

Political Correctness – A New Secular Religion

Religion and secularization are two realities that are generally opposed to each other. Religion refers to the eternal, while *saeculum* refers to the earthly and temporal. Traditional religion opposes secularization in that it refers to the stable connection between man and divinity, which regulates almost all aspects of life, while secularization refers to the emphasis that contemporary man puts on the things of this age, on the things of the world and exalts them in value, assigning them almost a perennial value, refers to the process of renouncing religion in favor of an autonomous existence, separated from God.

The association of the two terms: religion and secularization, in the phrase “secular religions” does not mean anything else than those religious forms that are born in Western societies following the process of secularization of society, even if starting from the secular, that is, from a reality which a classical religious man does not perceive as religious. They represent nothing more than anomalies of religiosity for a traditionally religious society.

I came across the phrase “new secular religions” in Mr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Nicu Gavriluță, professor of sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences and former dean of this faculty. He shows that both secular and authentic religions are part of the religious reality of our days, of our social life, because

“there cannot be in the modern world secularization without desecularization, and vice versa. Both are sides of a coin called life. If at a given historical moment secularization dominates socially, then desecularization appears as a possible, alternative world”

Professor Nicu Gavriluță sees this process in the hermeneutic key offered by the great Romanian historian of religions Mircea Eliade, who considered that in modern societies, that is, when they have reached a certain level of development, there is a tendency to forget God, to stop referring to Him, atheists and religious indifferences making a new “death of God” possible. Despite this regression of the religious phenomenon, as the Romanian scholar shows, religion and myth still do not die, but metamorphose, retreating

“to the deep level of the ocean of dreams, desires, nostalgia and symbols found in our unconscious (personal or collective). From there it continues to work effectively, even in the life of the most secularized man. At the limit, authentically religious myths and ideas can camouflage even in their deepest reverse: secular religions”.

Indeed, the level of deep secularization in certain societies has been reached in the West, but despite this, the “performance” of establishing a totally secularized society has not been achieved, at most one can speak of ultra-secularized societies, as Teodor Baconschi calls them, in which “The churches have become charitable NGOs, the privatization of religious feeling is almost total, the biotronic man and the robotic economy are coming, with a lot of free time and (probably) guaranteed universal income, possibly in Bitcoin”.

Regarding the new secular religions, Professor Nicu Gavriluță identifies some of them: political correctness, new technologies and transhumanism. Of these, we will only refer to political correctness seen in a religious key, as one of the new secular religions of the secularized contemporary man.

Analyzing the origins of political correctness, Nicu Gavriluță shows that they are still disputed and controversial. There is a theory that political correctness has its origins in Communist China under Mao Zedong, which formalized “the fight against these incorrect ideas and the education of members in the correct Party line”. A similar phrase: “politically correct

perspective” will appear in Lev Trotsky, so that in the 1930s the term “politically correct” became a commonplace of the Soviet press. As such, the history of this phrase indicates its Maoist-Stalinist origin and its evolution, as it would be adopted by the American and European left, with certain negative and self-critical connotations.

Alexandru Gabor wondered if there is a set of “politically correct” ideologies, and he also answered that no one knows the answer to this question, not even approximately, from which we deduce that there is still no unanimity regarding this hot topic on the global social agenda today. “We are prisoners of a systematic confusion regarding the isms selected under the umbrella of political correctness” - he said - and he showed that under the umbrella of political correctness are included realities such as multiculturalism, feminism, environmentalism and post-colonial studies. Trying to reduce these currents of ideas to just a few notions seems a contradiction in terms, because political correctness has abolished the idea of a canon, of something formulated once and for all, postulating a fundamental relativism in the social and human sciences. But in America and Western Europe this political doctrine has gone viral, infecting the academic environment and imposing a guide of conduct, first of all university, and from there, through the intellectual elite, it pours like an incandescent lava burning the minds of those who will be trainers of opinion in society or will occupy key positions in the social structure. From this level of influence, the representatives of political correctness will seek to impose its principles, apparently correct and common sense, but with a high potential generator of great social conflicts in the future. This is because, according to the model of class struggle in socialism and communism, which pits some social classes against others, and in this case society is fragmented, excessively polarized, on other criteria, but on the same principle, and some of its fractions are mobilized against others. And in this case, the formerly persecuted become persecutors.

