impossible if they not encounter opposite ideas and views, including those coming from the Church.⁶ But to regard some philosophical system as opened,

⁴ Tomo Vereš, *Filozofsko-teološki dijalog s Marxom*, Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb, 1981, p. 131.

⁵ Cf. Jordan Kuničić, *Tražeci prostor za dijalog između kršćana i marksista*, *Crkva u svijetu* 1(1971) 6, p. 21-33, 33.

⁶ Cf.. Ivica Maštruko, *Klasni mir katoličanstva*, Biblioteka Pogledi, Split, 1981., p. 256.

it is essential that he is open to a critique of those who maintain this system alive. Marxists in Croatia were never develop certain level of open system when it comes of religious identity among themselves. There is no evidence that could confirm our assumption how the members of the Communist Party in Croatia were openly and transparently having discussion among them selves on issue of confessional affiliation. There were directives coming from the head of organization, as one of Edvard Kardelj who emphasizes that an interest for religion is a private matter of personal freedom, in order to evade political differentiation in society.⁷ In gradual opening to dialogue with Catholic Church, Marxists did not withdrew from their ideological standpoints about religion as one of the forms of alienation of personal identity, and how Church as religious institution manifests that alienation in institutional form, that must not be fight against publically, but thru radical social changes. Theoretically, existence of religion could be tolerated, but in practice there were not sever attempts existed among the Marxists (except of those who followed Praxis) to engage the discussion about possibilities of concrete and coherent practice that equally involves the application of Christian and Marxist principles.

The philosophers of Praxis were primarily concerned with possibility that socialistic program for reforms could be endangered by ideologically narrowed circles. They criticized Marxism which has transformed in an ideology, so Gajo Petrović emphasizes how working class must fight against the ideology as “socially-alienated” consciousness.⁸ But Marxists did not recognize in Church as interlocutor hers overcoming the ideological understanding of faith, that was initiated in Neoscholastic analysis of fideism and modernism. The transformation of Marxism in the ideology shall be criticized by philosophers of Praxis but this critique shall be directed only towards the members of the Party, and an issue on “appropriate functioning” of political system. They exclude all the others socially relevant factors, and Church among them. Although the resistance against a dogmatic notion of socialistic collectivism is present in work of Kangrga, his, and the critique of other philosophers of Praxis, does not include equal participation of religion, so we assume that their valuation of Church as interlocutor in dialogue still remained ideological.

⁷ Cf.. Ivica Maštruko, *Klasni mir katoličanstva*, Biblioteka Pogledi, Split, 1981., p. 256.

⁸ Cf. Gajo Petrović, *Čemu praxis?*, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, Zagreb, 1972, p.176.

2. WHY IS RELEVANT TO RECONSIDER WORK OF KANGRGA FOR CONTINUATION OF DIALOGUE?

Nevertheless, we find that work of Kangrga is relevant to continue the dialogue with political left in modern Croatian society. There is no need for repeating the reasons why Kangrga has earned privileged place in modern Croatian philosophy that is well deserved, not only as one of the founders of Praxis, but also as consistent critic of dogmatic Marxism against which he used counter speculative interpretation of teaching of Marx in key of philosophy of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.⁹ Kangrga did not indulge himself in dialogue with representatives of Church as his colleagues from Praxis. There is no written trace in which he refers to certain theological works or disputes of that kind. But he left rich correspondence in which he criticizes his contemporaries from the Party. Kangrga has criticized political theory of the Communist Party that failed in realization because of a corruption, nepotism and bureaucracy. His critique of “ideological Marx” has not attracted him to dialogue with Church, although we assume this on basis of his ethical speculation on civil awareness in works of Fichte and Hegel, works in that he becomes more interested after the war and transition. To understand his critique of social and political reality in Croatia after the war, we must consider crucial points of his ethics, in which he devote himself on analysis of personal liberty, its theoretical foundations, process of realization of liberty and its relation with religion.

2.1 Kant: freedom as “theoretical determination”

In beginning of his philosophical investigation, Kangrga is involved with ethical problem of freedom in which he criticizes classical concept of ethics, under which he also includes ethics of virtues. He is occupied with ethical question on freedom in Kant, where he is eager to identify the “theoretical” approach to freedom with “scientific”. In that manner he comment Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, regarding ethics as practical science that is not directed toward a theoretical knowledge, but only toward the manner of action, practice as it self.¹⁰ Ethics, since it ought to be practical, cannot be based on, as, Kangrga defines them, *general ethical prin-*

⁹ Cf. Lino Veljak, In memoriam. Milan Kangrga (1.5.1923. - 25.4. 2008.), *Filozofska istraživanja*, 28(2008) 2, 441-443, p. 442.

