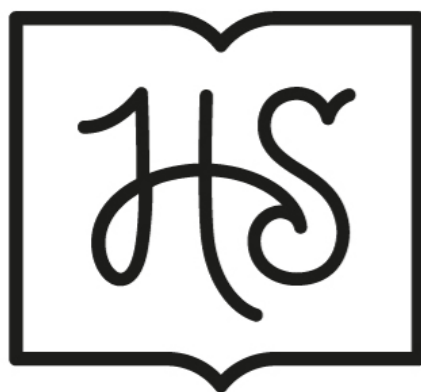


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# Transformation of Philosophy from Marxism to Theology in the educational system of Yugoslavia: The Case of Montenegro

Vucina ZORIC

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## ABSTRACT

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### *Transformation of Philosophy from Marxism to Theology in the educational system of Yugoslavia: The Case of Montenegro*

This paper presents and analyses the process of constitution and operation of the Department of Philosophy arising from the transformation of the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management at the University of Montenegro. The mentioned topic of the research was selected as a representative example of the official Yugoslav ideology impact on, as well as like a paradigmatic indicator of the then significantly totalitarian society in the field of education. The research focus was to consider: social and political circumstances in which the undisputed power of the Communist Party governed the state and almost all areas of education; the influence of ideology at those times on the establishment and operation of the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management at the University of Montenegro; and the complex process of its conversion into the Department of Philosophy. The final part of the paper is devoted to the analysis of certain peculiarities and difficulties in the ongoing work of the Department of Philosophy, with the possible development trends and challenges faced by the philosophy as the school teaching subject in secondary schools and universities in Montenegro.

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## Introduction

In the twentieth century, there were states and societies that could be described as totalitarian in various degrees and forms. After the World War II, Yugoslavia was a specific federal union, which, in the course of its existence (1945-1991), had many characteristics of a totalitarian regime. That was reflected mainly and mostly through the then ideology predominance in almost all aspects of life and work, which was created and directed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia – CPY (since 1952 called League of Communists of Yugoslavia - LCY). As expected, in Yugoslavia, therefore in the Republic of Montenegro as

one of its members too, the communist ideology which is grounded in Marxism was most visible in the field of education.

This paper also presents and analyses the process of constitution and operation of the Department of Philosophy arising from the process of transformation of the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management at the University of Montenegro. This process has been subject to a few relevant (Vukicevic 1998) or side (Delibasic 2003) research projects in the past, and its wider educational, political and social context in Montenegro, as well as in Yugoslavia and its republics, has recently been the research interest of rare and mostly the local historians of pedagogy (Medves 2015, pp. 14-41; Miovska-Spaseva 2015, pp. 114-128; Radeka Batinic 2015, pp. 42-63; Susnjara 2015, pp. 78-94; Vujusic-Zivkovic 2015, pp. 64-77; Zoric 2015, pp. 96 -112). The topic of the current study was selected as a representative example of the impact of Yugoslav official ideology as well as a paradigmatic indicator of the then significantly totalitarian society in the field of education. The research focus was to consider: the socio-political circumstances in which the undisputed power of the CPY governed the state and almost all areas of education; the influence of ideology of those times on the establishment and operation of the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management at the University of Montenegro; and the complex process of its conversion into the Department of Philosophy. The final part of this research outlines and analyses some specific characteristics and difficulties in the ongoing operation of the Department of Philosophy, with the possible development trends and challenges that will be encountered by philosophy as the school teaching subject in high schools and at the universities in Montenegro.

### **Socio-political context**

If compared to the period before the World War I, Yugoslav socialist regime introduced numerous changes and led to different political and economic effects and governance. A number of novelties in the joint state and its Republics, in the political, ideological, economic, social and other areas, had their reflection also on education and formation of a new view on the world and life. Although the Communist-Marxist ideology had humanistic orientation in its numerous segments, while especially in its goals (equality, social justice, brotherhood and unity among the people, free of charge and equal access to education and health care, etc.), in Yugoslavia, in many areas of life, it had totalitarian character through its absolute predominance and power in the then culture, education, philosophy, science and art.

