

Secularity and Secularism. Notes on a Semantic Question

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SECULARITY AND SECULARISM.
NOTES ON A SEMANTIC QUESTION

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UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO
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EDITORIAL NOTE

WARNING: This is a free translation of the chapter published in Spanish “Laicidad y laicismo. Notas sobre una cuestión semántica” within the book *Cuatro visiones sobre la laicidad* which can be viewed at the following site: <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/8/3863/4.pdf>

NOTA EDITORIAL

ADVERTENCIA: Esta es una traducción libre del capítulo publicado en español “Laicidad y laicismo. Notas sobre una cuestión semántica” dentro del libro *Cuatro visiones sobre la laicidad*, que puede consultarse en el siguiente sitio: <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/8/3863/4.pdf>

I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

In this brief work, I will not study the legal aspects related to secularism and secularity; I will only deal with seeing some meanings that are attributed to these words, while the confusion in their use also favors limitations for the consolidation of the secular state. Fear about the use of terms, or doubts about their scope, affects the perception of institutions and, to some extent, also their design.

French doctrine has adopted a distinction between secularity and *secularism* that, although shared by authors from other geographical and cultural areas, is not part of the common language. It is unequivocal that it corresponds to the legal and political culture to explain and extend the meaning of the words that denote the institutions, but in this case, it must also be agreed that numerous literary, reference and even legislative and doctrinal sources give another meaning to those words.

II. PAPAL THESES ON SECULARISM

It should be noted that the voice *secularism* was the object of an energetic rejection by the Catholic Church, and introduced a strong pejorative charge by making it synonymous with intransigence and intolerance.

Since the independence revolutions in Spanish America gained force, the papacy warned of the potential risks to its hegemony and took a position against the appearance of new states that would be removed from its influence. This explains why, in 1816, Pius VII issued the encyclical *Etsi longissimo terrarum*, in which he stated:

...Your piety and your zeal in the practice and preaching of the Most Holy Religion that we profess are well known to us. And as one of its beautiful and main precepts is the one that prescribes submission to the Superior Authorities, we do not doubt that in the commotions of those countries, which have been so bitter for Our Heart, you will not have ceased to inspire your flock the just and firm hatred with which he must look at them.

... It is up to us, to excite you more with this letter, to spare no effort to uproot and completely destroy the disastrous weed of disturbances and seditions that the enemy man sown in those countries. You will easily achieve such a holy object if each one of you demonstrates to your sheep with all the zeal you can the terrible and very serious prejudices of rebellion, if you present the illustrious and unique virtues of Our most beloved Son in Jesus Christ, Ferdinand, your Catholic King, for whom there is nothing more precious than Religion and the happiness of his subjects.

The most emphatic disqualification of the independence of Spanish America came a few years later. The terms used by Leo XII in his *Etsi quam diu* (1824) that the local clergy entered into deep contradictions because, in some countries, they even denied its authenticity. The papacy warned that the process of secularization could very well accompany that of independence from the Spanish Crown. For this reason, he stated:

...with the most bitter and incomparable pain... we have received the dire news of the deplorable situation in which both the State as the Church has come to reduce in those regions the weeds of rebellion, which the enemy man has sown in them, as we know very well the serious damage that results to religion, when unfortunately the tranquility of the people is disturbed.

...complain bitterly already observing the impunity with which the debauchery and license of the wicked runs; already noticing how the contagion of incendiary books and pamphlets spreads and spreads, in which both powers, ecclesiastical and civil, are depressed, belittled and attempted to be hateful; and now, finally, seeing out, like devastating locusts from a gloomy well, those

joins that are formed in the gloom of darkness, of which we do not hesitate to affirm with Saint Leo Pope, which is concretized in them as in a filthy bilge, how much more sacrilegious and blasphemous there is and has been in all heretical sects.

For Leo XII, “the sins of the peoples”, instigated by “the inventors of the novelty”, would be punished by “the Lord” because they transgressed the obedience due to Fernando VII, “Catholic King of Spain, whose sublime and solid virtue makes him put before the splendor of his greatness the luster of religion and the happiness of his subjects”.

