

Historical and Theological Sources of Secularism and Secularisation

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Abstract: This article proposes a new way of approaching the roots of secularism and its outcome that is secularization. The fact that this phenomenon arises precisely in a Christian world, which ultimately leads to a complete emancipation of that what is worldly toward religion, *profanum* toward *sacrum*, is astonishing. The process of European secularism has its beginning in the 11th century, when the so-called dispute about reason was initiated resulting, in the next epochs of human history, in an intensifying departure from transcendence in favour of a secular interpretation of reality. What ensued is a fading away of the classical understanding of truth as a “compatibility of entities with intellect” (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*), that is compatibility of understanding and reality, replacing understanding with one’s own crafting of reality, making of a new society. An examination of the history of the European secularization can contribute to a rise of a new humanism, which rests upon reasonableness that originates at the deepest basis of the Logos.

Keywords: secularism, secularization, theology, reason, truth, transcendence, Logos

Modern times are ever more strongly marked by the phenomenon of secularism and its fruit which is secularization (Lat. *saecularis* = secular; *saeculum* = world, century). The phenomenon is difficult to define unambiguously and precisely since there are many different approaches and hypotheses concerning the subject. The terms “secularism” and “secularization” are therefore not easy to define, because they carry different contents that at the same time take on different emphases. Secularism may be most generally defined as an attitude of the soul which excludes a religious interpretation of reality, and in particular favours the worldview without religion and the Church. It is a reduction of everything to the world with a simultaneous rejection of religion, faith and the Church, whereas secularisation – “laicity” is conceived of as an attitude promoting the fundamental assumption of the ideology of secularism which is “life without God.” Hence, one talks of a “laicised society” or of a “lay culture,” a “lay world.” An example may be the secularisation of culture, which is a social process, where religion is removed from social and individual life and therefore, it is a process of liberating oneself from the influence of the revealed content,¹ of religious awareness and from religious institutions i.e. the Church.

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¹ Ruh, “Säkularität und Säkularismus,” 414–418.

In this study, it is necessary to bring out more precise concepts of secularism and secularization. A specific mine of knowledge will be the concept of the history of theology based on the corresponding history of philosophy. This different way of searching for and defining the phenomena of secularism and secularization will shed new light on these issues. One ray of this light is the fact that European secularism is not a creation of the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries (George Jacob Holyoake; d. 1906), since its signs – and positive ones – were already visible in the theology of the 11th century (Chartres School).

It is known that the two phenomena of secularism and secularization cannot be equated, although this is often done, probably because they share the common feature of being non-religious. Secularism is a certain philosophy of life, an ideology, and even some form of secular humanism. As an ideology, it consciously proposes the rejection of all categories of religiosity and, above all, the rejection of the action of the Transcendent in relation to the world and man, making God the “great Absent One.” Secularism as secular humanism is characterized by the glorification of temporal values and thus the exclusion of the supernatural from human life.

Secularization, on the other hand, is a sociological process occurring in culture from which negative as well as some positive elements can be extracted. It is characterized by a general laicization, a loosening of bonds with religion and a liberation from Church authority and dependence, a break with religious tradition and the sphere of the *sacrum*, as well as driving religion out of social and individual life. Some positive elements of secularization can be seen above all in its critical function with regard to faith and religiosity, which manifests itself in the rationalization of certain theological, religious and cultural concepts and thus helps the Church to free itself from its possible dependencies (such as political ones) and from those elements of religiosity that today seem to be unnecessary taints.

Modern secularisation is marked by four main qualities: autonomy – as a form of man’s pursuit of self-determination and rejection of any dependence on authority; ideologization of science and technology by means of rationalising everything; voluntarism and individualism – where the basis of life is one’s own action; temporalism – as confining oneself to temporality and living in the present moment. These qualities clearly point to an ever more extensive departure from the Christian tradition, the disappearance of the sphere of *sacrum* in individual and social life and removing the Church from public life. Then, secularisation may be understood as “laicisation,” “desacralisation,” “dechristianisation,” as well as “secularism” and “secular humanism.”²

Therefore, while secularisation is conceived, as noted, as a sociological process occurring in culture, and secularism is a certain ideology which liberates man from the guardianship of the Church even to such an extent that it ultimately results in