There was no alternative, no possibility of critical thought and reconsideration. Moreover, in accordance with attitudes of the League of Communists, a teacher in the educational process could not interpret any other ideology except the ideology of the League of Communists, and it was a matter of professional responsibility (Bogavac 1973). All the important decisions were made at the top of the League of Communists and the Federal State, and the others were forced to implement them. The ideology of those times was largely bureaucratic and centralized, even though the Republics had a certain degree of decentralization mainly related

to the implementation of tasks assigned by the Party and the Federal Government level. The Republic of Montenegro had to fit into the ruling Marxist ideology in Yugoslavia in all fields, including also its observance and elaboration in the area of education.

One of the significant milestones in terms of redefining the ideology and educational policy was the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the League of Communists at which, among other things, it was concluded that, in the time to come, more attention and consideration should be paid to the necessity of harmonization of both social interests with personal ones and higher-level goals of socialism with everyday needs of each individual (*VII kongres Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* 1958). The dominantly collectivist concept existing at that time, in which the individual was practically not present, began to change. Along with some other factors, such as political and ideological conflict with the Soviet Union and the new interpretation of Marxism, the turning point in that direction was also the concept of self-managing socialism that became an experiment, dominant concept and specific Yugoslav version of the development of Marxist ideas. Self-management was a herald and prerequisite of the possibility of different views of reality and changes in educational, philosophical and scientific concepts. However, in the field of philosophy and sociology such a possibility did not become a reality for a long time. At the Bled Congress of philosophers in 1960, Yugoslav philosophy tried to cease to be a servant to politics and to allow independent development of sociology, but it was followed by a counterattack of the state ideology, where Marxism was (mis)used as an excuse to neutralize critical thinking (Ljubovic 2006, p. 260). This resulted in the persecution of intellectuals and magazines that represented critical thinking, especially of those from Belgrade and Ljubljana University. "At schools and universities, sociology was replaced by Marxism entailing all the characteristics of the official doctrine" (Ibid.). At that time, philosophy had the same fate as a teaching subject, and the initiative of establishing the departments of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management at universities was enforced.

### **Establishing the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management**

*Pedagogical Academy* was founded as the Pedagogical College in Niksic in 1963, and in 1977, it was transformed into the *Teaching Faculty*, which in 1988 was renamed and became the *Faculty of Philosophy* (University of Montenegro, founded in 1974). The original conversion into the Teaching Faculty was the result of monitoring the needs and trends in both the society and the state, as well as of the reforms in the education system, as it was believed that the education of all the teachers should be raised to the faculty degree. In addition to the existing departments delivering two-year studies, two more departments delivering four-year studies were established: Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management and the Department of Fundamentals of Technology and Manufacturing Work (Kilibarda 1999, p. 107). They practically enabled the transformation from the Pedagogical College to the Faculty.

In 1976, Professor of Sociology at the *Pedagogical Academy* in Niksic, Slobodan Vukicevic, was commissioned to write a detailed study for the establishment of the Department of

Marxism and Socialist Self-Management. By his own words, he accepted the task in the hope that he would take an advantage of the newly created situation for the establishment of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology, so he put Marxism within the framework of philosophy, sociology and political economy, where, in his opinion, it belonged (Vukicevic 1998, p. 143). He wrote *The Detailed Study for the Establishment of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology*, originating it from the determinations of the League of Communists, i.e. that the educational system should be based entirely on the basis of the Marxist view of the world, practice of socialist self-management in the country and connection to the associated labor, and the quotes of the leaders of the League of Communists as well as adopted documents to Congress were mentioned (*Elaborat za osnivanje Odsjeka za filozofiju i sociologiju* 1976). The original idea was to educate future teachers of Marxism as well as teachers of philosophy and sociology - the shortage which was felt in the high schools - at the Department of Philosophy and Sociology. It was estimated "that the future personnel for the realization of the ideas of Marxist education should gain wider philosophical, sociological, psychological and pedagogical knowledge, therefore it was proposed to establish the Department of Philosophy and Sociology in order to train the educators of wider profile, not only of Marxism and socialist self-management" (Delibasic 2003, p. 49). It was mentioned that departments of Philosophy and Sociology existed in all the Republics and Provinces in Yugoslavia and that they were more or less adapted to the needs of the society and that the proposed concept, though original and specific, was in accordance with the overall Montenegrin circumstances, but "the competent bodies of the Republic did not want to accept *The Detailed Study of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology*, but only about the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management" (Vukicevic 1998, pp. 148-149). Marxism was considered to be the widest possible platform for philosophical and sociological education (Delibasic 2003, p. 51). Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management started its work in academic year 1977-78. From the curriculum we can see that only some fundamental philosophical disciplines, such as the History of Philosophy and Logic with the General Methodology, Aesthetics, and Ethics were studied, sociological (General Sociology), as well as those which were predominantly Marxist (History of Marxism; Modern Philosophy and Modern Marxism, History of the Labor Movement and Socialist Revolution in Yugoslavia; Contemporary International Labor Movement), alongside such disciplines as Political Science, Economics, Pedagogy, Psychology, and so on (Vukicevic 1998, p. 147). To a significant extent, Marxism as the state ideology and the study programme were not exclusively and fully in line with the original Marxist ideas, but they were greatly changed with the aim of being exploited by the official ideology and regime of the specific state union such as Yugoslavia.

