
Social Aspects of the Science-Religion Dialogue in Post-Totalitarian Societies*

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1. Introduction

The dialogue between the two approaches to reality, embodied by modern science and religion, was never a purely academic question; it was relevant not only for the individual scientist but the whole academic community, and also has important consequences for the society as a whole.

In fact, most practising scientists seldom get involved in these problems. Modern scientific research is a demanding and competitive activity, so most young scientists are busy trying to learn the necessary methodology and achieve publishable results recognized and appreciated by their peers. Though many scientists are also religious, in some way or another, it seems that they manage to function satisfactorily in two parallel worlds, professional and deeper personal, either unaware of any conflicts between them, or unwilling or unable to resolve them rationally.

Nevertheless, a small minority feels a need to study these problems, either motivated by some external factors, or by their curiosity or by the fact that modern science - and I shall be talking from the standpoint of a physicist – has in many cases reached its limits, the points where non-scientific questions arise, as are the problems of epistemology, and also of the meaning, purpose and value of scientific results. The standard examples of the first are quantum physics and relativity, with their puzzling indeterminism and non-locality¹, and the second group is dominated by the often urgent problems of ethics.

Though for an individual scientist this science-religion dialogue should primarily provide resolution of internal uncertainties, it soon becomes obvious that the social context also plays an important role. Not only are the scientific research and the position of a scientist strongly conditioned by external factors, including cultural tradition and mentality, but their interaction is reciprocal: Attitudes towards the science-religion relations have important influence on the society, and have often in history shaped social and political developments. And this process is still going on!

Of course, one usually considers here the negative examples of extreme, fundamentalist attitudes, i.e. fideism and scientism, but there are also positive cases where tolerant and argumentative approaches contribute to the advances of individual and common good.

This paper discusses some specific aspects of the science-religion dialogue in the context of a post-totalitarian society, as are the societies in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after half a century of communist dictatorship, taking the situation in Croatia for a case study². Though possibly of largely academic interest in a stable democratic environment, this

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problem here acquires vital importance for a number of reasons. One of them, for example, is the need to re-establish and reintegrate intellectual elites after their destruction by the totalitarian regimes, and I shall argue that in this destruction an important role was played by the imposed scientific dogma. Understanding the causes and various methods of this process will help us to envisage the complex process of recovery, especially of the academic community, as well as its importance for the development of stable and prosperous democracies in the region.

2. The role of scientism in a totalitarian society

2.1 Science-religion pseudo-conflict: scientism and fideism
Though it is not the main topic of this paper, let us clarify that “scientific fundamentalism”, or scientism, is a specific ideological extension of science into the fields of philosophy and politics, which attributes unlimited powers to the human reason, when applied in the so-called “scientific method”. In its extreme form it eliminates not only religion and philosophy as false and irrelevant, but also all arts, literature, even “soft” sciences, like history, sociology, economics, that are not subject to experimentation and quantification³.

Of course, there are also totalitarian regimes based on another fundamentalism of religious origin, or fideism, where claims to absolute truth and justification of absolute power are based on religious teachings. Some Islamic regimes are such recent examples, where religious fundamentalism suppresses other aspects of human spirituality, but in certain historic periods this was also the case in Europe. Needless to say, just as in case of scientism, this is a false interpretation of religion, only a surrogate of true faith, however influential it could be.

Both scientism and fideism try to find their justification in the false idea of the inherent conflict between science and religion. Proper understanding of both can easily show, in spite of the complexity of their relationship, that these two are neither exclusive nor opposed, but instead complementary. The development of fideism and scientism, and their frequent conflicts were mistakenly considered to refer to the intrinsic incompatibilities of science and religion.

In the Western civilization, based on Judeo-Christian tradition, fideistic tendencies are quite isolated, even if they occasionally rise to the surface e.g. in the form of “scientific creationism”. Catholic Church, starting with the First Vatican Council (1869-70), and especially pope John Paul II made great efforts to clarify the relationship between religion and science, and establish a reasonable dialogue, promoting the idea of their compatibility. As pope John Paul II says in the first sentence of his encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*: “*Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth...*”⁴. I shall not elaborate here on this topic, though it will become obvious that I support the idea of compatibility and even complementarity of science and religion, and justify this by discussing the deviations due to the opposite approach. After all, the title of the paper announces the dialogue that would be impossible in the fundamentalist context.