¹⁰ Milan Kangrga, *Etika i sloboda*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1966, p.15.

ciples. General ethical principles are: god¹¹ or supreme being, rightness, bliss, universal spirit, *ataraxia* of soul.¹² All these concepts Kangrga defines as general ethical principles that must be avoided in ethical thinking, by which he assumes that we should leave them to metaphysics. How the ethics, therefore an ethical study on freedom must be strictly theoretical, and theory is based on searching an evidence and determination of content, and since we are impotent to prove or determine who god is, and what is supreme good, or rightness, these principles are a-theoretical or ex-theoretical assumptions, that we can accept or not.¹³ In scientifically positive inference of theories, some thesis are *hypo*-thesis, but every hypothesis is needed to insurance the validation of theory, it has gravity of scientific evaluation, and it is questionable how Kangrga suggests us to choose these principles as a-theoretical. How could we isolate a question about freedom in Kant from the questions of existence of God or immortality of soul?

Kant integrates this problems in one whole: immortality is necessary for realization of moral law; freedom is necessary for autonomous agenda of subject in reliance to sensitive world and in accordance with free will; and third, God must exist (even as idea) so a subject could achieve supreme good in necessary conditions that are imposed by world of sensations¹⁴Kangrga was in his study exclusively confine on problem of freedom. But if ethics cannot prove existence of God or immortality of soul, why should she have the capacity to prove that human being is essentially free being? If this question must be strictly scientific, then it is possible to prove its existence as any other scientific fact. This is main argument that Kangrga use to insist in thesis that we regard Christian ethics exclusively as the ethics of values, and the ethics of Kant as the ethics of autonomous moral law.¹⁵ But insisting on moral autonomy is not the sufficient evidence for existence of freedom, just because it is not restrained by acts of God's will thru bidding character of moral law. Further one, in Christian ethics, autonomy of man is not compromised by God, since he created him with free will and reason. Kangrga concludes his elaboration on freedom in

¹¹ Kangrga does not use the term God in specific, monotheistic sense, rather he use term god as conventional, philosophical term used to define holy in context of antique theology.

¹² Milan Kangrga, *Etika i sloboda*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1966, p. 21.

¹³ Cf. Milan Kangrga, *Etika i sloboda*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1966, p. 23.

¹⁴ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritika praktičnog uma*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1990, p. 181-182.

¹⁵ Usp. Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 83.

Kant, presenting his attempt to define freedom only as theoretical determination which existence cannot be proven nor derived.¹⁶ To demonstrate how freedom is real in field of practice, Kangrga turns to Hegel and Marx.

2.2. Hegel and Marx: overcoming moralism in realization of personal freedom

In the preface of Croatian translation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* Kangrga states that Hegel has deconstructed Christian notion of God as Creator of world: since how the creation is the activity, and in an activity lies the difference, and in every difference that what is finite is revealing, and according to this, logically, God himself reduces on finite being, and because God cannot be finite being, he ceases to be God.¹⁷ The concept of creation in Hegel Kangrga defines in dialectical sense, as the dialectical dynamism of reality. If the creativity is agency that we define as all other agency, naturally, the creation will be different from the creator. Certain sculpture or the painting carries in self an idea that was previously held by the artist, and certain house carries in self previous plan/drawing in mind of the architect. Picasso transferred his own impression of bombarding Guernica on canvas, he transferred a *part* of himself, not the his own identity. On first sight, the distinction of Creator and creation does not refers on problem of human freedom or freedom of choice. Hutchinson, in interpreting Hegel's notion of God states: "When we use the expression God, we are just saying the same thing, for God is obviously thought; or God is a Spirit, and life of the Spirit is thought. Creation, then, is thought also; it is the thought of God."¹⁸ If God is a thought that produces thought, there is no distinction between spirit if it is a thought, and matter, because matter is after all, contingent and perceptive, while spirit and Absolute are mere abstractions. Then, if God created human being with free will, not only that human being is illusion, as *imago Dei*, but also the freedom by which he decides this or that.

How, then, can we imagine the notion of nothingness, as contradiction to concept of God who created world *ex nihilo*, to our own existence, acts that we preform, or things that we made or we can make? If we subtract from Absolute Spirit every predicate,

¹⁶ Cf. Milan Kangrga, *Etika i sloboda*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1966, p. 60.