There have already been major criticisms of political correctness, significant confrontations between supporters and detractors of this social doctrine. One of them is the British historian Paul Johnson, who described political correctness as “an infection of the mind”, “one of

the greatest dangers to intellectuality in the Western academic world”. He regards political correctness as a pathology of the mind that must be cured immediately. British history shows that the adherents of political correctness are the half-educated, the pseudo-intellectuals, the mediocre academic students, the untalented, who “contrary to their own inabilities, seek revenge on those who are superior to them”. In fact, this new social doctrine stands against meritocracy and promotes dilettantism and mediocrity in the name of apparent justice and so-called moral reparation for past abuses.

In our country, Gabriel Liiceanu, starting from a quote by Pascal from *Cugetări*, interprets political correctness as a “contemporary human disorder”, and considers it to be a perverse ideology that twists people’s minds, like communism - the mother ideology. By deliberately confusing the rational with the passionate, political correctness

“makes eminently unreasonable realities seem reasonable [...] by a strange and magical power of fascination and perversion of naturalness and normality. Political correctness uses the media to impose its own and unique truth on everyone. By what? By dictation, intimidation, threat and, at the limit, violence”.

G. Liiceanu also made a very pertinent remark, observing the ubiquitous and non-institutionalized presence of political correctness, its followers not having an official public presence, as their predecessors had - the communist activists. Adherents of political correctness are spread through universities, in newspaper editorial offices or through television, that is, precisely where a greater manipulation of the population can be achieved, in the hot spots of the formation of public opinion.

Martin S. Martin, reconsidering an earlier position, sees political correctness as a social phenomenon, aimed at social control of the population, a tool of public intimidation “by inducing a sense of guilt among the white, Christian and heterosexual population”. The statement has a large dose of truth, because there is a discrimination against the white population, belonging to traditional Christianity and heterosexual,

as a kind of compensation for the discrimination caused in the past by this very population. It is a kind of backlash of the former colonies against the former colonial powers that subjugated them, of the periphery against the center and a sense of guilt induced by those who wronged the Jews (the Nazi regime), the blacks (the political regimes in the US or that of South Africa - apartheid), on homosexuals, these being condemned by Christian morality. But the problem is different: if these discriminations happened in a West that got rich at the expense of peoples it exploited or a black population kept in slavery for many centuries, the West must not now export this feeling of culpability in a world that has not benefited from the injustices committed.

Another negative consequence of political correctness was emphasized by the writer Radu Jørgensen when he draws attention to the minimization of real competition, positive discrimination taking the place of meritocracy, but it is known that social progress was produced precisely by the freedom of expression of valuable people, those who made an important contribution to the evolution of society, those who pushed knowledge further in all fields. This is the only way to explain the evolution of Western societies, in which the competition of values was at the forefront. That is why the current refusal to continue promoting meritocracy cannot be explained. The leveling of values and their annulment was done only by socialist societies and it was seen with its consequences, and now the neo-Marxist movements are repeating the mistake of their predecessors. According to Radu Jørgensen, political correctness has become “a social pathology”, which by canceling competition and other aspects,

“profoundly affects the social mentality of new generations of pupils and students in the USA. The favorite target of political correctness is the classical, Christian view of education and the transmission of values. Basic concepts of Western culture are stigmatized and disavowed. Two of these relate to elitism and meritocracy”.

These concepts, which in the past were positive and desirable, today in the West represent just as many accusations, incriminating those to whom they are attributed, through a change of mentality that is socially self-destructive. Currently there are other criteria for social division, such as those related to: race, ethnicity, social condition, physical or mental handicap, etc., but these were not of any interest in the past. In the American universities, for example, we are witnessing the reversal of normality, meritocracy being replaced by positive discrimination of the minority, excluded, marginal. In this way, the society will enter an accentuated process of self-destruction.

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