Both fundamentalisms are characterized by intolerance, suppression of alternative thinking and desire for control and power. But the dominant form of fundamentalist thinking in Europe in the last century was scientism. More precisely, strong tendencies in the philosophy of the 19th century, materialism, positivism and ultimately scientism, provided the framework and intellectual justification for the three totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century – communism,

fascism and nazism, with all their tragic consequences.

2.2 Totalitarian rule and the social structure

After a century dominated by two world wars, brief periods of right wing and long periods of left wing dictatorships, the region of Central and Eastern Europe is going through a painful process of recovery. This process is far more difficult and complex than was expected after the collapse of Berlin Wall in 1989, leading to frequent frustrations and presenting many unexpected challenges. It is a process without a historical precedent – we still have to discover new ways to repair both material and mental damages that occurred in the past period. Therefore the precise diagnosis of the situation, of the key problems inherited from the past and still present, can give us necessary indications towards the solution – however demanding and of long-term character.

One of the main problems causing delays in the social transformation and democratisation of the post-totalitarian countries in Central and Eastern Europe is destruction of the institutions of civil society, and especially the destruction of the intellectual elites in the 20th century by the totalitarian regimes. They were either physical eliminated or, for almost half a century, completely controlled and manipulated by the power centres. This refers not only to the academic communities, but also to the economy, government, etc.

Even if some individuals managed to survive (not only physically!), the institutions – universities, academies, professional associations, political parties, chambers of commerce, cultural organizations, etc., were either closed or infiltrated and controlled by the Party and the State. One should also mention the attempted destruction of religious organizations, the persecution of priests and all religious persons.

The consequences for this region were, and still are disastrous. The recovery of post-totalitarian societies is slowed down and sometimes even reversed because of the lack of independent and capable individuals and institutions whose cooperative effort would build a tolerant and prosperous democratic society. Even when such individuals do exist they are often isolated and marginalized, with the resulting return of the “old” cadres and the revival of the old totalitarian mentality and behaviour.

All this occurs in the period of intense globalisation, presenting additional challenges to which the post-communist societies are unable to find adequate response.

In this paper I want to discuss why and how a totalitarian regime destroys intellectual elites and other independent social structures, where the suppression of spiritual, cultural religious identity is both the goal and the tool, and the specific role of scientism in this process /2/. I also want to point out special animosity of the totalitarian mentality towards family and religion, and the negative consequences of the scientific approach in education. It is curious to analyze how scientism damaged even the normal development of science in Croatia.

Religion, and in particular organized religion, was always considered by totalitarian regimes as an especially dangerous enemy because it promotes certain principles, system of values and norms, and thus could limit the absolute power of the Party. And this was certainly a correct conclusion on their side. There are other similar “enemies” of the totalitarian rule: the family, professional or cultural organizations, academic institutions, in fact all structures organized to preserve individual and collective human rights on various levels, from the local community

to the nation-state

The purpose of this analysis is to detect the specific problems arising when one wants to start a science-religion dialogue in a post-totalitarian environment, and gradually develop a common approach to this problem.

2.3 Totalitarian rule and intellectuals

The destruction of national elites in the totalitarian regimes was not accidental, but an intentional action of the Party, which tried in this way to suppress every criticism and independent thinking in the defense of its absolute power. The reason is obvious: Independent institutions and individuals with their competence and professional and moral responsibilities were a threat to the absolute power and monopoly of the Party, and had to be eliminated.

It is interesting to notice the similarities between the Communist and Nazi/Fascist aggressive attitudes towards intellectual elites, and in fact towards all independent social structures. The term Party can therefore denote any totalitarian power structure – either the Nazi or the Communist or the Fascist Party - any Party in the Orwellian sense, remembering that Orwell was the first to give a brilliant analysis of this phenomenon.

Immediately after World War II the victorious communist leaders in former Yugoslavia followed the radical view that the bourgeois class had to be destroyed, and they indeed started with “liquidations” of the «class enemies», «collaborators», «enemies of the people», etc. The result was the physical elimination of many intellectuals or their removal from the teaching and/or research positions.

Apart from physical persecution, “scientific fundamentalism” of the Marxist-Leninist model was used as an important instrument of repression of spiritual values and activities that were not in accordance with the official Party line, and for the elimination of critical thinking.

The «liquidations» continued until the new rulers realized that the country and their system could not function without qualified people, without the detested «bourgeois»; they were needed as some kind of “serfs”, and thus their lives were spared, but they were reduced to second-class citizens.

