

Secularism, a means of education for coexistence

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

27th January 2008

In the most economically advanced countries today, while the State is becoming increasingly “lighter” in economic terms and reducing the supply of social services — in order also to adapt the cost of social services to the market standard consistent with production (as in the case of the low social spending of emerging economies) — it is becoming increasingly concerned with matters of ethics and bioethics, with a plethora of laws on these areas (abortion, IVF treatment, stem cell research, euthanasia, infibulation, etc.) and in personal areas, such as domestic partnerships, divorce, separation, etc.).

In this difficult period for capitalist accumulation, characterized by a mature capitalist structure and by the entry onto the market of aggressive new producers, the State is developing one of its classic functions, that of policeman, and is contributing to the control of the labour market and the mechanisms of social production that are necessary to the creation of profit. As it is unable to depress the role of the tertiary sector involved in the provision of services over a certain limit — a sector which also produces profit for capital — it is laying down regulations to manage personal matters and govern the changing social composition of the workforce.

The nature of the workforce at the end of the last century and the structure of wages had created a demographic balance which in the West was characterized by a low birth rate, so as to maintain standards of living that were compatible with the available income, the standard of which was relatively high. Part of these measures on the social level were a demographic policy that used income, abortion and contraception as instruments of demographic planning. What upset this situation, necessitating further intervention was the explosion of the women’s movement, which provoked profound changes not only to their individual social role, but also to the collective role of men and women. This led to changes with regard to the family, such as divorce and civil unions, which is simply the creation of a new type of legal relationship to enable the law and the State to intervene in relationships that would otherwise go unnoticed.

The tendency to juridicize personal relationships be they homosexual or heterosexual recognizes and regulates this change at the same time, using means which are typical of illuminated reformism.

The relentless waves of migration, a result of the capital’s strategic decisions on the management of the labour market, but also of wider economic and social phenomena, have widened and

changed the spectrum of problems and thus the policing function of the State in the so-called mature capitalist countries has grown through the adoption of an adequate instrumental apparatus of laws.

And where the State was and is unable to produce these laws, capital itself has done so through the market.

Jurists (legal experts) — even the most traditional — are among the first to admit these days that it is the market and the professional corporations (doctors, biologists, pharmaceutical companies, etc.) who produce laws and enforce them much more efficiently than the State, without the use of any Parliament. It is a phenomenon often known as the *Lex Mercatoria*, or Law Merchant.

We thus see the strengthening of:

- **juridical pluralism:** the co-existence of several juridical orders (for example, the law of the State, of the mafia, of the market and of religions, which operate over the same territory);
- **regulatory pluralism:** the contemporary enforcement — independently from national or State borders — of regulations enacted by various sources which regulate the same phenomenon (local or regional authorities, States, the EU, international bodies, but also Churches, cultural or ethnic communities, etc.);
- **ethical pluralism:** the search for legal bases (essential elements) which can be shared by all, and act as a common denominator, beyond which lies the relativism of values. In other words, everyone has his or her own values and can cultivate and exercise them.

From this we can see that no one Truth exists, but many truths that coexist; that no one Law exists, but many laws; that no one Company exists, but many companies producing and thriving; that no one Individual exists, but many individuals.

It is a victory for relativism in law, in morals, in economics, in social life and in relationships. The sort of relativism that allows us, for example, to consider equally both monogamous and polygamous couples, heterosexual and same-sex couples. In a situation such as the one described, the secularity of the institutions and of people is an essential element for the management of the current phase (as the development of productive forces and of the contingent economic dynamics).

And here, every political force, every party, and even every religious confession, provides its own version of secularism, in general using an adjective to define and complete it. Secularism therefore become just, true, positive, relative, etc., according to the case.

Looking for a moment at the vision of secularism held by religious confessions (that we anarchist communists identify as *a group of people who believe themselves to be and know they are and who therefore form international agencies, or **businesses** selling sacredness*) and in particular the [Roman] Catholic confession, it is important to remember that for the popes and above all the pop currently reigning, secularism in the Catholic vision is *just* and *positive*, as it is born from Catholic culture (see the numerous Vatican documents on the matter).

For Catholics, secularism comes from the rejection of relativism, as the reigning pontiff often reminds us. There is only one truth, the truth revealed by God, interpreted by the Catholic hierarchy. The relationship with the State and the institutions becomes a matter of adopting Catholic values, tempered by measured tolerance towards the positions of others, towards which

there nonetheless exists a moral sense of superiority on the part of believers (the superiority of Western, Christian and in particular Catholic values).

Laws must be inspired by Catholic values and need be obeyed only if they correspond to religious commandments. Hence the no to divorce and to different forms of legalized civil unions, no to abortion, to contraception, to genetic intervention on embryos, to any sexuality not aimed at procreation, and to euthanasia of any form.

And in order to promote all this: yes to Catholic schools, yes to a Catholic-inspired curriculum at state schools and to religious instruction as part of the curriculum, yes to the financing of Catholic aid programmes and charities, yes to economic aid to Church structures and tax benefits.

This strategy has led to the attack on Law 194/78¹ which, it must be said, has reduced by 60% the use of abortion by Italian citizens, though much remains to be done in the case of immigrant women. Compared to the laws currently in force in a great many other countries, this law has been far more effective in reducing the requests for abortion, and would certainly be even more effective if it were not for the incessant work of deterrence by the Catholic church to the use of contraception and contraceptive methods to encourage responsible motherhood.

The attack on the law – objectively aimed at the rights of women, whose bodies are considered as the holders of a social function, a sort of family and social household appliance – reveals the serious lack of human respect for women and the misogyny of the ecclesiastic hierarchy and the body of the Catholic Church, its profoundly unhealthy vision of love and good, aimed at a fantastic conception of man, the idea of God.

Feelings made up of closeness, physicality, sexuality and solidity between two people is replaced with the alienated love for an abstract God, the product of the anguish of human beings.

But the attack on Law 194/78 has its roots in fortuitous political needs, dictated by the need for a strategy aimed at building a fundamentalist, neo-conservative political and social bloc which can hold together a political alliance whose objective is to re-establish social and productive, not to mention political, relations of an authoritarian nature, which in turn can provide greater support for capitalist accumulation.

And it is these designs, above all, that we must unmask and combat by accepting the principle of secularism without adjectives as *a means of education for coexistence*.

In the anarchist communist concept, the society that we want to build is dynamic, in continual evolution and change, a society that accepts diversity as a value, a society that – unlike the Marxist variety – has no truth that it wants to impose, not even atheism, a society that aims to achieve complete happiness on earth, through equality, including gender equality, and an end to exploitation of one man by another and freedom from wage slavery.

¹ The law on abortion.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici
Secularism, a means of education for coexistence
27th January 2008

Retrieved on 29th October 2021 from www.anarkismo.net

theanarchistlibrary.org