² Mazanka, “Refleksje o filozoficznych źródłach,” 62.

a complete independence from God, and even to placing oneself in his position. Thus, the ideology of secularism leads to creating “secular humanism,” which is characterized by two fundamental attitudes towards human beings: to limit their universal values to only worldly values, which leads to creating the so-called secularistic ethics, and to exclude all supernaturality and transcendence from human life, starting from man’s fundamental relationship with God and ending with a materialist treatment of human nature, rejecting the existence of the soul. This leads to a gradual depreciation of personal and ecclesial faith, of religious life in general, and ultimately to agnosticism and atheism, and by the same token to “dehumanisation,” to objectifying man by depriving him of metaphysics. Thus, secularism is anti-religious, anti-moral and anti-subjective.

Therefore, the pivotal question that arises is the one of the sources and causes of these contemporary phenomena of secularism and secularization.³ Similarly, just like secularisation and secularism may be understood differently, also the sources of these phenomena are conceived of differently. If secularism was confined to materialism, it would have its roots already in the ancient world. Also, the emergence and development of Greek philosophy, which abandoned mythology in favour of drawing upon reason, clearly indicates the onset of secularisation.⁴ Yet the proper signs of European secularism in the Christian world need to be sought in the 11th century, after the establishment of the School of Chartres, which began the so-called “dispute over reason,” and then in the 14th century, when Marsilius of Padua and William Ockham formulated the programme of emancipation of lay authorities in relation to political and ecclesial authority.⁵ This process was reinforced by the Reformation in the 16th century, drawing in particular upon Ockham. It considered faith to be “a private matter,” and even “pathology,” and thus contributed to creating “scientific” atheism. The sources of secularism also include the ideology of the Enlightenment, which questioned revealed religion, as well as a clear progress of anti-Christian tendencies of the French Revolution. Subsequent sources of secularization were brought by the emergence of modern culture shaped by the philosophy of Cartesius, Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, to natural scientists-mathematicians,⁶ to modern secularisers: Karl Marx, Friedrich William Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud. Secularism also has its further roots in the book of the American theologian Harvey Cox *The Secular City*, which clearly put forward the thesis of secularism: to be free from religion in individual, social and institutional life.⁷ Cox started from the absence of God in today’s society. This was followed by the radical trend of “the death of

³ See, e.g., Stallmann, *Was ist Säkularisierung?*; Lübke, *Säkularisierung*; Taylor, *Ein säkulares Zeitalter*.

⁴ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, 16; Reale, *Historia filozofii starożytniej*, 54.

⁵ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 115.

⁶ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 369–370.

⁷ Ruh, “Säkularität und Säkularismus,” 415.

God” drawing upon Nietzsche. Therefore, cardinal Gerhard L. Müller⁸ rightly asks: “Where is God in a secularised era?”

Looking at the history of Christian theology, one may still differently define and enhance the sources of modern secularism. They are marked by the great figures of philosophy and theology, who introduce revolutionary changes not only in theology but also in the whole social and cultural life. Chronologically, these figures appear in specific historical epochs.⁹ For our subject-matter, the most interesting epochs are the ones since the Early Middle Ages until today. This is the time of the birth and development of European secularism.

1. The Era of the Early Middle Ages

The secularisation of the Early Middle Ages occurred at two levels. On the one hand, it concerned the dispute between the pope and the Caesar about the rule of the whole world, between the Church and lay authorities about the control of society. On the other one, secularisation concerned explaining everything by reason ever more clearly. Since the Church took over the helm not only of philosophy but also of other fields of knowledge, which strove to become more independent by means of a rational way of argumentation.