In 1829, upon assuming the papacy, Pius VIII published *Traditi*, in which he announced his decision to combat education outside religion, as many “depraved teachers” claimed:

...As it is known that the precepts of the teachers serve in a great way to form the heart and understanding of the disciples, it is sought by all kinds of means and tricks to give the youth depraved teachers who lead them to the paths of Baal, by means of doctrines contrary to those of God, and with assiduous and perfidious care, contaminate by their teachings, the intelligences and the hearts of those whom they instruct.

The result is that these young people fall into such a lamentable license that they lose all respect for religion, abandon all rules of conduct, disregard the sanctity of doctrine, violate all divine and human laws, and surrender without shyness to all kinds of disorders, to all mistakes, to all kinds of audacity.

As the number of those contagious books increases prodigiously day by day, with whose help impious doctrines spread like gangrene throughout the whole body of the Church, you must watch over your flock, and do everything possible to rid them of the contagion of those bad books, which of all the most disastrous.

Just a few years later, Gregory XVI issued *Summo Fugiter* (1832) in which he warned that marriage could also be a factor of loss of influence in the face of a growing process of secularization of family relationships, for which he condemned “severely the mar-

riages of Catholics with heretics”. The same year he issued the encyclical *Mirari Vos*, which he put as a subtitle “On modern errors”. What were these? Especially the French Revolution and its aftermath of demand for freedoms throughout the European Continent and in America. He was referring to this phenomenon when he spoke of the “insolence of the rebels”. He emphatically stated:

It is the triumph of unbridled malice, of shameless science, of limitless dissolution. The sanctity of sacred things is despised; and the majesty of divine worship, which is as powerful as it is necessary, is censured, profaned and mocked: hence holy doctrine is corrupted and errors of all kinds are boldly spread. Neither the sacred laws, nor the rights, nor the institutions, nor the holy teachings are safe from the attacks of evil tongues.

But the axis of the encyclical was in these words:

From that muddy source of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous sentence or, rather, madness, which affirms and defends freedom of conscience at all costs and for all. This pestilent error makes its way, shielded by the immoderate freedom of opinion that, to the ruin of religious and civil society, spreads more and more everywhere every day, reaching imprudence of some to ensure that great benefit follows from it for the cause of religion... Hence the inconstancy in spirits, the corruption of youth, the contempt —on the part of the people— of holy things and of the most respectable laws and institutions; In a word, the greatest and deadliest plague for society, because even the oldest experience teaches how the States, which flourished most for their wealth, power and glory, succumbed to the sole evil of an immoderate freedom of opinion, freedom in oratory and desire for novelty.

Freedom of conscience and freedom of the press go together in the harsh papal disqualification:

We must also deal in this place with the freedom of the press, never sufficiently condemned, if by such we understand the right to make all kinds of writings public; freedom, desired and promoted

by many. We are horrified, Venerable Brethren, as we consider what monsters of doctrine, or rather, what innumerable errors surround us, spreading everywhere, in innumerable books, pamphlets, and articles, which, if insignificant in length, are not because of the malice they contain; and from all of them comes the curse that we see with deep sorrow spread over the earth. There are, however, oh pain! those who take their audacity to such a degree that they insist, with insistence, that this barrage of errors scattered everywhere is compensated by some other book, which in the midst of so many errors is published to defend the cause of religion. It is absolutely illegal, and also condemned by all rights, to do a true and greater evil knowingly, because there is hope of a small good that results from it. Will anyone say that active poisons can and should be spread freely, sold publicly and given to drink, because it sometimes happens that the one who uses them has been snatched from death?

As can be seen, the allusion is direct to those who, then known as inclined towards freedom of thought¹ postulated that freedom of religion and of the press would favor the Church itself, while her followers would enjoy the extent of those freedoms, just as would those of other faiths and those who had none.

Paragraphs later, Gregory XVI added arguments against the separation of Church and state, calling supporters of freedom sectarians and disqualifying “the desire for novelty”:

The greatest misfortunes would come to religion and nations if the wishes of those who seek the separation of Church and State were fulfilled and the harmony between the priesthood and civil power were broken. It is evident, in fact, that the partisans of an

¹ The expression freethinker was widely used in the 19th century before the use of the adjective secular became general. This is confirmed by its use by authors such as Leopoldo Alas (Clarín), Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, Benito Pérez Galdós and Juan Valera. The voice was included in the *DRAE* in 1925 (15th ed.), where it was defined as a “supporter of free thought”, and this in turn as a “doctrine that claims absolute independence for individual reason from all supernatural criteria in religious matters”.

unbridled liberty shudder at harmony, which has always been so favorable and so salutary for religion as it is for peoples.