Therefore the next phase followed a more pragmatic Soviet approach. Because of specific needs in industrial and especially military development, “technical intelligentsia”, i.e. experts in «hard» sciences and engineering, were not only tolerated but some even enjoyed privileged status (provided they served well and abstained from politics). This division was obvious e.g. at the University of Zagreb and in the “independent” research institutes (analogous to the Soviet-style academies), where the Party exercised only loose (but sufficient) control over activities in science and engineering. This support and relatively tolerant atmosphere provided a (relatively brief) period of successful development of natural sciences in Croatia, with a number of independent-minded scientists of international reputation.

However, in politically more sensitive fields of social sciences and humanities the Party members absolutely dominated and various ideological committees constantly controlled and terrorized other scientists. But, even this was not enough, and it is here that the first dissonant sounds were heard. It is significant that the regime was occasionally criticized *from inside* and by the prominent intellectuals in the Party (members of «nomenklatura»!), not from the conservative or liberal side but from the extreme left position. This internal dissent was more

dangerous than some external “bourgeois” criticism, which could be (and was) easily suppressed.

2.4 Self-management dogma

Scientism, as an ideological deformation of science, caused much damage even to the progress of science itself, and also created spirit of intellectual intolerance, which served as the justification for the totalitarian rule of the Party.

Together with other, e.g. economic problems, possible internal dissent was one of the reasons that led to the introduction of the specific – and most efficient – method of control, well-known as “self-management”, connected with the transformation of Yugoslav communism from the Soviet rigid model to the more flexible “permanent revolution” (or “controlled chaos”) system, similar to the Chinese one.

The trick was to install very elaborate and intentionally inefficient “democratic” procedures at all levels, with endless elections of representatives, meetings, discussions and decisions on trivial issues. This was, of course, all fake, because Party officials controlled absolutely all decisions of any importance. However, this “make-believe” democracy created continuous internal conflicts among the frustrated participants, which also led to the fragmentation of institutions, enterprises and other organizations into smaller “self-managing” units, also often mutually confronted. In this way “self-management” was destroying their organic unity. Needless to say, this was a disaster for the structure and functioning of the university, and Croatian universities are still only loosely connected affiliations of almost independent faculties⁵. Of course, the main result was that the Party was now relieved of any responsibility and at the same time had absolute power.

2.5 Scientism against science: Science as the panacea

Now I come to the second dogma which contributed to the mental deformations in the scientific community, and which can be related to «scientism» in its radical version. This was the systematic misuse of the term science, its application to what was and what was not science: it was proclaimed that *science could and should solve all the problems of the society*, of the «working class», improve the standard of living, provide reduction of imports, etc., etc.

While most people probably were not even aware of the true situation (as happens in most societies!), I am convinced that the authors of this planned confusion intentionally suppressed the necessary (even if sometimes fuzzy!) distinctions between fundamental sciences, oriented basic research, applied research and development, the differences in their goals, methods, organization, planning, evaluation and, of course, their funding. *Everything was “science”*, even quality control in a production process, or simple technology transfer. Unfortunately, but understandably, in this obscure game politicians were able to find support and collaboration among some scientists, always prepared to accommodate and bend their ethical and professional principles.

One of the lasting consequences of this system, i.e. the combination of «self-management» and «scientism», was that the professional – institutional – responsibility disappeared because institutions had no adequate internal structure or power. Professional standards were neither stimulated nor required – the Party only needed political accommodation or passivity. This unfortunately «corrupted» large numbers of otherwise decent and correct scientists who accepted this deal offered by the Party – little or no work, no professional discipline or

responsibility but, above all, no «dangerous» initiative or troublemaking.

2.6 Totalitarian rule and religion

Apart from brutal persecutions, the attack on religion was based on “dialectic materialism”, with its origin in scientism, and included the usual range of typical Marxist-Leninist ideological phraseology, e.g. “Science and religion are in conflict”, “Science has proved that there was no God”, “Religion is the opium of the masses”, etc., etc. This was the official doctrine imposed and taught at schools, repeated *ad nauseam* in the media, and it was dangerous to show any public sign of deviation from it.

Various religious communities reacted differently to the persecutions, which also differed in intensity, from the murder of hundreds of thousands of priests and faithful in the Soviet Union to the German extermination camps to the more sophisticated later methods of oppression. However, two things are relevant for further discussion.