¹⁷ Milan Kangrga, Predgovor, u: Georg W. Friedrich Hegel, *Fenomenologija duha*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1987, p. XXXV.

¹⁸ James Hutchinson, *The Secret of Hegel. Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form and Matter*, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 1865, p. 85.

remains that abstract “is”, as residuum of everything existing, that is hypothetically is taken from Being, but this “is” has no beginning, since that “created” and “not-created” in dialectical tension are still remaining “nothing”, and “is” only exists in their synthesis.¹⁹ If God is not free to create something from nothing in this Hegelian concept, how human being can create something from reason of free will? Only the Being has the liberty, but this liberty of Being in which the change, the “is”, is only the appearance of dialectical tension, like *perpetuum mobile*, autonomic machine that has no switch on or off, we can only stop its work if we engage our self in it and disrupt the structure, or destroy it. In similar way, Kangrga tries to define classical notion of freedom as notion of passive position that is theoretically justified, but is impossible in practice.

If a freedom is “given” as metaphysical concept, there is no life or agency in it. In other words, if we define human being as a priori free being, we negate the autonomy of Being,²⁰ so the metaphysical liberty is only possible theoretically, not in practice, and moralism is a derivation of theoretical understanding of freedom. Kangrga is referring to moralism as fixed system that disables the realization of person in freedom, it is outcome of religious belief, she constructed this system that dispose man in position of unrealized subject. Referring this, Kangrga has no intention to claim that Hegel is atheist, thus not claim that he is atheist also,²¹ for him, the religion must to assist person in realization of freedom, especially in area considering production, therefor it could have affirmative goal. Since he finds that Hegelian argumentation of freedom is still theoretical, Kangrga turns to Marx and concept of freedom that he calls *cognitive necessity*. All the institutions and religion also, are the forms of alienation, and how the autonomous morality is contradiction to the institutional form of moralism, his performance thru creativity and productivity is exclusive manner to step out from alienation in moralism to original state of *homeland*.

The knowledge of personal freedom is necessary, cannot be neglected or avoided, but only way to transform freedom in unique form of existence is thru practice. “When Marx talks about the return from alienation to his personal homeland, then he tells us exactly this: about the man who returns to himself, in his proper

¹⁹ James Hutchinson, *The Secret of Hegel. Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form and Matter*, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 1865, p. 85-86.

²⁰ Cf. Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 136.

²¹ Cf. Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 224.

human serenity. In other words, that means in practice, to return to his personal possibility or being in freedom.”²² For Kangrga it is possible to believe in God as Absolute Spirit, as Hegel has believed, and to believe that our personal freedom shall guide us towards the imaginary homeland, in which all our needs and needs of others in the end shall be satisfied. The happiness is legitimate goal of work and production, still who can guarantee us that we shall be happy and truthfully liberated from alienation when this stage arrives? The satisfying the needs of all humanity presents certain end of history and every meaningful happening²³, therefore, we could be satisfied one day with our social and economical standards, development in medicine and science, but who can guarantee us that we shall find the reasons to regard our life, our existence as meaningful. This meaningfulness can be find in relation to holy, in religious experience of the Other, who transcendence dialectical image of Hegel.

3. HOW TO BUILD THE DIALOGUE IN CROATIA TODAY?

We find that Kangrga is relevant to our reconstruction of dialogue between the Church and political left in Croatia, since Kangrga has devoted his analysis of Hegel and Fichte in context of civil society that needs to be established in modern Croatia after the war and economic transition. In certain way, Kangrga has become after the war, a victim of an ideological confrontations in public speech in Croatian politics. So, his ideas and elaborations shall be essential to us, in consideration of dialogue between the Church and radical left in topics on human liberty, civil society and development.

3.1 Mutual understanding and perception of practice

The dialogue between theologians and Marxists in socialistic Croatia has stop, if we may say on estimation of situation: many obstacles were in certain way recognized, but in practice these obstacles were difficult to surpass because Church did not have same disposition of public influence and institutional power as state. Beside this, Marxists had retained the ideological perception on religion. This position was changed during transition: Church returned to public, regain some of the properties, restored her charity work, spiritual guidance in military, police and hospi-

²² Milan Kangrga, *Etika i sloboda*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1966, p.111.