To many other causes of no small gravity that worry us and fill us with pain, must be added certain associations or meetings, which, confederating with the sectarians of any false religion or cult, simulating a certain religious piety but full, to the truth, from the desire for novelties and to promote seditions everywhere, they preach all kinds of liberties, they promote disturbances against the Church and the State; and try to destroy all authority, no matter how holy.

Regarding the relationship with power, the pope concluded:

Knowing that certain doctrines that deny the fidelity and submission due to princes, who everywhere light the torch of rebellion, have been divulged, in writings that spread everywhere, we must work so that the peoples do not stray, deceived, from the path of good.

That also the Princes, our very beloved Christian children, cooperate with their contest and activity so that they become a reality. Our wishes in favor of the Church and the State. Think that you have been given the authority not only for temporal government, but above all to defend the Church.

Later, in 1864, Pius IX published the encyclical *Cuanta cura* and *Syllabus*, that accounted for the eighty “mistakes of our time”. This pope, beatified by John Paul II in 2000, was the one who vehemently disregarded the liberal legislation of Mexico in 1856²

² On December 15, 1856, Pius IX made a speech about the Constitution of Mexico. Several fragments of that text were incorporated into the *Syllabus* in 1864. Regarding Mexico, he said: “Among many other insults that have been lavished on our most holy religion, on its ministers and pastors, as well as on the Vicar of Christ, the Chamber of Deputies proposed a new constitution composed of many articles, not a few of which are in open opposition to the same religion, with its healthy doctrine, with its most holy precepts and its rights. Among other things, the privilege of ecclesiastical jurisdiction is proscribed in this constitution; it is established that no one can enjoy any onerous emolument to the company; it is prohibited, as a general point, that no one can be bound,

and of Colombia in 1863.³ Years earlier, as canon, the young aristocrat Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferreti had the opportunity to learn about the liberal course of the independence revolution in

either by contact or by promise or by religious vow; and in order to more easily corrupt customs, and spread more and more the disastrous plague of indifference, and uproot our most holy religion, the free exercise of all cults is admitted and the power to freely express any kind of opinion and thought is granted. You will easily deduce, venerable brothers, how our most holy religion has been attacked and afflicted in Mexico, and how many insults have been done by that government to the Catholic Church, to its sacred ministers and pastors, to their rights and to our supreme authority and of this Holy See. Far be it from us that in such a disturbance of sacred things, and in the presence of this oppression of the church, of her power and her freedom, we never fail in the duty that our ministry imposes on us. So, so that the faithful who reside there know, and the Catholic universe knows that we strongly condemn everything that the Mexican government has done against the Catholic religion, and against the Church and its sacred ministers and pastors, against its laws, rights and properties, as well as against the authority of this Holy See, we raise our pontifical voice with apostolic freedom in this your most respectable meeting, to condemn and reprove and declare the enunciated decrees and everything else that has been practiced there invalid and of no value of civil authority with such contempt for ecclesiastical authority and with such detriment to religion...”

³ In the *Incredibili afflictamur* encyclical of September 17, 1863, he said: “... we are sorry to learn of the cruel and shameful way in which the Catholic Church is attacked, disrupted and tormented by the Government in the Republic of New Granada. Truly, we lack words to express the countless sacrilegious attacks with which that Government, gravely insulting us, to this Apostolic See, insists on violating and destroying our most holy Religion, its venerable rights, its doctrine, its cult and its sacred ministers. Well, for the past two years mainly, said Government has published nefarious laws and decrees, totally contrary to the authority of the Catholic Church, its doctrine and its rights. In those unique laws and decrees, among other things, sacred ministers are prohibited from exercising the ecclesiastical ministry if they do not consent to a license from the civil authority; all the assets of the Church have been usurped and sold, which has deprived of their income the parishes, the religious of both sexes and the clergy, the hospitals, the regional houses (asylums), the pious associations, benefits, and even chaplaincies of patronage rights. With these most unjust laws and decrees, the legitimate right of the Church to acquire and possess is thoroughly combated; the cult of non-Catholic sects is sanctioned; All religious associations of both sexes that live in the territory of New Granada are suppressed, their existence is completely prohibited”.