While in the early ages of Christianity the attempt was rather to defend faith against unbelievers, at the beginning of the Middle Ages this faith started to be justified rationally. The critical significance of human reason was discerned by Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) at the end of the 11th century. In his work *Cur Deus homo*, he justified the truth of the Christian belief of the Incarnation of the Son of God and his vicarious sacrifice of reparation based solely on rational causes. Anselm employed the example of feud as a relationship of faithfulness, violating which involved a commitment to compensate the damage as well as an optional commitment as satisfaction (*satisfactio*). Man’s sin, which broke the original relationship with God, renders such an optional commitment necessary. However, a sinner cannot do it, but only such a man who is without sin. According to Christianity, only the Incarnate Son of God is free from sin. And it is only him who can perform this task, i.e. mend the relationship of man with God and thus to redeem humanity through his death, interpreted as a divine act of reparation.¹⁰ Thus, Anselm showed a positive significance of reason as a neutral instance, by means of which one may consider arguments for and against, in order to get to the critical truth. And additionally, he began to seek

⁸ See Müller, *Der Glaube*.

⁹ Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 95–103.

¹⁰ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 138–139.

consistency between God's justice (*iustitia*) and mercy (*miser cordia*), outlining the theological task for future times.¹¹ This rational discourse led to positive secularisation that mercy cannot be demanded just like justice, but it can only be contemplated.

Another important figure of this epoch is Peter Abelard (d. 1142), who continued rational thinking (*ratio*) about the truths of faith and orientated it subjectivistically towards one's own "ego." He postulated a critical assessment of religious message by reason. He considered theology to be a science, distinguishing it from religion. Theology must act rationally in order to ensure its independence from religion. Yet, the rationality of theology should not prove the subject of religion to be rational, but enhance it in a rational way. That does not mean that Abelard is a rationalist who wants to justify the Christian faith rationally, but on the contrary – he wants religion to be rationally safeguarded, and hence faith not to be undermined rationally.¹² Thus, he suggested solving all possible contradictions in theology by means of the instrument of reason according to the rules of dialectics.¹³

A particular role in further rationalization of theology and science was played by the cathedral School in Chartres and the School of St Victor. The School in Chartres, established by Fulbert of Chartres (d. 1028), gathered many theologians, who began a more extensive investigation of philosophical-natural sciences issues and cosmology. Thierry of Chartres (d. c. 1155) led the way with his work *De sex dierum operibus*, in which he made a commentary to the first chapters of the Book of Genesis in the vein of Plato's philosophy.¹⁴ It fuelled the discussion between the Biblical message of the creation of the world and the Platonian myth of creation in *Timaios*, but also pioneeringly emphasized the significance of natural sciences such as: mathematics, astronomy, music and geometry. The activities of the School in Chartres were of significance for secularisation in this respect that they were understood as "removing the spell" of the way of perceiving things, including religion. Yet, this secularisation was not directed against faith, accentuating ever stronger the significance of reason.

The School of St Victor, founded by King of France Louis VI (1108–1137) himself on the outskirts of Paris in 1113, was in turn an important centre of intellectual life. Admittedly, the representatives of this School, mainly Hugo and Richard, dealt more with theology than with natural sciences but they strove to form new notions of existence, of the person and relationships, which changed the face not only of theology itself but also of science in general.¹⁵ This conduct was a source of positive secularisation, too.

¹¹ Kienzler, "Anselm von Canterbury," 54–59.

¹² Rieger, "Petrus Abaelard," 66.

¹³ Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 192.

¹⁴ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 144.

¹⁵ Berndt, "Hugo von St. Victor," 98–111.

2. The Era of the Mature Middle Ages

Similarly to the Early Middle Ages, also the Mature Middle Ages initially contributed to positive secularisation by means of a return to Aristotle's writings, even though they were, in their main points, opposed to the Christian faith, like e.g. the eternity of the world, metaphysical necessarism or a universal spiritual soul which enables one to cognize the world. It was these "aggressive points" which made theologians justify their science with arguments and defend it against other interpretations of reality. Since they gave rise to a new understanding of the world and of man themselves that was founded not only on Revelation but on human reason. A brilliant systematician as for those times Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) adopted the main concepts of Aristotle's philosophy and built a system of expressing the Christian faith rationally, which theology utilized until the 20th century. Moreover, Aquinas considered theology not to be subordinate *ancilla theologiae* but to be an independent instance seeking the truth, which is critical also towards the revealed faith.¹⁶ Thereby, he distinguished two orders of cognition: nature and Revelation, but at the same time he indicated that nature and grace are inherently oriented towards each other. This is confirmed not least by Thomas's fundamental conviction of the divine "primary cause" and worldly-human "secondary causes."¹⁷