²³ Tomo Vereš, *Filozofsko-teološki dijalog s Marxom*, Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb, 1981, p.197.

tals; and soon, state will arrange the concordance agreement with Vatican State. And political left has changed its rhetoric towards religion. The radical left on new political scene defines its relation to Church on ground of secular state: they regard the Church as institution and religious community that usurps public area that must stay secular, and by that, threatens to secular character of state and society. They do not question however the right of believe and religious practice which is defined by laws, although they question the way by which Church is present and active in society, so we can assume that they are not anti-religious, but anti-clerical.

We can also assume that problem does not lie down in understanding of state as secular, or of secular society. We can ask the representatives of radical left how they explain the positive role of secularization that promotes supremacy of state over religion if state as itself, is the form of alienation? Then, secularization can also be regarded as process of alienation. In the same time, there exists a strong reaction against the secularization among the Catholics who connect secularization with systematic atheism promoted and imposed during a Communist regime, although the atheism in modern Croatian society is related with other factors, not with secular laws. Nevertheless, this contrast should not be the obstacle in practical appliance of ethical principles. The golden rule, "love for the other" that imposes a choice between egoistic and altruistic acceptance of other is surly *specifically* Christian, but not *exclusively* Christian, that means how someone who is atheist, can accept and live in accordance with them,²⁴ without a justification of personal choice in believing in God as Supreme Good. Furthermore, Christian ethical norm comes out from experience of Church living in the world, but with that the Spirit is not limited on her, but also he acts on individuals who are concluding morally correct.²⁵ This kind of frame of mutual understanding applies on life in civil society, with all his weaknesses detected in critique of Milan Kangrga.

3.2 Critique of Croatian society from Kangrga's view

After the establishment of independent Croatian state, Kangrga was often exposed to allegations of the press and those coming from individuals in academic circles, for be "anti-Croatian", "Yugo-

²⁴ Ivan Fuček, Katolici i marksisti traže etičke norme, *Obnovljeni život*, 26 (1977) 5, p. 454-463, 461.

²⁵ Cf. Ivan Fuček, Katolici i marksisti traže etičke norme, *Obnovljeni život*, 26 (1977) 5, p. 454-463, 461.

nostalgic”, enemy of the state. Kangrga was quite critical towards the government and ruling party, especially during the second half of 90ies, and in the begging of 2000ies. But, we find how his critique is similar to the observations of some thinkers and analysts close to Church. Veljak describes critique of Kangrga as critique of *etnophilia* as degenerate form of tribal, pre-civil and sub-civil consciousness.²⁶ Željko Mardešić has analyzed transition in Croatia in circumstance of prevailing ideological dualism, and he concludes how modernity could not come to us as value of peace, democracy, freedom, progress, culture, legal order and social security, but as the menace of war, poverty, social insecurity, decline, abuse(of public position), arrogance and bribe,²⁷ in all which we have more or less, followed the trends of other countries in transition.

In these circumstances, political platform that consider it self close to the Church, becomes some version of “rebuilt” political Catholicism from first half of 20th century, period of *Catholic Action* and bishop Mahnič. In that manner, she did not follow the ideas of II. Vatican Council, reflected in works of theologians who were open to dialogue, as Maredšić, Šagi-Bunić, Turčinović and Bajsić. New political Catholicism in democratic Croatia, resists secularization and civil activism in way of defending the faith against the modernity as enemy, similar as that how *Catholic Action* was fighting against them, eighty years ago. It is then expected, that dialogue with Marxists will not be continued. But, in confrontation of this kind of Catholicism with idea of civil society, the main obstacle represents the phenomenon of *political conversion*.

Our religious and ecclesial history knows many documented or undocumented cases of conversion from a Catholicism to Orthodox or Islam, although same times there were opposite, and in many cases these conversions were motivated by political or financial interests. However, the political conversion from the Communism to the Catholicism was equally condemned by intellectuals from both sides. While Kangrga describes these converts as “smugglers of own life”, emphasizing all the misery of that kind of conversion, “changing the coat”, Mardešić similar, accents how this phenomenon in society and in Church, phenomenon of new political believers that were fervent communists, is deeply against the ideals of Christianity: although the Constitution guarantee them to change political

²⁶ Cf. Lino Veljak, In memoriam. Milan Kangrga (1.5.1923. - 25.4.2008.), *Filozofska istraživanja*, 28(2008) 2, 441-443, p. 442.