America. Who would later become Pius IX accompanied, in 1821, the papal envoy Giovanni Muzi to find out what was happening in Argentina and Chile and to dissuade their rulers from the measures they were taking. In Argentina, Bernardino Rivadavia, whom Mastai described as “the main minister of Hell in South America”,⁴ had secularized cemeteries, founded state primary schools and the University of Buenos Aires with lay teachers, and dissolved some religious orders whose property he expropriated. The Argentine reformist current was so powerful that in the province of San Juan the so-called “Carta de Mayo” (1825) was adopted, in which very advanced precepts appear.⁵

17o. No citizen or foreigner, association of the country or foreigner, may be disturbed in the public exercise of religion, whatever they profess, provided that those who exercise it pay for their worship at their own expense.

20o. The law will henceforth fix, when various religious associations are created or introduced, the points of detail that will rise for their concurrence.

In 1864 Pius IX denounced the liberals because:

The nefarious machinations of wicked men, who, throwing up the foam of their confusion, like the waves of the stormy sea, and promising freedom, being themselves, as they are, slaves of corruption, have tried with their fallacious opinions and extremely pernicious writings transform the foundations of the Catholic religion and of civil society, put an end to all virtue and justice, deprave hearts and understandings, separate from the right moral discipline unwary people, and very especially inexperienced youth, and miserably corrupt it, and cause it to fall into the sna-

⁴ Cfr. Arciniegas, Germán, *El continente de los siete colores*, Bogotá, Taurus, 2004, p. 306.

⁵ Religious freedom was considered essential to encourage immigration and, with it, economic development. Similar arguments will be found later in the debates of the Mexican Constituent of 1856-1857.

res of error, and ultimately tear it from the guild of the Catholic Church.

...Which opinions, false and perverse, are all the more abominable, as they are mainly aimed at preventing and removing that salutary force that the Catholic Church, by institution and command of its Divine Author, must exercise freely until the end of time, not less on each man in particular, than on nations, peoples and their supreme princes; and because they also conspire to make that mutual society and concord between the Priesthood and the Empire, which was always happy and healthy, disappear... Well, you know very well, Venerable Brethren, there are not a few who apply to civil society the impious and absurd principle they call naturalism.

In opposition to the primacy of the legal order of the state, he also argued:

...Renewing the perverse and so many times condemned errors of the innovators, they dare with flagrant impudence to subject the supreme authority of the Church and of this Apostolic See, granted to it by Christ our Lord, to the discretion of civil power, and to deny all the rights of the Church itself and the Holy See over those things that belong to the external order. For they are not ashamed to affirm “that the laws of the Church do not bind in conscience except when they are promulgated by civil power”.

For all the arguments, Pius IX concluded:

Thus, by virtue of our Apostolic authority, we reprove, proscribe, and condemn each and every one of the perverse opinions and doctrines singularly mentioned in these letters, and we want and command that all the children of the Catholic Church be considered absolutely disapproved, proscribed, and condemned.

Leo XIII's best-known encyclical is *Rerum novarum*, published 1891; however, in 1878, the first year of his pontificate, issued *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, where he poured condemnatory expres-

sions for democracy and socialism that reflected the harsh rhetoric of his predecessors. The first words of his first encyclical went like this:

Our apostolic charge from the beginning of our pontificate moved us, Venerable Brethren, to not fail to indicate, in the Encyclical Letters addressed to you, the deadly pestilence that snakes through the most intimate bowels of human society and leads it to extreme danger of ruin.

Lines later, he indicated the bridge with the doctrine of Pius IX when using as heading “The new mistakes”. These were democracy and socialism. He condemned the Socialists and the Democrats for challenging monarchical authority and promoting equality:

To the superior powers —to which, according to the Apostle, every soul must be subject, because from God himself they receive the right to command— they deny obedience, and they go around preaching the perfect equality of all men in rights and duties.