Another figure of this period, William Ockham (d. 1347), clearly distinguished and separated theology and philosophy; he also introduced the axiom which at present is the basis for empirical sciences that the fundament of cognition is experience and also a requirement that one must form non-contradictory conclusions within one science. In Ockham, the path leading to secularism was separating faith from reason, since he elevated faith itself and limited reason solely to temporary reality. Yet Ockham's fundamental secularistic approach to reality consists in negating universal concepts (*universals*),¹⁸ which he considers to be abstract. What is universal is a mental thing, and not an ontic term.¹⁹ There exists only a single thing (*singularia*) as the departure point of all cognition. This is why general concepts like the Church or state do not have real reality, they exist only in the human mind. Hence, they have no superior value, and their only purpose is to ensure salvation to believers and good to citizens. Thus, Church authorities have no competence in relation to believers except for ministering to their salvation. This implies man gaining independence from the rule of the Church. This is already direct preparation for Luther's Reformation that a believer decides on given truths of faith, whether to accept or to reject them. By his *via moderna* Ockham breaks off with the previous tradition:

¹⁶ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 161.

¹⁷ Drewes, "Thomas von Aquin," 139.

¹⁸ Leppin, "Wilhelm von Ockham," 187.

¹⁹ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, 563.

he separates philosophy from theology, faith from reason, the Church from state, Church authorities from secular authorities. This is a manifestation of negative secularisation which appears in such a strong vein for the first time. And even though Martin Luther (d. 1546) became acquainted with the theses of Ockhamism during his studies at Wittenberg University (1508–1512), and he also learned about the neo-Platonic theology of St Augustine due to his membership of an Augustinian order in Erfurt, it was not him alone who was the source of contemporary secularism. Yet Protestantism itself – with its persistent proclamation of individual freedom of faith and conscience – contributed significantly to the onset of the early modern period and modernism.²⁰

3. The Era of the Reformation

Strangely, studies on secularism and secularisation do not deal with M. Luther. Maybe because he did not leave behind any systematic outline of his thought. He was acquainted with works of scholastic theologians like Gabriel Biel (d. 1495), Ockham, Duns Scot (d. 1308), Pierre d'Ailly (d. 1420) and Thomas Aquinas. Yet his activities were naturally significantly affected by St Augustine (d. 430) whom he favoured over all scholastics. Already during his first Bible lectures, Luther started to criticize intensively the main Aristotelian assumptions and thereby also the whole scholastic theology. This, however, could not have been a source of secularisation. It was more his understanding of the Church and the world, and in particular distinguishing the two kingdoms: the one of Christ and the one of the world, that resulted in leaving to spirit what was spiritual and to the world – what was worldly. Luther encouraged believers to take on themselves responsibility for the world.²¹

Undoubtedly, the dispute of Luther with the papacy, and first of all, a rejection of papal teaching or the teaching on the Eucharist and the sacraments, as well as on other important dogmatic issues, deepened the split between the Church and the Reformation movement originated by him and ultimately led to the Council of Trent and Counterreformation, but also to the establishment of Protestantism as a Christian church community. Thus, the western division of the Church and the establishment of a non-Catholic Church was the result of the protest directed against the secularisation of the Church.²² Yet already since the period of the Enlightenment, Protestantism itself adopted clear signs of negative secularisation.

²⁰ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 296.

²¹ Beutel, "Martin Luther," 60.

²² Müller, *Der Glaube*, 182.