²⁷ Željko Mardešić, Politički dualizam i koncilsko kršćanstvo, *Nova prisutnost*, 1(2003) 1, p. 5-27, 7.

views and possess them, their “new” rhetoric against political enemies (although their “non-converted” old comrades) is deeply non-Christian, it comes from egoistic attempt of instrumentalization of religion,²⁸ which naturally, questions a sincerity of conversion.

Kangrga was also attacked because his critical views on the isolated segments of the Croatian political agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the effects of that agenda in Croatia. Although we can agree with Lucić²⁹, that his critique of Croats from Herzegovina (more on account of individuals, not on account of collective!) is inappropriate and maybe rude, still, is it appropriate to mark in pejorative way, representatives of Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina (mostly theologians who criticize this politics as populism and demagogy), traitors of nation they belong and its interests.³⁰ This kind of discussion is far from attempt to establish dialogue in which critique is legit, constructive and wide. The speech of hate, labeling the interlocutors as an enemies and traitors of nation, a suspicion and the ideological prejudices, are all present in arena of political speech that equally comes from representatives of left and right. Considering the critique of Kangrga we must return to these questions: firstly, can we imagine and design civil society together; secondly, can we agree on the concept of the free citizen; and thirdly, can we participate on common path of social progress.

3.2.1. What kind of civil society we desire?

One of the fundamental questions that appears in this direction of dialogue considers the identity of civil society which is composed by individuals, and independent from the influence of religion(s). The resistance against the process of secularization of civil society as something that is “imported” from West, is a narrative that cannot be justified considering real social and cultural circumstances. Marx defined the civil society of his time still underdeveloped, and ruled by doctrine of *homo homini lupus*.³¹ We can find a similar objection in Kangrga’s critique on Croatian society after the

²⁸ Željko Mardešić, *Politički dualizam i koncilsko kršćanstvo, Nova prisutnost*, 1(2003) 1, p. 5-27, 24

²⁹ Cf. Ivo Lucić, *Etika ili Kangrga?*, in: <https://kamenjar.com/etika-ili-kangrga/> (Accessed 20.03.2022)

³⁰ Often we encounter in print or internet media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, that the dissenters of mainstream politics among Bosnian Croats, intellectuals, clerics or laymen, are called “halal Croats”, in attempt to show how they not support the rights of Croats since they do not support one political party.

³¹ Milan Kangrga, *Etički problem u djelu Karla Marxa*, Nolit, Beograd, 1980, p. 66.

war, and in this context, moralism that comes from religious conviction, is an obstacle towards the civil society of free individuals. But, European society today is according to sociological parameters is secular, not only in the countries with long tradition of western democracy, but also in countries that step out from Eastern block thru transition. In dialogue about the nature of civil society with Marxists we find two problems that need to be resolved.

First, there is a distinction between critique of moralism and that what is the ethical message of Holy Scripture. Ethical message, as we said, is not constricted only to believers, the non-believer can also live according the Gospels, even if he does not acknowledge the belief that Church believes. But in that case, the practical atheism, that presented by Feuerbach and Marx only the theoretical base of practice, cannot be regarded as exclusive frame of practice in a secular civil society. Then, society cease to be secular, since that does not involve different views but only imposes one that is regarded as needed and adequate. Secondly, we can agree on issue of rule of law that govern the civil society. Kangrga evaluates contemporary situation on argument that Croatia did not reach certain degree of democracy and rule of law, as Hegelian concept which guarantees the rights of every individual.³² It is difficult, and we do not know how Kangrga has imagined this, to reconcile this Hegelian vision with state as alienation in Marx. If state is alienation, then the law is instrument that provides this state of alienation, but in that case there is a danger for society, that is not perfect, to become even more imperfect, to become an anarchy.

In context of Kangrga's analysis, the degree of rule of law achieved in Croatia, can be regarded as stumbling rock in dialogue between the Church and left. The disappointment that has arisen after the transition in Croatian society is a symptom of "belated" modernity, that Church responded only with condemnation of "sin of structures", nepotism and corruption. This was insufficient, and we had to put in more effort our competitions to analyze the causes of this state, that naturally involves a dialogue not only with left, but with wider circles of religious, social and political groups also.

3.2.2. Realization of freedom thru dialogue

In his critique on social reality in Croatia, Kangrga detects general ignorance of term "citizen",³³ The causes of this ignorance or, better to say, valuation of individual as citizen, can be found in

³² Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p.158.