The Department for Marxism and Socialist Self-management enrolled a great number of students at the beginning of its work, almost an equal number of full-time and part-time students, however, with time, the number of students decreased as illustrated by the following table.



**Table 1. The ratio of the number of students who were enrolled and graduated from the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management at the Teaching Faculty of the University of Montenegro.** (*Arhiv Odsjeka za marksizam i socijalisticko samoupravljanje* 2015)

School year	Department of Marxism and socialist self-management			
	Enrolled			Graduated
	full time	extramural	$\Sigma$	$\Sigma$ ( full time + extramural)
77/78	53	63	116	-----
78/79	80	75	155	-----
79/80	106	?	$? \geq 106$	-----
80/81	38	30	68	-----
81/82	43	41	84	10 (7+3)
82/83	29	36	65	15 (10+5)
83/84	25	24	49	27 (27+0)
84/85	33	8	42	25 (25+0)
85/86	30	16	46	12 (10+2)
86/87	?	?	?	8 (8+0)
87/88	?	?	?	11 (9+2)

Given the fact that Marxism and socialist self-management was the state ideology in the long run and that, at that time, Montenegro officially needed more than 150 teachers of the teaching subject, there was great interest for the enrollment at that study programme especially in the beginning. Apart from high school-leavers, there were many teachers having secondary or two-year post secondary education who wanted to acquire higher education, and thus more secure jobs, as well as those who were registered as unemployed at the Employment Bureau and had some education and having that profile (Delibasic 2003, pp. 52-53). However, "the estimate, at the beginning of the Faculty establishment process, that the staff educated at the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management [...] was to be deficient for many years proved to be unrealistic" (Ibid., p. 13). In fact, according to the republics' regulations of that time, other experts such as philosophers, sociologists, historians, lawyers, etc. could teach Marxism and Socialist Self-Management as a teaching subject also, and the number of people interested in studying at the Department rapidly declined (Table 1), what, among other things, led to its transformation into the Department of Philosophy and Sociology. This is the example of the obvious confusion and lack of coordination of the educational policy at the national level.

### **The transformation into the Department of Philosophy and Sociology**

Another indication that in the course of the 1970s the changes in the society and in the state of Yugoslavia were developing faster than the strength of ideological directives, educational

policies, and legislation in the field was the increasingly critical and self-critical awareness within the Marxist-oriented intellectual elite. For example, at the time Goricar J. emphasized that „if the erosion of Marxism at the university during the past few years was mentioned as something negative, it is necessary to remind of the fact that in that same period at our universities there was the process of erosion of (Marxist) dogmatism - which was certainly positive." (Goricar 1975, pp. 221-222). Marxism experienced a deep crisis at that time at the universities, and it largely happened due to its narrow-mindedness and imperative and vague content. Moreover, there was a general view that "at our universities Marxism was caused great damage as that teaching subject degenerate into a kind of Religious Education" (Ibid., pp. 224). In this way, its detachment from the real life and real human needs was criticized.