First, the damage – both physical and mental - was enormous, both to the religious communities and their members, but also to the whole intellectual community and to the society. The brainwashing programme that lasted for so long left a lasting imprint on the mentality of the people, which is reinforced by the fact that it is still going on in the media and even at schools, though in a more sophisticated way. People instinctively opposed the Marxist-Leninist propaganda - after all, the population in Croatia declared themselves in 1991 more than 80% Catholic, but in spite of that their level of knowledge about religion as well as about science was (and still is) very poor. There was no alternative information available, no possibility for an honest discussion of the science-religion relations. All this emphasizes the need to repair this situation.

Second, the persecution failed to eliminate religion and destroy completely religious institutions, though to a large extent they were removed from their social functions. In fact, the goal of the regime in the later stage was not so much to destroy the religious organizations, churches, etc., but to isolate them from the flock and control their activities, and in several cases they succeeded. In fact, the price paid for the survival of the religious organizations was their passive role, abstention from many social activities, and this created a certain defensive mentality that is still present now when they (the hierarchy) have the necessary freedom of action, and are expected to contribute to the important social issues, such as the science-religion dialogue.

It is therefore indicative to see that this topic is still completely ignored by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Croatia, and even absent from the curricula of religious schools.

But due to the forced segregation of lay intellectuals according to their religious affiliation and their removal from their natural roles in the society, the society was losing their creative contributions in scientific research, education, arts and humanities, in economic activities, and finally in politics and government. This oppression also provoked waves of emigration, and the resulting “brain drain” impoverished the academic community.

3. Scientism and education

3.1 Education for the future and the values

The future of our society is based on education, with or without referring to the popular phrase “knowledge society”, but this education should be more than passive acquisition of

skills. In other words, education is intrinsically connected to the system of values that has to complement the scientific content of the learning process. And this starts in the family, which is its most important, though not the only factor.

But the family is still under attack in the contemporary society⁶, even more dangerous and sophisticated than before, under different guises, and motivated by the same reason – the will of certain power centres to manipulate people, especially young people, for their financial gains. The method is not the physical oppression as before but the destruction of moral values and authority, all in the name of science, resulting – in the words of Pope John Paul II – in the «culture of death». At the same time, the old centres of power that survived the collapse of communism suddenly becoming promoters of the new «democratic» policies, successfully oppose the changes that would e.g. repair the existing anti-family legislation. On the contrary, bowing to the new global fashion and suggestions from their patrons in the global centres of power they try e.g. to introduce new unnatural forms of «family», thus putting the normal natural family at the disadvantage.

One of the main results of the attempted destruction of the family is the erosion of parental authority, and consequently all authority based on traditional values, on positive qualities like knowledge, character, love, etc. In education this creates immediate problems, because normal educational process requires continuous collaboration and synergy between three actors – the family, school and the social environment (including mass media, church structure like local parish, etc.) and if the children observe any discrepancy between them the education becomes impossible.

The problem namely arises whenever the three actors cannot agree on the accepted value system that should form the basis of education and do not define its ultimate goals, or when the agreement is only superficial, i.e. false. In the communist regime of the Soviet type the Party insisted on imposing a monolithic Marxist-Leninist, i.e. materialist and atheistic ideology on all society, especially at schools. This had a relative success, more in the former Soviet Union, less in other countries where tradition and other social forces (e.g. Catholic Church) resisted this process. However, there appeared another and more sophisticated solution that is now spreading even after the nominal elimination of the totalitarian control of the Party, and which again reflects scientific ideas.

This new and often adopted approach is to separate the transmission of knowledge, or training for profession, from the more fundamental aspects of personality formation, i.e. the transmission of the moral and ethical values, which usually has the form of religious education. This separation is obviously impossible, both processes are linked and mutually conditioned, because *there is no human activity that is value-free*, and this is especially true in education. Even the basic pretext of separating description of reality from its ethical aspects imposes the well-defined philosophical scheme – relativism, and ultimately agnosticism in every aspect of relation to reality. And this is *de facto* the negation of education itself!