³³ Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p.229.

postwar circumstances – Croatian society did not go thru those transformations that had countries on the West in peacetime environment. Beside this, the term of "citizen" becomes in certain way, hated, in ideologically divided Croatian public. We can agree with Kangrga, in his interpretation of Fichte, that the citizen is not only politically constructed reality, but we deal with individual whose rights are guaranteed by the rule of law. Person is self-educated, he is a moral act from which emerges eminently human world.³⁴ Nevertheless, human world has its structure of communication, structure of dialogue. Fichtean ideal of maturing of personality, would also involve the dialogue as modality. Since the freedom is potentiality of personal realization, it could not be reflected on nature, and by that, Hegel describes nature in antique way, as uncanny and unknowable.

He can only conquer her in ways of production. As the nature represents that what is produced,³⁵ and becomes close to individual, the higher stage of this "return in homeland", can be achieved, we suppose, thru dialogue. In the comment of one sermon in church during the rite of matrimony,³⁶ Kangrga refers on Hegel, saying that the Church should preach about the Spirit more, Absolute Spirit that becomes real, that is, in spiritually off course, in dialogue, building love and friendship. We cannot neglect the fact how Catholic Church was trying after the war to communicate in ecumenical and inter-religious way with other religious communities, especially with Serb Orthodox Church and Jewish community. Even then, official politic, or as we called it, new political Catholicism expected from the Church to participate in reconstruction of identity of nation, in which there was always present a danger that she could become, only in eyes of public, as "national Church", losing essential segment of universality.

3.2.3. There is no progress without the answers on suffering and hope

The theological view on goals of dialogue with Marxists acknowledges the critique on alienation, since the Christianity in practice, and what Marxists are expecting, do not want to "alienate" human from himself, and according to this, it is not build on illusions that future can be bright if alienation is still present. But

³⁴ Cf. Milan Kangrga, *Etika ili revolucija: prilog samoosuješćivanju komunističke revolucije*, Nolit, Beograd, 1983, p. 187.

³⁵ Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 224.

³⁶ Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 224.

also it is not pessimistic in way that regard his capacities only thru aspect of Origin sin. Christianity is “practical” *in* dialogue and *thru* dialogue, because God is in continual dialogue with his creature. World is not some unknown existence that provokes in us feelings of fear and anguish, it is not some aggregate things in them selves, as Kant sees him. How Zucal defines, world is named by God and many other things are named for a man, for this unique creature that posses privileged destiny to find himself in encounter with God in dialogue of *Me* and *You*.³⁷ God is in continuous dialogue with the world in mystery of Church, who is open to the inspirations of his Spirit, and the needs of modern man, opening thru this mediation new horizons of future in kingdom of God.

Surely, we can encounter the misunderstanding here, since Kangrga demands from Christians concrete actions, to imply the ideals of Christ thru the practice, because Jesus was, as he believes, revolutionary, whose ideals we could better preform thru practice, then with prayer.³⁸ Surely that Kangrga is alluding on present tension that always accompanies Christian kerigma, a tension between contemplation and action, between Mary and Martha. But, neither of that can be excluded, even in the present days, although Marxist critique will be directed on this *passivity* of faith. Kangrga believes that Christian theology has misinterpreted Hegel and Marx – since God is Creator and spring of all that exists, man cannot be alienated from him, but opposite, God has distanced/alienated from him.³⁹ Marxist critique of religion as alienation considers Christ of Revelation as “alienated” from authentic figure of revolutionary leader, who did not preach violence, but he called to radical reestablishment of society.

Nevertheless, we need to emphasize how reducing the faith on practice, which Marxists are demanding from Christians is not a consequence of God’s retreat from the world. God is not alienated from us, as Marx believed, but the Providence was retreat her self, as von Balthasar claims, for a degree more or less, because it is Providence in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who placed this event of suffering, death and resurrection as last and defining moment for the world and world history.⁴⁰ This kind of

³⁷ Silvano Zucal, *Lineamenti di pensiero dialogico*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 2004, 94.

³⁸ Cf. Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 161.

³⁹ Milan Kangrga, *Etički problem u djelu K. Marxa: kritika moralne svijesti*, Nolit, Beograd, 1980, p. 245.

⁴⁰ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Istina je simfonična: vidovi kršćanskog pluralizma*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2010, p. 179.

interpretation is distant from many narratives present in folkloric piety of our people, narratives that describe our historical situation with words that *God has been with us*, that we were been *fortress of Christianity*, defenders of Christian Europe. Surely, the experience of war in 90ies was traumatic, and still we are facing the consequences. But rhetoric of political right is colored with this kind of triumphalism, in which the sentiment of heroism is mixed up with mystification of own sacrifice.