Given the fact that the situation at the Teaching Faculty of the University of Montenegro was unsustainable due to many reasons (due to the attitudes of the executives in LCY; the general trend of embracing the achievements of sciences in general, especially the philosophical, sociological, psychological and pedagogical knowledge, not only the modern Marxist concepts, aspirations for educating personnel of a wider profile, poor assessment of the required number of teachers of Marxism, lower interest in the study of Marxism, etc.), there was the idea of transformation of the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management into the Department of Philosophy and Sociology with three programmes: philosophy, sociology and Marxism, with the common teaching subjects during the first two years of study, and the specialized ones for the last two years of study (Delibasic 2003, pp. 49-56). However, the decision (*Elaborat o transformaciji Odsjeka za marksizam i socijalisticko samoupravljanje u Odsjek za filosofiju i sociologiju* 1988) was taken on the overall transformation of the Department into the Department of Philosophy /fɪ'lɔsəfɪ/ (not as previously Philosophy /fɪ'lɔzəfɪ/) (though the word is incorrectly spelt in our language, but according to some views, it represents insisting on the φιλοσοφία in ancient Greek language) and sociology (without Marxism as the study programme) in May 1988, and the first students were enrolled in academic year 1988/89. Marxism as a study programme was not present since it had been abolished as a teaching subject in the reformed secondary and higher education schools, which were the reflection and the announcement of the then and future developments in the society, ruling party, and the state of Yugoslavia respectively. Besides, it is interesting to note the introduction of the word Philosophy /fɪ'lɔsəfɪ/, not Philosophy /fɪ'lɔzəfɪ/ in the name of the Department, which can be interpreted as a step backward to its roots, and probably in part to the spiritually, culturally and nationally directed (Slavic-Byzantine-Greek) origin. For the first time and as an optional course at the third year of study the teaching subject Philosophy of Religion was offered (Sijakovic 1990, p. 67).

The conversion into the Department of Philosophy and Sociology and the overall social changes that followed it, made it possible that during the same year (1988) the Teaching Faculty was renamed the Faculty of Philosophy /fɪ'lɔzəfɪ/. Since then, and even today, the inconsistency of the name of the Department of Philosophy /fɪ'lɔsəfɪ/, and the Faculty of

Philosophy /fɪ'lɒzəfi/ seems to be unusual to many, due to the differences in their spelling and pronunciation. However, it is important to note that although the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management was relatively quickly transformed into the Department of Philosophy /fɪ'lɒsəfi/ and Sociology, it did not depart promptly and completely from Marxist ideology. Abandoning the old ideas and habits was for many a slow process; the end of self-managing socialism was looming; there were not enough teachers of philosophy, sociology and other similar teaching subjects, and even fewer ones with new fresh ideas and bold stance. As if the time heralding changes was faster than any change in the awareness and courage of people to support reforms in society, education, science, philosophy and life altogether. However, it became clear that Marxism could not be a substitute for philosophy or sociology. It was obvious that "ideological and political reasons were replaced by the arguments of science and the needs of the society for certain profile of professionals" (Delibasic 2003, p. 57), which was reflected in the lack of teachers of philosophy and sociology.

### **Separation of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology**

Although in the context of Montenegro joint study at the Department of Philosophy and Sociology had many justifications, it became apparent that its division into two Departments was required due to both negative effects of the other studies on the scope and quality of separate study programmes and a fuller philosophical, i. e. sociological education. In the year 1992, the Department was converted into the Department of Philosophy and Department of Sociology. As time went on, in the curriculum of the Department of Philosophy, new (two-semester) teaching subjects appeared, including also some that to one considerable extent referred to the theology, and to another they were related to the historical-political and national issues: *Byzantine philosophy*; and *Philosophy and the Slavs* (not Slovenians!) (Ibid., pp. 60-61). It was not something that would necessarily be considered as either a bad thing or moving out of the scope of philosophy (since philosophy is interested in everything), but it could be only recognized as the tendency of interest or a new concept of partial direction of the Department of Philosophy. It is interesting that, from the moment of establishment of the Department of Philosophy, secondary school graduates with higher achievements started enrolling at the Department unlike before when it had been the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management. The love for philosophy was the prevailing motive for enrolling the studies, rather than earlier easy-to-find employment motives (Ibid., p. 63).

### **The treatment of the teaching subject of philosophy and the tendencies of development at the Department of Philosophy**

Since the seventies of the twentieth century, there was the need for the teaching subjects of philosophy and sociology that were almost abolished in secondary schools, with some of their respective contents incorporated in Marxism and socialist self-management and the rest

dispersed throughout other teaching subjects (Vukicevic 1998, p. 162). Due to the real needs, the importance of philosophy and, since its establishment, of the Department of Philosophy, there was a reaffirmation of teaching philosophy and logic at secondary schools and faculties in Montenegro until the middle of the last decade. Today, in the independent state of Montenegro, the philosophy as the teaching subject is experiencing the same fate as during the era of Marxism and self-managing socialism in Yugoslavia, but not due to the ideological and political reasons, but due to the lack of understanding of the importance of philosophy itself. This teaching subject is not taught at secondary vocational schools, and is only on the high (gymnasium) and secondary art schools' fourth grade curriculum with insufficient 2 hours per week. It has degraded in various ways, and one of them is that at secondary schools teachers can present the contents of ethics and religion of their own choice through the scope of an optional *Civic Education* (Bogojevic 2006, p. 10). Anyway, the teaching subject that has its many qualities and is beneficial for the students, according to everything mentioned above, is very similar to the tight embrace in which philosophy was in the range of the teaching subject Marxism and Socialist Self-Management.