...And these monstrous opinions publish in their meetings, persuade with their pamphlets, and spread the public in a cloud of newspapers. For which the venerable majesty and empire of the kings has become an object of such great hatred on the part of the seditious people, that sacrilegious traitors, unable to suffer any restraint, more than once and in a short time have turned their weapons with impious daring against the princes themselves.

...Hence, with a new impiety, unknown even to the Gentiles themselves, states have been constituted without any regard for God or the order established by him. It has been vociferated that public authority receives neither the principle, nor the majesty, nor the force of command from God, but rather from the mass of the people, who, judging themselves free from all divine sanction, have only allowed themselves to submit to those laws that she gave herself at will. The supernatural truths of faith being challenged and discarded as enemies of reason, the same Author and Redeemer of the human race is banished, insensibly and little by little,

from the Universities, Institutes and Schools and from the entire public ensemble of human life.

...So the clandestine societies began to form, within which the seeds of the errors that we have mentioned were already being fostered, the Roman Pontiffs Clement XII and Benedict XIV did not omit to discover the impious projects of these sects and warn the faithful of all the world the ruin that was rigged in the dark.

...To all, finally, it is manifest with how serious words and how firm and constancy of spirit our glorious predecessor Pius IX has fought, already in various speeches, already in encyclicals given to the bishops of the whole world, against the iniquitous attempts of the sects, and especially against the plague of socialism, which was already being born from them.

...The inequality of right and power derive from the same Author of nature, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name.

...But if the mandates of the legislators and princes sanction or command something that contradicts the divine or natural law, the dignity and obligation of the Christian name and the feeling of the Apostle, demand that God must be obeyed before men.

Several of these arguments were reiterated in *Humanum genus* (1884), where he referred to “the utopian monstrosities of the socialists and communists” and where he also spoke out against the civil state:

...Next come the principles of political science. In this matter, naturalists affirm that all men are legally equal and of the same condition in all aspects of life. That everyone is free by nature. That no one has the right to command another and that to pretend that men obey an authority that does not come from themselves is to do violence to it. Everything is, then, in the hands of the free people; political power exists by mandate or delegation of the people, but in such a way that, if the popular will changes, it is lawful to dethrone the princes even by force. The source of all civil rights and obligations is either in the multitude or in the government of the state, configuring of course according to the principles of the new law.

It is also necessary that the state be atheist. There is no reason to put one religion before another among the several that exist. All must be considered equally.

...The total public disregard for religion and the contempt for God, as if he did not exist, in the constitution and administration of the state, constitute an unheard-of audacity even for the pagans themselves, in whose heart and in whose understanding it was so engraved not only the belief in the gods, but the need for a public worship, which they considered easier to find a city in the air than a state without God.

...Those who want to liberate the state from all religious duties, proceed not only against all rights, but also with absurd ignorance [because] the same one who created society also created authority. From this we see that whoever has power is God's minister... And there is nothing more contrary to the truth than to suppose in the hands of the people the right to deny obedience when it pleases them.

...But since the personal qualities of men cannot be the same and they are very different from one another in the natural endowments of body and soul and there are many differences in customs, wills and temperaments, nothing is more contrary to the reason is that trying to cover everything and confuse everything to the same extent and bring to civil institutions such absolute legal equality... If everyone were equal and each one ruled at will, the appearance of this state would be horrific.

...suppressed the fear of God and respect for divine laws, despised the authority of the rulers, allowed and legitimized the fever of revolutions, unleashed to the point of license the popular passions, with no other brake than punishment, they must necessarily be followed universal changes and disorders. These changes and these upheavals are what many communist and socialist associations unreservedly seek.

In December 1905, the French Assembly approved the law of Separation of Churches and State, whose article 1o. provided: "the Republic ensures freedom of conscience and guarantees the free exercise of worship with the only restrictions that the law

provides in the interest of public order””. It was not a rule adverse to religion; it corresponded to one more stage in the construction of the secular state; In turn, the following February, Pope Pius X issued the encyclical *Vehementer nos* to censure that law, adding that the laicization of hospitals and schools was an act contrary to God.