However, when we exclude recent war in which we gained independence from Yugoslavia, in all other historical episodes, our governments were servant, we were dealing compromises with those who were more powerful than us, rulings of Hausburg, Ottoman Empire, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Nazi-regime. The “smugglers of own life” as Kangrga describes political converts in 90ies are the offspring of that kind of Croatian *Volkgeist*. These wounds, that did not come as consequences of war, but from chaotic postwar state, in which the great leaders of self-ruling socialism were in one night become, “great” capitalists. And these are wounds from recent past, with major distrust in state, and officials. Then, it is a crucial issue for a dialogue between theologians and radical left: how can we carry our suffering from past, and search mutual confidence in task of progress and hope?

The encounter with personal or collective experience of suffering brakes the delusive image of reality present in public speech of modern populism formed by narratives, since the experience of suffering is universal. It cannot be exclusively mine, or of my people. It was equally experienced by aggressor and the victim. During the I. World War, Austrians were suffered equally as Croatians, Slovenes, Hungarians or Bosniaks, although there existed strong prejudice about them, since the Vienna Court was ruling sometimes in authoritarian way. The dialogue then cannot be conducted in way that the sides will have exclusive right to be representatives of those who suffered, Church or radical left, it cannot be pathetic expression of care, on the contrary, it must have certain therapeutic note. In the defensive stand we hardly acknowledge the suffering of the other, just because he or her criticize us or shows open animosity. We shall not acknowledge his understanding of personal sacrifice or suffering, because we have perception on sacrifice that is content of our Christian belief, but we do not see that is not its privilege. In that context, we can be closer to Marxist view on God who alienated from us, but from point in which God deliberately and willingly accepted our own disability, our suffering in Jesus Chr-

ist.⁴¹ Can we say that God alienated from human kind in general, in us, Christians? Then, the task of Church cannot be restricted on indulgence to believers as hers members or be presented in that manner.

If we had achieved some degree of mutual understanding on past, we must also consider the question of future progress. Is there a place for a shared notion of hope? Can we discuss about the hope as metaphysical category, or theological virtue if we are making concrete in practice that what we are hoping for “in theory”? Kangrga in his critique on Origin sin, claims that work is not the curse, but we must consider it as possibility for us in attempt of self-realization, with our work, our production.⁴² If we prove our autonomy with self-realization thru work and production, the hope again is bidding us with God’s will, because we are hoping to achieve something that in this instance we believe is impossible. Seems how this issue would again make a distance between Christians and Marxists, but from one side, Christian notion on hope certainly does not involve passivity towards the future, just because it proclaims confidence in God’s plan. On the other, Communist attempt to make real the Proletarian utopia of society without class and without hierarchy ended as experiment of authoritarian regime, utopia in realization implies such way of government in which nobody could be in position of insight in personal freedom as something what is necessary to achieve. Recent Croatian history should be good common ground for self-reflection, self-critique equally for Christians and Marxists (leftists) about this issue.

CONCLUSION

In this presentation we tried to consider problem of disrupt dialogue between the Church and political left having in context the critique of political and social situation in Croatia from perspective of Milan Kangrga, university professor of ethics and one of the founders of Praxis school. The prewar dialogue between Church and Marxists has opened the area of public speech to Church, and Marxists, mostly members of Praxis, had a chance to affirm their critique of dogmatic interpretation of Marxist theory. But the outcomes of that dialogue were difficult to apply, because the unequal position of Church, and firm ideological convictions about religion

⁴¹ Ivan Devčić, *Pred Bogom blizin i dalekim: filozofija o religiji*, Filozofsko-teološki Institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb, 2007, p. 220.

⁴² Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008, p. 256.

among the philosophers of praxis. The lack of confidence in dialogue between the Church and political left reflects after democratic changes on public speech in rhetorical hate and ideological prejudices. This kind of communication in Kangrga's critique comes from immaturity of civil consciousness, dysfunctional rule of law and disrespect of individual freedoms. But, was this critique also the task of theologians? To discern, to foster good, and indicate that what is deformed? We do not claim that this engagement was insufficient, but again, when we draw a distinction between prewar dialogue and after, the critical voices from opposite side have not been well heard. Therefore, contemporary theology in Croatia should not be afraid to enter in dialogue from fear that shall lose something, or that she shall gain nothing instead that she expected to gain, because that "nothing" has its purpose, "nothing but the personal goal in creating brotherly relations among people."⁴³ In discussions considering civil society, freedoms of individuals, collective traumas of past and possibility of mutual perspective on future, she conduct the task of Church, how Pope Francis described, *that asks, and listens*.