All this, besides other things, leads to a decline in motivation and interest among high school graduates to study philosophy. For example, during the period of four years since 2008 to 2011 27, 25, 29, and 26 students were enrolled at the Department of Philosophy respectively, and the total number of students who graduated in that period was only 16 students out of 50 final year students. The total number of students in all those years was 50, 50, 51, and 107 respectively. During the same four-year period, at the Department of Philosophy, 13 students were attending the master's degree programme and the Doctorate Degree Programme was attended by only one student. Virtually, the Department of Philosophy is in danger of survival. However, although it is possible, it is highly unlikely that Montenegro would have no Department of Philosophy, or – which is perhaps even more paradoxical – that it would have the Faculty of Philosophy without the Department of Philosophy.

Currently, at the Department of Philosophy, such teaching subjects as *Byzantine Philosophy to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century*, *Byzantine Philosophy from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, and *the Philosophy of the Slavs* (since 2012 it is no longer an optional but a specialist course), and *Russian Philosophy* are studied as one-semester teaching subjects (*Nastavni planovi i programi* 2012, pp. 3-4). So, the same teaching subjects have remained with the difference that now they are taught as one-semester teaching subjects. Interest in theological issues and historical-political and national contexts has remained on the same level, and there is no trend for making a change in those teaching subjects. Nevertheless, to a considerable extent it can be talked about shifting the interests of the Department of Philosophy and of philosophy professors, assistant professors and post-graduate students to theology and theology matters (through their work arrangements out of the Faculty of Philosophy, published papers, professional development undertaken at faculties of theology and religion, and alike) induced also by the degradation of philosophy at faculties and secondary schools. Such trend has its end for sure; however, it is a matter of its place and time. That large philosophers' switch to studying theology issues, due to practical life situations, seems to be reasonable, whereas primarily forced to a detriment of

the very philosophy but not as a matter of the philosophers' fault. Although the same is not connoted by theology in terms of philosophical and religious contexts (of the time of Plato, Aristotle, etc.) respectively, there are high relations between them. Ultimately, the controversy of philosophy goes beyond the limits.

### **Conclusion**

Ironically, the Department of Philosophy has stemmed from the Department of Marxism and Socialist Self-Management and, based on certain trends and to an extent, its direction towards, among other things, theological research areas is noticeable – something that would have been unimaginable in the time of Yugoslavia's Montenegro. Naturally, both Marxism and theology have their place within philosophy. Moreover, it cannot be considered negative if philosophy is Marxism and theology oriented to a certain extent unless it is dominant and uncritical.

The undertaken research, even only in the educational context, strived for analyzing social and historical changes in ideology and general comprehension of reality and the view of the world within the society and the state of Yugoslavia – for example, the process of constituting, operating and regarding for the Department of Philosophy in Montenegro. In the time of Yugoslavia, philosophy was forced to be humble in the ideological and totalitarian orientation of the society and the state created according to Marxism dogmas. Nevertheless, it survived the autism of the social system focused only on its own experience and ideas. It was almost banned, abolished, degraded, and expelled from the educational system; however, even nowadays in the entirely different social and political context with reference to the trends of events and the education policy, it does not take a better position in Montenegro.

Poor regard for philosophy as a teaching subject at schools and faculties, followed by the lack of motivation for enrollment at the philosophy studies and a small number of students, as well as by aligning the education policy at the University of Montenegro with the cost-effectiveness of the studies and labor market demands, have raise a question of survival of the only Department of Philosophy in Montenegro. Is it possible to have a faculty of philosophy and a university without philosophy integrated in their respective curricula? Anyway, much can be done in the field; however, it will be interesting and important to witness the destiny of the Department of Philosophy that must survive, progress and strengthen further because it deserves that due to both its importance and eminent professors who have sustained hard times of philosophy degradation and its general significance and mission.

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