Pius XI produced a harsh encyclical against secularism in 1922. In *Ubi arcano* he equates secular education to an act anti-religious. Driven by an extreme impulse, he came to affirm that “war is the product” of that decision, as if just a few years earlier the bloodiest of all wars known up to then had not ended, and in which education had nothing to do. In 1925 other references, now more direct, to secularism appeared In *Quas primas*, the pope included a lengthy section under the heading “Against Modern Secularism”:

And if we now order that Christ the King be honored by all the Catholics of the world, with this we will also provide for the needs of the present times, and we will put a very effective remedy to the plague that today infects human society.

We judge the so-called secularism as a plague of our times with its errors and abominable attempts; and you know, venerable brothers, that such impiety did not mature in a single day but was incubated long before in the bowels of society. It began by denying the empire of Christ over all peoples; the Church was denied the right, founded on the right of Christ himself, to teach the human race, that is, to give laws and direct peoples to lead them to eternal happiness. Then, little by little, the Christian religion was equated with the other false religions and unseemly lowered to their level. It was then submitted to the civil power and to the arbitrary permission of the rulers and magistrates. And further progress was made: there were some of these who imagined replacing the religion of Christ with a certain natural religion, with certain purely human sentiments. There was no lack of states that believed they could do without God and put their religion in impiety and contempt for God.

It was not indicated which are those states that “put their religion in impiety”, but it was clear that the “abominable errors” of secularism were related to the adoption of secular laws. That this process of secularization was seen as an act adverse to the Church and to religion corresponds to the pontifical perspective, not to the intention of the norms, at least those of which there is ample information, such as the French, the Mexican and the Colombian ones, about which I have transcribed several paragraphs.

In 1933, during the economic depression and during the consolidation of fascism in Germany and Italy, Pius XI published *Dilectissima nobis* to disqualify the secular measures adopted by the newly established Republic in Spain; the papal arguments would later be taken up by Francisco Franco. There he condemned the secular state, the laws, and schools “without God”, and secularism was branded as “apostasy from modern society”.

As can be seen from what has been examined so far, what the papacy rejects and stigmatizes is not a series of acts or decisions contrary to religious dogma, but a set of measures that in our time no one, not even the churches, objects. The secularism that was alluded to did not have and does not have an anti-religious meaning and admitting that the reforms of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th did correspond to an objective contrary to faiths and religious dogmas lacks historical and legal support. This does not exclude, of course, that in the debate numerous people who assumed attitudes contrary to the dogma have intervened, but that was not the intention of the reform norms adopted by the constitutions and by the laws. The proscription of religions is only identifiable in the Soviet and Chinese systems of the 20th century, but not in the constitutional systems of Western Europe and America of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

In general, I present abundant papal texts so that the emphasis of the adjectives with which the search for democracy is disqualified, by contesting and ignoring the absolute authority of the monarchs and the interest in freedom, is noted. As has been

seen, the adoption of freedom of conscience and of the press is denounced as a crime, the object of which could in no way be understood then or now as an action adverse to religion.

III. SECULARISM AND SECULARITY

Let us now see how the evolution of terms in lexicons and literary expressions has occurred. It is not a cult issue; but a matter of practical relevance because, as has been seen in the papal address of which I have made extensive mention, with the deliberate purpose, the voice secularism has been associated with a militant, intolerant position, incompatible with an objective of respect for others and for one's own, as corresponds in an open and plural society within the framework of a constitutional state. Hence it is postulated that secularism has a pejorative connotation against which the use of secularity, in theory a voice accepted to denote a comprehensive, reasonable and respectful position.

Now, the stigmatization of the voice secularism does not correspond to the intention of those who sought separation, first, and supremacy, later, in the relations of the state with the churches, but to the pontifical disqualification from the beginning of that process. In our time, admitting that secularists were nothing but militant dogmatists against religion is to validate the reasons of Gregory XVI and Pius IX, X and XI. This, however, is not a valuable argument either because it would be equivalent to reiterating a partially settled historical dispute, resolved so far in favor of freedoms. What does count, and this is a matter of the legal culture of our time, is that the use of words corresponds to their dominant meaning.

