

BOOK REVIEW

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Nicu Gavriluță, *Noile religii seculare. Corectitudinea politică, tehnologiile viitorului și transumanismul (New Secular Religions. Political Correctness, Future Technologies, and Transhumanism)*, Polirom, 2018

The book *Noile religii seculare. Corectitudinea politică, tehnologiile viitorului și transumanismul* [New Secular Religions. Political Correctness, Future Technologies and Transhumanism] written by professor Nicu Gavriluță had appeared in 2018 at the well-known Publishing House Polirom from Iași. Attention is being paid to what the author considers to be „three new secular religions”: political correctness, transhumanism and future technologies. Political correctness is a neo-Marxist ideology of utmost relevance in the American society, elevated by the author to *secular religion* rank. Through its mediation it is promoted a certain behavior of people, „unnaturally attentive not to disturb and not to say something that can be interpreted as an abuse or a discriminatory procedure” (p. 83). The originality of the professor lies in the fact that he is construing „the younger daughter” of the classic Marxism as a new cultural ideology that works for some people as a new religion. Of course, this is a false religion, turned upside down. It immanents the absolute and it absolutizes the contingent. It camouflages two old and famous myths (the myth of good and evil confrontation and the myth of the Golden Age) in simplified and perfectly secularized versions.

In their turn, the future technologies want to „replace” the old spiritual traditions or to profoundly alter the society itself by creating and worshipping some virtual realities. The examples from the book of Nicu Gavriluță are bringing into focus precisely this process of fetishism of the new technologies underneath the faces of *Google* and *Copy Paste Churches* and *The Way of the Future*. All are institutionalized forms of absolutization of the new technologies from our daily life. These upside down „religions” are looking for notoriety and legitimacy via the transfer of symbols, ideas and rituals taken from Christianity.

Finally, both transhumanism and posthumanism are trying to redefine the human being. These new streams of thought are proven to be „the place of the

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creation of the *deshumanized man* resembling a different creature, with enhanced psychical abilities, *a mutant or an X-men*, „*the golden dream of each police, totalitarian state. An absolute, perfect Big Brother*” (p. 182). Within this new secular religion, Nicu Gavriluță is retrieving, camouflaged, other old myths of humanity: the myth of everlasting youth, the myth of immortality, the myth of the superhuman, the myth of the invincible hero, the myth of ubiquity, the myth of *deus otiosus* and the myth of *homo deus*. These formidable survivals of the mythological fantasies in time and history, accompanied by certain symbols and profane beliefs, are conferring to the transhumanist thinking the role of secular religion.

The subject of the book is treated in a concise and accessible way for the reader, which leads to reflection. It provokes the imagination and arouses the curiosity. Its discourse is a generous one, addressing numerous themes in an original manner, starting from a profound incursion into history and anthropology. It reaches the present times and anticipates certain challenges of the future. This „is requested” to be understood better, taking into account the fact that the religion and the religiosity phenomena are two social realities in constant dynamics and evolution.

The professor’s volume is containing clear and original ideas, written in a cursive form and charged with spiritual depth. There is in this book a thorough substratum belonging to the sociology of religion and the writing of Mircea Eliade. On their basis are made frequent references to the religious changes appeared together with the globalization. These references are used when new virtual „churches” are built, when we speak about the cult of the Internet, mass-media and social networks. Thus it appears an analogy between the authentic, classic religions which have been incurred in ancient history, and respectively the new, secular ones, emerging in full (post)modernity. The book is not a plea for the exacerbation of the new, secular religions to the detriment of veritable religions such as Christianity or Islamism. On the contrary, intends to draw a warning upon the rupture between the traditional and the secular religions, as well as upon the effects of „family environment de-privatization”, of the traditions and rooted habits.

The volume is offering, at the same time, a new vision upon the myths, symbols and religious rituals rediscovered by the author as being camouflaged within these three secular religions. Nicu Gavriluță is insisting upon the existential journey of the man. This is getting valences which seem to be uncontrolled, given by the new secular religions and their fetishization. These changes seem to be inevitable and they are seizing our social life. But, in my opinion, the new secular religions are appearing just because of the human and social evolution. The man is searching to „update” himself just like a „gadget”, it aims to possess a „new soft”, one can allow him to deal to all challenges appeared in the „century of speed”. Therefore it emerges a new type of man, the SMART man, almost permanently connected to the new technology. Such a man is continuously concerned with his image (the one he intends to present, not

necessarily the real one). He is chameleonic and willing to more and more compromises in order to ensure a secured climate in both the virtual and the real environment. For some people this passageway from the real setting to the virtual one is no more. Some persons cannot delimitate clearly the two plans, creating therefore all sorts of illusions and deceptions.

This book is also a therapeutic one which can be read (as) a guide for the prevention of such slippage. Professor Nicu Gavriluță is offering some landmarks in order to escape the captivity of the virtual world and to avoid building „an almost sacred cult of suffering” (p. 127). A sequence of chapter three from the book is dealing with a subject of utmost novelty: *Way of the Future*, a religion on autopilot appeared on American soil. It reminds me of the words of a confessor from Iași, the priest Calistrat Chifan. Observing the changes occurred in the modern society, the priest, during a liturgy, drew the attention upon the risks provoked by the secular cult of the new technologies. If we don't find a solution right away, then „the church will become some sort of McDonalds drive. It will have a window where the parishioners will be aligned in their cars in order to be anointed and receive the holy bread. Then they will move forward as the man seems to lack the time for the profound prayer and meditation”.

In conclusion I consider that the volume *Noile religii seculare [New Secular Religions]* of professor Nicu Gavriluță can offer appropriate cultural and spiritual solutions in order to create awareness for the changes and the risks appeared in our current society thanks to political correctness, new technologies and transhumanism.