4. The Era of the Renaissance – Cartesius

There have been – as has been mentioned – various approaches to secularism and secularisation. It is commonly thought that the era of the Renaissance not only brings new sources of secularization, but is also the cradle of the birth of secularism as well as the place and time of the transformation of secularisation into secularism. This era, mainly in the person of René Descartes (d. 1650), brought a new understanding of man and the world which consisted in a transformation from the mediaeval theocentric approach to the modern anthropocentric one. It is perhaps best expressed by Cartesius' maxim *je pense donc je suis*, translated later into Latin as *cogito ergo sum*. This means that the departure point in cognition is one's own thinking and a methodological absolute doubt. This is why the first pillar of cognition is not to "consider as true anything that is not so clearly and explicitly cognized that it cannot be questioned."²³ And thus, only this can be accepted as true which can be verified by one's own analysis and logical reflection. Since only two things are unassailable: the fact of thinking and my "ego" which thinks.²⁴ The surrounding world ceases to be a symbol of spiritual truths and it is reduced to an object of observation, where reason plays the most important role. The world simply assumes a secular character, instead of a divine one. It is no longer contemplated as God's creation, but as nature. However, God himself is not eliminated from man's cognition. It is him as the Most Perfect Being that remains the guarantee of the certainty of human cognition.²⁵ However, Cartesius has a different understanding of God, which is reflected in his saying: "The God of Abraham is not the God of philosophers."²⁶

5. The Era of the Enlightenment

Undoubtedly, the Enlightenment became a source of secularisation and secularism by means of its ideas of freedom and independence, which were manifested in various manners by liberation from all authorities, traditions and institutions in favour of omnipotent reason. It is not, however, about undermining the priority of rationality brought about by the Enlightenment, but about its one-sided understanding, excluding the existing forms of cognition and action. This concerned mainly French thinkers, but also English and German ones.

²³ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 256.

²⁴ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, 93.

²⁵ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 256.

²⁶ Ratzinger, "Der Gott des Glaubens," 136–147.

What Blaise Pascal (d. 1662) criticized in Cartesius was the understanding of God as the one who must constitute a connection between *res cogitans* (consciousness, self) and *res extensa* (body) in order to ensure the certainty of cognition. However, this radical ontic dualism led to the breakup of sciences, where metaphysics deals with God, but by means of studying the mind, and physics – with” the world by means of studying matter. According to Pascal, the Cartesian dualism between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* can be overcome solely by the “heart” or by the “subtle soul.”²⁷ Yet also here, one can recognize a new approach to man: they are a subject aware of themselves. This “subjectivity” which marks the transition from objective reality to subjective subjectivity becomes the banner of the early modern period.

Subjectivity is naturally the result of using human reason in two directions: either in combination with God’s Revelation or based solely on natural principles. This is how deism (John Toland, d. 1722; Matthew Tindal, d. 1733) and empiricism (John Locke, d. 1704; David Hume, d. 1776) were born, particularly in 17th and 18th century England. This deism signifies belief in God, but in a different God: the God of mechanism.²⁸ Admittedly, he created the machine of the world, but then it continues to work by itself, without a break and without any irregularity. Since then, only what is natural has been important. Also, only natural knowledge counts. What is supernatural can be understood only symbolically. It was at the same time the beginning of the “theology of the Enlightenment,” relying more on human reason than on Revelation. Theological rationalism, based on formulating the content of faith by means of human reason, was shaped primarily by Evangelical theologians.

French atheists went even further in this thinking of religious criticism in the name of reason. The Catholic abbot Jean Meslier (d. 1729) is considered to be the first modern atheist. He denied the existence of supernatural powers, including also Christian God.²⁹ Meslier’s initially latent criticism of the Church was revealed only after his death by Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet, d. 1778), who, in his collected works, included the compiled manuscripts of the deceased as his “testament.” Thus, Voltaire contributed to the development of anticlericalism. He himself was in favour of morality guided not by religion and the Church but by the human mind, while criticizing belief in God in the face of evil existing in the world. This new problem of theodicy was addressed by the German philosopher Gottfried William Leibniz (d. 1716): perfect God created the best of possible worlds, but he no longer gets involved in its course. The fact that evil exists in the world is an inevitable consequence of the existence of a limited, finite world. This is the reason why metaphysical evil exists (*malum methaphysicum*).

²⁷ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 257.

²⁸ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, 246.

²⁹ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 267.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (d. 1781) went even further in his reflections on the criticism of religion. In order to learn the truth, one has to liberate everything from religious care and subject it to pure rational explanation.³⁰ According to Lessing, even Revelation did not give humanity what human reason arrived at.³¹ Religion, including Christianity, plays only an educational function, and Christ – that of a moral example. Thus, it is not religion, not Revelation but reason that determines morality. The underlying general conviction in these Lessing's assertions is that there is no eternal invincible truth, but only quest for the truth.³² Therefore, the history of humanity points to the development of an unlimited rule of reason.