The encyclicals have attributed to secularism a factious and intolerant reach that it does not have, and to avoid a rectification in relation to the sentences formulated against *secularism*, they have opted for another word that is more acceptable to the papacy and that allows their condemnatory expressions of *secularism*

to remain valid. Furthermore, it makes it easier for even secularist thinkers of our time to make the distinction their own and, from the perspective of the Church, to validate the papal excesses that I have referred to above. That is not the intention of secularists, but it is the dimension that it acquires in contemporary ecclesiastical discourse. For the same reason, everything indicates that the distinction between secularism and secularity is more political than academic.

If the dominant understanding of the voices secularism and secularity were to attribute to the first a negative charge of exclusion and intolerance and to the second a positive one of respect, addressing the issue would have a cultish purpose; but if what prevails is the idea that secular thought can be considered as *secularism*, when referring to a body of lay doctrine, and as *secularity*, when what is identified is an action or a decision in accordance with what is laic, we are in different situations. The relevance of the topic consists in putting in parallel the thesis of the Church and legal doctrine, which does not contribute to consolidate a secular culture but to disorient the laity who they can doubt if with the secularism contradict secularity, and, in the end, not knowing what one and the other consist of.

The reason is very simple. In Spanish the suffixes *ismo*, *ista* and *dad* are part of the structure of the language and are not used to make the kind of distinction that is raised in the case of the words we are now examining. About seven hundred cultisms that use the suffix *ismo*, to denote a doctrine, plus another five hundred with *ista*, to signify a profession, a current of opinion, a style or participation in a doctrine are documented.⁶ This is a way of building that comes from the Greek and goes through the Latin. It is present, for example, in voices like baptism (*bautismo*), catechism (*catecismo*), cynicism (*cinismo*), syllogism (*silogismo*), solecism (*solecismo*) and many more, to none of which is attributed a pejorative sense of intransigence.

⁶ See Pharies, David, *Diccionario etimológico de los sufijos españoles*, Madrid, Gredos, 2002, pp. 356 et seq.

As for the suffix *ista*, is associated with the practice of an activity (alchemist/*alquimista*, canonist/*canonista*, economist/*economista*, jurist/*jurista*, pianist/*pianista*), to the assumption of a position (antagonist/*antagonista*, rightist/*derechista*, oppositionist/*oposicionista*, protagonist/*protagonista*) or belonging to a doctrine (buddhist/*budista*, Darwinian/*darwinista*, existentialist/*existencialista*, federalist/*federalista*, socialist/*socialista*), without necessarily implying a negative attitude due to partial or excluding. It also has its roots in Greek, as in the case of *lako-*nistos, supporter of the laconians.

As for the suffix *dad*, reflects the Latin suffix *tate*, *tas*, *atis*, with the function of indicating a quality.⁷ Here the voices far exceed a thousand because they include, for example, city/*ciudad*, dignity/*dignidad*, disease/*enfermedad*, freedom/*libertad*, power/*potestad*, storm/*tempestad*, will/*voluntad*. Numerous cases were born and remained in the Middle Ages: old age/*vejeidad* (vejez), tiredness/*cansedad* (*cansancio*), weakness/*flaquedad* (*flaqueza*).⁸

Words also reflect conventions, so many words have different meanings among Spanish speakers in different countries, and sometimes even within the same country.

But this is not the case for *laic/laico*, *secularity/laicidad* and *secularism/laicismo*. In essence, for all Spanish speakers they mean the same thing, with their own variants of what they want to refer to: one is the position of the laity within the Catholic Church, and another is that of the laity in the sphere of civil society. But this is also part of the established language.

The issue becomes a problem when what is involved is to establish a conventional difference about two words that have a different acceptance and use in society. In the established language the suffix *ismo* is used to denote a tendency, a style or a doctrine, the suffix *ista* to identify an activity, a position or a link, and the suffix *dad* to indicate a quality, a set, or a characteristic.

⁷ *Idem*, p. 162 et seq.

⁸ See for example, *Dictionarium Nebrissensis*, Lungduni (Lyon), 1555, p. 578.