KANGRGA, „MI“ I „ONI“. KRITIKA SVEGA MILANA KANGRGE I PREKINUTI DIJALOG CRKVE I MARKSISTA U HRVATSKOJ

Sažetak

Javna komunikacija između Katoličke Crkve i radikalne ljevice u Hrvatskoj je danas opterećena s nerazumijevanjima koje reflektiraju dublje ideološko sukobljavanje koje ima povijesno i društveno začelje. U ovom radu smo razmotrili filozofski rad Milana Kangrge, predstavnika i jednog od utemeljitelja škole Praxis kako bi potkrijepili pretpostavku da moramo obnoviti dijalog između Crkve i političke ljevice budući da je predratni dijalog između teologa i marksista ostavio mnoga pitanja. Dijalog između Crkve i marksista prije rata je imao određeni uspjeh, iako je otvorena i konstruktivna rasprava o nekim temama koje bi bile relevantne za obje strane se nije nastavila, kako zbog ratnih sukoba i njegovih posljedica, tako i zbog polarizacije političke scene. Razmotrili smo kritiku političke i društvene zbilje u Hrvatskoj Milana Kangrge, kako je i sam bio krivo tumačen, ponajviše u kontekstu ideološkog konflikta, iako smo prikazali

⁴³ Tomo Vereš, *Filozofsko-teološki dijalog s Marxom*, Filozofsko-teološki Institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb, p. 279.

da je u određenim pitanjima glede moderniteta, građanskih prava i sloboda, kao i pravne države bio blizak kritičkim glasovima u Crkvi. Dijalog između Crkve i političke ljevice može biti obnovljen i nastavljen, u kojem moramo razmotriti kako nadići barijere koje su dugo vremena bile neprimjetne i negirane.

Ključne riječi: dijalog, marksizam, društvo, država, sloboda.

Literature:

- Boris Gunjević, Sukob na teološkoj ljevici. Ili marksist i kršćanin ponovno u dijalogu nakon četrdeset godina, *Filozofska istraživanja*, 28 (2008) 3, p. 649-656.
- Jordan Kuničić, Tražeći prostor za dijalog između kršćana i marksista, *Crkva u svijetu* 1(1971) 6, p. 21-33.
- Esad Čimić, *Marx i marksisti u odnosu prema religiji*, Institut za društvena istraživanja Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 1986.
- Tomo Vereš, *Filozofsko-teološki dijalog s Marxom*, Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb, 1981.
- Ivica Maštruko, *Klasni mir katoličanstva*, Biblioteka Pogledi, Split, 1981.
- Gajo Petrović, *Čemu praxis?*, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, Zagreb, 1972.
- Lino Veljak, In memoriam. Milan Kangrga (1.5.1923. - 25.4. 2008.), *Filozofska istraživanja*, 28(2008) 2, 441-443.
- Milan Kangrga, *Etika i sloboda*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1966.
- Immanuel Kant, *Kritika praktičnog uma*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1990.
- Milan Kangrga, *Klasični njemački idealizam*, FF press, Zagreb, 2008.
- Milan Kangrga, Predgovor, u: Georg W. Friedrich Hegel, *Fenomenologija duha*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1987.
- James Hutchinson, *The Secret of Hegel. Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form and Matter*, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 1865.
- Ivan Fuček, Katolici i marksisti traže etičke norme, *Obnovljeni život*, 26 (1977) 5, p. 454-463.
- Željko Mardešić, Politički dualizam i koncilsko kršćanstvo, *Nova prisutnost*, 1(2003) 1, p. 5-27.
- Ivo Lucić, Etika ili Kangrga?, in: <https://kamenjar.com/etika-ili-kangrga>
- Milan Kangrga, *Etički problem u djelu Karla Marxa: kritika moralne svijesti*, Nolit, Beograd, 1980.
- Silvano Zucal, *Lineamenti di pensiero dialogico*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 2004.
- Milan Kangrga, *Etika ili revolucija: prilog samoosvješćivanju komunističke revolucije*, Nolit, Beograd, 1983.
- Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Istina je simfonična: vidovi kršćanskog pluralizma*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2010.
- Ivan Devčić, *Pred Bogom blizim i dalekim: filozofija o religiji*, Filozofsko-teološki Institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb, 2007.