One can easily discover the hypocrisy of all such attempts. Namely, what usually happens is that traditional values – in the case of Central Europe or Europe in general this really means Judeo-Christian system of beliefs and values – is eliminated in the name of «scientific impartiality» or moral «neutrality», but immediately replaced by an ideological substitute, some new political or moral «correctness» (or in fact dictate) under the guise of «teaching for democracy» or «human rights» (defined by whom?), or some «multi-cultural» curriculum concocted from yoga, hedonism, ecology, etc. The only and real intention of this effort turns

out in fact to be *the suppression of the Judeo-Christian character of the school* and the consequent changes in the character of the new generation.

In this example one can observe an intriguing cycle of scientific and fideistic attitudes, which confirms them both as expressions of the same totalitarian, oppressive and intolerant mentality. In the name of (the belief in) impartial and supposedly unquestionable “scientific” arguments an attempt is being made to replace one (traditional and well defined) system of values and impose a fuzzy collection of others as substitutes. Whether we call this a “fideistic scientism” or “scientific fideism” makes no difference – it is important to discover their real origin in the simple quest for power!

3.2 Competence and freedom

I should like to emphasize the important role of *competence* for understanding social and political processes, and thus illustrate from a different angle the previously analysed connection between scientific and religious formation of a young person and its importance for the society.

Competence, both in life and profession, is one of the key elements of a successful and independent personality, and the role of both the family and the school is certainly to bring up competent young people. By competence I understand the ability to solve problems encountered in life, to make appropriate decisions in accord with the situation, adequate knowledge and the proper system of values, and to be able to carry them through. Such independence leads to personal awareness, social recognition and freedom, and therefore it is not well perceived by the totalitarian power centres that want to manipulate and govern others.

As the education in the proper sense is one of the essential sources of competence for young people, this motivated the Communist party to put the school system under strict control, even at the expense of the quality of education, in order to eliminate every possibility of the formation of a new elite among young people who might be able – one day - to challenge their absolute power.

Another feature of the Soviet system (not only in the Soviet Union but also in other countries of the Soviet Bloc) was the separation of teaching and research in higher education. In simple words, universities were supposed to teach, and research was to be done in the network of institutes, which were usually part of the academies of sciences. Of course, we know that this could never work because unity of research and teaching is an intrinsic quality of the university. And very soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union all these countries started dismantling these huge institutes and reorganizing higher education in a standard way, though not without difficulties. The reason for this strange behaviour was that the Party realized that it could be relatively easy to impose strict control on the teaching – e.g. curricula, selection of teachers and their influence on the students. But imposing such rigid control on research proved to be counterproductive – the creativity suffered and the expected results were lacking. Therefore, for pragmatic reasons the Party allowed relative freedom inside these research centres, but they were not permitted to contact and «contaminate» large number of students at the universities.

Education of competent and independent individuals with strong commitment to a morally sound value system is the concern of every society (if it is dedicated to the «culture of life» and not the «culture of death»!), and especially those recovering from the period of

totalitarian rule. These individuals should form the «elite» in the positive sense that could provide necessary and qualified leadership in a democratic society and thus guarantee its future.

4. Problems of a post-totalitarian society

4.1 Specific need for a science-religion dialogue

The development of democratic and prosperous societies in this region, after the material and spiritual destruction caused by the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, will be impossible without the real – and not only formal - reconstruction of the whole range of key institutions of the civil society, including not only government and political structures but also intellectual and academic centres. This will require great engagement of the whole society, but primarily the efforts of the intellectual elites, which are still undervalued and marginalized by the present post-totalitarian mentality.

As emphasized earlier, this is not only an academic problem. An important example of urgent need for such a dialogue will be how to answer adequately to the challenges of the new technologies, which not only bring great benefits to the mankind but also present enormous potential dangers, from the weapons of mass destruction to the global warming, to mention just the most obvious.

Obviously, not all technologies that are possible are also acceptable and desirable, and the society is permanently confronted with the dilemmas of choice which science alone cannot answer. Namely, science is descriptive and not prescriptive (“Science is value-free, or morally neutral!”), it tells us “how” but does not treat the questions of meaning, sense, purpose, and especially value statements⁷. On the contrary, all great religions are primarily concerned with the problem of values and their applications, and therefore they can be fruitfully explored only in the science-religion dialogue.

We therefore need people who will be both scientifically “literate” – trained in a specific field of science and/or technology, and at the same time morally sensitive and responsible. This claim is supported by the underlying belief that “the spiritual wings of the world’s great religions have a common core of ethical values, which can be used to provide guidance in practical solutions”⁸. This will present an opportunity and a challenge for the inter-religious dialogue, in order to find a common basis for action, to define the elements that unify all these religions and not what divides them.