The same spirit of criticism of faith in Revelation is present in Hermann Samuel Reimarus (d. 1768). He thought that supernatural Revelation was not necessary since religious truths may be learned naturally, by means of one's own reason.³³ Since then, authors have postulated more and more seeking the certainty and credibility of data outside religion, outside Revelation, outside the Church.

A stand against such materialistic-atheistic thinking was taken by Immanuel Kant (d. 1804). In his work *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* he sought to ensure religion the rightful place "within the boundaries of pure reason." According to him, religion cannot be considered to be irrational since, by means of theoretical reason, one cannot even prove the existence of God. Reason will neither prove the existence of God, nor eradicate Him.³⁴ To achieve this, one needs experience independent from the concept of God. However, religion has its place within the framework of practical reason since the idea of God plays an indispensable function of justifying morality, so that one acts definitely morally considering the moral imperative of God's commandments. Religion is completely reduced to morality.³⁵ Therefore, it is not so much ritual practices but man's moral attitude that is the manifestation of a positive recognition of autonomy and secularisation, which result from Kant's criticism of cognition.

6. The Early Modern Age

What is characteristic of this period is not only further propagation of life sciences but also broadly conceived secularisation as emancipation of cultural, social and scientific life from the directives of religion and Christianity. The relationship between

³⁰ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 327.

³¹ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 272.

³² Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, 263.

³³ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 273.

³⁴ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 338.

³⁵ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, 350.

faith and knowledge, God and history was defined anew. In particular, the philosophy of religion of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (d. 1831) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (d. 1854) contributed to the understanding of God as a process of the Absolute mediating the-act-of-coming to itself (*Zu-sich-selbst-Kommen*) throughout history. A manifestation of this is understanding the Incarnation of the divine Logos not only as entering time and history, but also as overcoming the opposition between time and eternity.³⁶ Then, God is not distinct enough from the world and this leads to God's "becoming" (*Werden Gottes*) in human consciousness.³⁷ This idealism expresses the Absolute solely as a potentiality which can be thought of (theoretical reason). It is absolute idealism which asserts that thinking, being, the truth, are all identical with spirit. That is why everything that is rational is real and what is real is rational.³⁸

The Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (d. 1855) took a stand against combining theology and faith with the social thinking (spirit) of a given epoch. He thought that the belief in the man Jesus as God requires recognizing him also with reason as the Redeemer, and not cognizing him in his creation or human consciousness³⁹ – as the German idealists wanted. Thereby, Kierkegaard defined the mutual relationship of human existence to the process of faith, which faith is not accepting abstract truths, but becomes the basis for a special relationship of my "ego" to God. This is how the Danish Theologian becomes the forerunner of "dialectic theology" in response to "liberal theology." However, this criticism of Kierkegaard did not last long since the Evangelical Tübingen School began to deal with the autonomy of consciousness, which led to further secularisation.

7. The Era of Nihilism and Marxism

Undoubtedly, the unquestionable face of modern secularism is Friedrich William Nietzsche (d. 1900). Initially brought up in the spirit of Protestant pietism, whose basic intention was to form "a new man" risen from sin, already as a young man, he totally turned away from God and religion – mainly under the influence of David Friedrich Strauss' work *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (Tübingen 1835–1836) – thinking that faith is only subjectively true and Christianity is harmful. According to him, also morality is not objective, i.e. universally binding, but everybody has their own morality which suits them.⁴⁰ Nietzsche's loss of faith was further reinforced by

³⁶ Góźdz, "Czas a wieczność," 141–156.

³⁷ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 280.

³⁸ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, 411.

³⁹ Ansorge, *Kleine Geschichte*, 287.

⁴⁰ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 413.

the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (d. 1860), built upon voluntaristic metaphysics which results in pessimism because life is nothing else but a powerful fear of death and struggle with suffering.⁴¹ This pessimism was discerned by Nietzsche also in the fact that Christianity proclaimed compassion, being on the side of the quiet, the suffering and the poor. Yet soon – Nietzsche prophesied – a man would be born who would bury the meek and weak man.⁴² This will be an act of man's liberation and at the same time of a complete rejection of God and Christianity, and my means of this of radicalization of secularism.

