



New Horizons for Science and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe

The Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion University of Oxford

Project information

Project title: Religion and Science – Priests as University Professors and Rectors

Project leader: doc. dr. sc. Ana Biočić

Executive summary: We intend to stimulate a better understanding of the relationship between the Catholic faith and science through the questions which thematize: a) The role of religion in the historical development of science b) How the history of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) influenced views on science and religion. The main research question is how religion influenced the development of science at the University of Zagreb. We will find the answer by researching the life, activities, and scientific work of the priests' rectors of the University. By an interdisciplinary approach (history, theology, and philosophy) we will research whether and if so in what way the elected rectors of the University of Zagreb, and professors of the (Catholic) Faculty of Theology, who were also priests, improved and contributed to the development of science. The research focus will also be devoted to the education of rectors within the multicultural and multinational Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, later the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, respectively Yugoslavia. In this respect, new perspectives of research within the CEE region will be opened. The many activities of the project will include a conference, five translations of key works into leading regional languages, conference proceedings, and an exhibition. These activities will help in creating a new generation of scholars and co-operative networks which will transform the future research in the region.

Project description: We will research the activity of sixteen rectors who were professors at the Faculty of Theology from the foundation of the University to the Second World War, after which, because of political circumstances, the professors from the Faculty of Theology were no longer elected to the post of rectors of the University. We will study their contribution to the development of the scientific field they were primarily engaged through educational and scientific work, but also to the contribution of the development of science in general through their overall public activity. The focus of research is directed at the influence of religious and theological attitudes of this group, on their scientific progressiveness, with and dialogue relationship with science, to answer the basic research question whether and if so in what form religion influenced

the development of science, as well as was it a matter of fact that the presence of Catholic priests in certain occasions aggravated the dialogue between religion and science. The project is important because the research of this sort has not yet been carried out in Croatia, and since a country which was a part of greater national communities is in question, the research would lead to further comparative studies. The project includes a comparison of different perspectives – historical, theological, and philosophical – which contributes to the quality of research. The research will be based on the sources stored in libraries, the Archive of the Catholic Faculty of Theology, and the Archive of the University of Zagreb. The answers to the research questions will be found through detailed research of the Schedule of Lectures, which will answer a question in what measure they were on the path of the development of science. Research of the available periodicals and published works will determine in what measure they followed the development of science and contributed to it. Through prosopography, we will consider in what way have the education and social circumstances influenced the attitudes of the individuals in question, but also how religion specifically in the case of rectors of the University and priests influenced their comprehension of science and its development. In the first year, the research group will carry out detailed research of sources and literature. It will be based on its identification, after which a close reading of the sources will follow to answer the mentioned research questions. In the middle of the second year, the research group will finish its studies and present its results at a scientific meeting. The result of the research will be a symposium which will demonstrate the results of the research group with the invitation for participation to foreign researchers (from Slovenia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Hungary and Austria) to fit the researched within a wider context and compare it with the situation in neighboring countries. The results of the symposium are planned to be brought together and published in the form of conference proceedings in English. Comparative studies would be relevant on the international scope. At the end of the second research year, we would organize an exhibition at our parent institution to popularize science. Through the media, we would invite the wider public to visit the exhibition. The contribution is expected for the wider academic community through research of the history of the parent Faculty and University, but also to open a topic that is not represented in the Croatian scientific community – the influence of religion on the development of science. We hope to encourage further research of a wider frame on the area of central and eastern Europe.

Budget Narrative: The expenses would be related to the realization of the project's results. In the first year, the research team would focus their efforts on researching and analyzing sources. Thus, part of the funds would be spent on literature and periodicals. The scientific meeting would take place in the first half of the second year. Besides the research team, we would invite researchers from abroad to participate in the scientific meeting. For the organization of the scientific meeting, we would use the premises of our parent institution, hence, we are left with the expenses related to the catering, media coverage and expenses required for the production of printed materials (posters, programs, and books of abstracts) such as graphic design and printing. In the second half of the second year, along with the continuation of our research, we would work on the publication of the conference proceedings. Since it would be published in English, we would need to cover the expenses required for the translation. Costs related to the publication of research carried out by the project team including conference proceedings and translations in English, publisher's costs, printing costs. At the very end of the second year, we plan to organize an exhibition for the popularization of science. The expenses would cover the opening of the exhibition and media coverage, as well as communications expenses related to the printing and advertising/publicity.

Results: outputs: A scientific meeting on an international scale is expected to take place in the second year of research. At the meeting, the research results would be presented and foreign experts would be invited to join in which would stimulate dialogue and further cooperation in comparative studies. The papers presented at the meeting would be edited and published within

the conference proceedings in English. At the end of the research project (in the final months) we would work on the popularization of science through an exhibition accessible to the public. The aim is to display pictures, books, tables of lectures and by doing so stimulate the interest of the wider public for this topic.

Results: At an academic level we expect to contribute to a better understanding of the influence of theology, more specifically the professors of theology, on the development of science, not only in the theological sphere but broader, for instance on law and philosophy. We would determine in what way the priest's rector on the state University helped with the expansion and development of science with their public work, not only scientific, which would enable us to obtain the answer to our main research question how religion throughout history had an impact on the development of science. The public contribution would be to acquaint the wider public with the historical role of priests in the development of science through the development of the University and scientific work through an exhibition. Promotion of international cooperation and perspective for further research within the CEE-region.

Longer term plans in relation to the project: In the long term, the project could be of use to the research group by opening new research questions and topics. A better understanding of the activity of the professors from their institution will use as a valuable tool for measuring the influence of theology on society, but also offer an opportunity for better understanding the role of a parent institution on the historical development of science. It will open the opportunity of dialogue with other theological faculties and researchers of versatile profiles on this topic. The opportunity of comparative studies which will give and insight into the transfer of ideas on an international scene, respectively within the CEE region. The project will increase the competitiveness of the research group. The topic which we expect to process afterward is the comprehension of the relationship between religion and science in the region of CEE which divided history in the sense of communist heritage. The continuation of the research would chronologically and thematically follow up this projected research.

Project team:

Doc. dr. sc. Ana Biočić

- organization of the exhibition
- editorial work on the conference proceedings
- organization of a symposium and participation on the symposium

prof. dr. sc. Slavko Slišković

- organization of the symposium
- participation on the symposium

Izv. prof. dr. sc. Danijel Tolvajčić

- organization of the symposium

- participation on the symposium

Izv. prof. dr. sc. Marija Pehar

- organization of the exhibition

- participation on the symposium

Doc. dr. sc. Iva Mršić Felbar

- editorial work on the conference proceedings

- participation on the symposium