And this guidance is urgently needed. Fortunately, this region of Central Europe is a nuclear-free zone. But the environmental destruction in the past and possible threats in the future, profit-only oriented introduction of new production techniques leading to huge unemployment, social engineering by irresponsible use of powerful new media on behalf of the financial power centres, ethical problems in biomedicine and biotechnology, all these are just a few examples of such dilemmas that have to be resolved

4.2 Global problem: The “two-cultures” syndrome

In a country with a small and taciturn scientific community all the standard problems of the science-religion dialogue are present with additional gravity. For example, in recent times there was almost no tradition of academic or public discussions of these topics in Croatia. The individuals who felt the need to consider and study these problems in the past were scattered and isolated, without institutional support, and to a large extent still are. So it is very difficult

to achieve specific goals of the science-spirituality dialogue that impose certain restraints. In fact, this problem is not restricted to Croatia but has a much wider relevance.

The structure of the activities aimed to pursue the science-religion dialogue should definitely not be reduced e.g. to specialized lectures, i.e. monologues, however brilliant, on the topics and from the viewpoint of a single discipline. Instead, the whole purpose is to provide a dialogue across the boundaries of our disciplines, even around our prejudices, and establish fruitful exchange of information and opinions. However, modern tendencies (and institutional pressure) have forced all of us to specialize in narrow segments of our disciplines in order to survive, and modifying this attitude will certainly not be easy. This would require an effort to cross the boundaries of our professions, of our expertise, and try to communicate and discuss in a «foreign territory», using «foreign» words and expressions, and relying on the «other» side to make an equal effort to understand, to provide its own knowledge, to share the burden of interdisciplinary dialogue. A philosopher or a theologian should try to understand the methods and attitudes of a scientist, and vice versa. But – as it became obvious during our first discussions – the dialogue is difficult even among scientists, who often cannot agree even on the definition of science(s), much less their methodologies.

The difficulty concerns not so much the possible science – religion controversy, but even the (old?) intra-science "two-culture" syndrome,⁹ tensions and misunderstandings between intellectuals, especially in humanities and in natural sciences. This indicates the need for better communication and for the clarification of the (supposedly obvious!) definitions in this specific aspect of the «unity of knowledge» question.

In fact, it seems that the natural scientists, and physicists foremost among them, are most eager and willing to cross these boundaries and speak “another language”, and especially to transfer their professional experiences to their colleagues in other disciplines. (The long list of Templeton Prize winners in recent times only confirms this conclusion!) I am afraid that many others, coming from humanities and social sciences, are unwilling to leave their safe areas and start a real dialogue, which is especially true for theologians and philosophers.

I confess that I am personally interested in the solution of this impasse. As a theoretical physicist my only contribution to the science-religion dialogue can be my specific professional and personal, i.e. religious experience. I believe that the understanding of the true character and methodology of (natural) science research coming from the first-hand experience should be both relevant and interesting for our (less exact but more profound) partners, just as their views and knowledge are interesting to us. If it turns out that this is not so, it is certainly useless for me and my colleagues to try to become dilettante philosophers or theologians in order to discuss competently intricacies of these disciplines, and very likely prove to be incompetent! So the dialogue becomes meaningful only if we meet halfway, if we share our specific knowledge, listen carefully and complement each other, however demanding this could be, and try to create new synthesis, mutual understanding and appreciation. Otherwise, the dialogue reduced to monologues will not continue for long.

Are we prepared for this new “culture of the dialogue”?

4.3 Local problem: Information and communication

It will take time and patient work to neutralize the system of disinformation on the science-religion issues which functioned for half a century, by combining high quality academic and

public activities with intense dissemination of basic information. This applies in specific ways to the academic community and also to the wider public.

Unfortunately, the most powerful media are still controlled by the old/new power centres and are intensely promoting their financial and/or political interests, and are therefore not open to the free, tolerant and qualified public discussion of these issues. Instead, they are generally following the materialistic worldview, usually reduced to vulgar consumerism and hedonism, which is practically identical to, but more sophisticated than the earlier communist propaganda. Similar situation is with the public education, where curricula still reflect strong influence of the old mentality. So one has to find the new channels of communication!