A criticism of religion had been even earlier undertaken by Karl Marx (d. 1883). However, he did it from a social and economic standpoint and not from a philosophical one. For him, as well as for his friend Friedrich Engels (d. 1895), the fathers of historical and dialectic Marxism, religion is the main source of social alienation, where human creations take control of man. What is more, "religion is a set of false and anti-scientific assertions."⁴³ For the ruling class, religion is also a means of lulling the proletariat's vigilance – specific opium for the people – so that they should not break free of their tether. This criticism of religion in Marx has its roots, first, in his fascination with the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach or Hegel, but he defined himself as a materialist and he also acted in the political and economic as well as social reality. As for Hegel, the first ones were ideas, for Marx it was – materialistic reality. Only this is true and decisive reality.⁴⁴ Much as Marx's views of the exploitation of the proletariat seem to be right, the worst evil of Marxism is rejection of God, negation of the personal character of man and of the highest moral values.⁴⁵ Especially, the so called Marxist humanism, considering man not to be a human individual but to be a social being, a generic creature who is fulfilled in the action of collective life – strengthened modern secularism. Thus, combining the economic issue with religion had social repercussions and became the cause of negative secularisation, particularly after the October Revolution in Russia and secularisation in western societies.

8. The Era of Modernism and Post-modernism

Modernity – as the heir of the ideas of the Enlightenment – is characterized by such qualities which distinguish this epoch from the previous ones and, at the same time, constitute further development of secularisation and secularism. These are:

⁴¹ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 357.

⁴² Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, 515–517.

⁴³ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 386.

⁴⁴ Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, 472.

⁴⁵ Bartnik, *Historia filozofii*, 393.

conceiving of time as a dimension of human activity; making redemption worldly since it takes place in the human history; believing in the universality of reason; departing from the previously binding social structures; developing rationality and orienting it towards purpose-means.⁴⁶

In the 1970s criticism of modernist centrism and rationalism gave rise to post-modernism (Lat. *modernus*, French *moderne* – modern), which introduced decentrism, a negation of the category of unity and irrationalism.⁴⁷ A characteristic feature of the trend of post-modernism is the absolutisation of pluralism, irrationalism and chaotisation of freedom, which freedom fights with the objective truth, and also demands unrestrained freedom for each person, at the same time refusing the person subjectivity.⁴⁸ It may be added that further negative features of post-modernism as: explicit subjectivism, cognitive and moral relativism, anti-humanism, individualism and cultural nihilism – contribute very significantly to the development of secularism and secularisation today. Though this movement itself is already strongly dwindling today.

Conclusion

The outlined image of the rise and development of secularism and of its fruit – secularisation – shows that it is a process which originated in materialistic and atheistic trends as far back as in antiquity, developed in the subsequent eras, and recently is taking on the form of even total anti-transcendental ideology. While in antiquity this process was rightly understood as abandoning mythical thinking in favour of rational thinking, in the Early Middle Ages it was a form of reconciling faith with reason, and today again it is taking on the form of powerful mythology. In the Middle Ages, it was an approach to understanding faith, as well as to the intellection of the whole Christianity, and in the times of the Reformation the whole error of secularism was revealed and it resulted in the self-secularisation of the Church, which went counter to the whole Tradition and today is assuming the form of a total negation of Tradition, spiritual and intellectual. However, it needs to be remembered that secularisation has brought no greater benefit to secular thought (Czesław S. Bartnik, d. 2020). Quite on the contrary – it has destroyed its rationality and has created a new mythology of the world, culture and man, e.g. by holding that not only man is a person but that also animals, or even robots, are personalities. Such mythology is terrifying. The secularistic awareness of modern times has, in turn, resulted in indifference

⁴⁶ Vester, "Modernismus und Postmodernismus," 5.

⁴⁷ Gózdź, "Problem teologii ponowoczesności," 6.

⁴⁸ Bronk, "Krajobraz postmodernistyczny," 79.

towards the truth grounded in God, and thereby in “faith” only in the advances of natural sciences and technology as well as of global knowledge which rests solely on immanentism and thereby on atheism.

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