When it comes to the publication of texts on the science-religion relations, the methodological comments made earlier, concerning the need to avoid narrow professional boundaries and to reach beyond the limits of separate disciplines, apply here as well. These texts should also be understood by a wider non-specialist population, if we want to enable the future dialogue. But, it will require courage and determination to give up producing another research paper in one's own field, but instead to risk, for the sake of this dialogue, to enter into a «foreign territory»! And at the same time this paper will not contribute to the publication list needed for one's professional promotion. This is the price to be paid for the interdisciplinarity, and it could be pretty high for the young scientists.

It may be surprising to the English speaking community, but in spite of the universal spread of English, it is still necessary to provide sufficient information (via books, journals, Internet, etc.) in the local languages, especially in post-totalitarian societies where the lack of such information was imposed for decades. Though we emphasize the key role of the elite intellectuals in our Study Group, our ultimate goal must be to make this wealth of ideas and spiritual experiences available as widely as possible. And this will obviously not be possible without opening to the treasures of literatures in other languages, in the first place to the basic texts (books and articles) in the wider field of science and spirituality, specifically science and religion. This would require a program of systematic translations of original texts, mostly from English, but also from other languages.

Overcoming all these obstacles will require patience, humility, tolerance and determination. And, obviously, a lot of time!

4.4 Prospects for the future

It is very difficult for someone without personal experience with the totalitarian system to fully understand how quickly it destroys academic institutions (as well as other structures in a society!), how deeply it distorts the mentality and ethics of most people (including those fighting against it!), and how perversely it misuses science in the form of scientism to achieve absolute power in the society.

In fact, the destruction of the middle class was by far the worst and longest lasting damage resulting from the Communist period. Because this is an unexpected and new social phenomenon it will require careful analysis and a long term «therapy», but we still have to find the method upon which to base this «therapy». I believe that in this process, in the spiritual renewal of our societies, the an essential step will be *(re)introduction and affirmation of a value system based on Christian principles*, just as the (moral) destruction of the academic community (and the middle class in general) started with and was based on the

suppression of exactly these values.

Reintegration and revitalization of the intellectual communities in the post-totalitarian societies will require elimination of all fundamentalisms and their intolerance, all divisions and animosities, and the establishment of a real and fruitful dialogue of the two great modes of human spirituality and quest for truth – science and religion.

1 See e.g. Niels Bohr: *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge UP, 1961); or Werner Heisenberg: *Physik und Philosophie* (Verlag Ullstein, 1977); The standard text is Max Jammer: *The Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics* (Wiley, 1974).

2 Earlier discussions of this problem were presented in M. Sunjic: «*Scientism*» *against science in a socialist regime* (Conference «Theology and Science in Conversation in the Changing Contexts of Central and Eastern Europe» , Bratislava, 31 January – 2 February, 2003), and in M. Sunjic: *Science-Religion Dialogue and the Recovery of Intellectual Elites in Post-totalitarian Societies* (International Symposium “Religion and European Integration – Religion as a Factor of Stability in South Eastern Europe”, Maribor, 6-8 October, 2005).

3 This radical viewpoint can be found e.g. in P.W. Atkins: *Nature's Imagination: The Frontiers of Scientific Vision*, ed. by J. Cornwell (Oxford U.P., 1995), or in Richard Dawkins: *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (Norton, New York, 1986).

4 Pope John Paul II: *Encyclical letter Fides et Ratio* (Vatican, 1998)

5 M. Sunjic: *Higher Education in Croatia: Unfinished Reform*, International Higher Education 26, p. 6-8 (2001)

6 See e.g. J.P. Matlary: *Redefining the Family in Western Politics: Political Strategies*, presented at the Conference «Family in Europe», Rome, 2004.

7 See e.g. Karl Popper: *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (3rd English edition, Hutchinson, 1972), or the books by John Ziman: *An introduction to science studies*. (Cambridge UP, 1974) and *Real science: What it is, and what it means* (Cambridge UP, 2000). One can also quote many famous scientists, like the physicist Richard Feynman, who in his book *The Meaning of it All: Thoughts of a Citizen Scientist* (Addison-Wesley, 1998) emphasizes the limited power of scientific research.

8 G.F.R. Ellis: *The Science and Religion Dialogue: Where it Stands Today and why it Matters*, Metanexus, Templeton Prize Lecture 2004

9 C.P. Snow: *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge U.P., 1959); C.P. Snow: *The Two Cultures and a Second Look. An Expanded Version of the Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge U.P., 1964)