This is how voices are constructed as *espiritualista*/spiritualist, *espiritualismo*/spiritualism, *espiritualidad*/spirituality; *européista*/europeanist, *européismo*/europeanism, *uropeidad*/europeanness; *fatalista*/fatalistic, *fatalismo*/fatalism, *fatalidad*/fatality; *feminista*/feminist, *feminismo*/feminism, *femineidad*/femininity; *formalista*/formalist, *formalismo*/formalism, *formalidad*/formality; *idealista*/idealist, *idealismo*/idealism, *idealidad*/ideality; *individualista*/individualistic, *individualismo*/individualism, *individualidad*/individuality; *localista*/localist, *localismo*/localism, *localidad*/locality; *materialista*/materialist, *materialismo*/materialism, *materialidad*/materiality; *moralista*/moralism, *moralismo*/moralism, *moralidad*/morality; *municipalista*/municipalist, *municipalismo*/municipalism, *municipalidad*/municipality; *nacionalista*/nationalist, *nacionalismo*/nationalism, *nacionalidad*/nationality; *neutralista*/neutralist, *neutralismo*/neutralism, *neutralidad*/neutrality; *oficialista*/officialdom, *oficialismo*/officialdom, *oficialidad*/officialdom; *patrimonialista*/patrimonialist, *patrimonialismo*/patrimonialism, *patrimonialidad*/patrimoniality; *realista*/realistic, *realismo*/realism, *realidad*/reality; *sensualista*/sensualist, *sensualismo*/sensualism, *sensualidad*/sensuality; *universalista*/universalist, *universalismo*/universalism, *universalidad*/universality; *verticalista*/verticalist, *verticalismo*/verticalism, *verticalidad*/verticality; *voluntarista*/voluntarist, *voluntarismo*/voluntarism, *voluntariedad*/voluntariness. This long list could be even more extensive and aims to show that the way of building in Spanish with these suffixes has been established over centuries.

As voices close to the matter at hand, they can be considered *constitucionalismo*/constitutionalism, *constitucionalista*/constitutionalist, *constitucionalidad*/constitutionality. The first corresponds to a doctrine or a current around constitutional systems; the second is a vocation or a specialty, and the third refers to what has the quality of being constitutional. Other words may imply a certain critical sense, as in the case of *legalismo*/legalism and *legalista*/legalist, that are associated with an extreme formalism but even so do not imply a pejorative meaning. Regarding the issue dealt with here, it would be necessary to add other voices, such as *catoli-*

cismo/catholicism and *crisitanismo*/christianism, which correspond to *catolicidad*/catholicity and *crisitanidad*/christianity; which does not happen with mysticism.

It should also be borne in mind that the words of law are often polysemous. Clear examples are the voices: state, constitution, justice, equity, freedom and many more. In this matter there are no binding prescriptions and what prevails is the power to give each of these concepts the content and scope that is most convincing for those who hold it. Change the criteria in the case of secularism and secularity emphasizing that there is only one mandatory way of using these concepts, which in addition is the one that the Catholic Church itself has dictated, it is a way of imposing a style from the ecclesiastical one in the legal field and that, therefore, contradicts what it seeks to signify: the independence of criteria and perspectives between the civil and the ecclesiastical world.

IV. THE VOICE *LAIC*

It is well known that the voice *laic* comes from the Greek *laos*, which translates as town. However, in classical Greece *demos* was also used in an equivalent sense. What was the difference? In the Homeric texts these voices have different meanings. On *The Iliad*, *demos*⁹ and *laos* are expressions that present a certain similarity, but whose context attributes their own nuances. *Demos* could mean community,¹⁰ population,¹¹ place,¹² social organization,¹³

⁹ In all the examples that follow I use *Iliad*, critical bilingual edition of José García Blanco, Luis M. Maciá Aparicio and Jesús de la Villa Polo, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998-2013.

¹⁰ *Iliad*, V, 78 [“which a god among his people was worshiped”]; X, 33 [“which god was honored in the town”].

¹¹ *Iliad*, II, 545 [“town of Erechtheus”]; II, 828 [“population of Apeso”]; III, 201 [Ithaca town].

¹² *Iliad*, V, 710 [“que muy pingüe pueblo tienen” (los beocios)]; VI, 158 [“the town expelled him”]; VI, 125 [“when by chance I arrived to that town”].

¹³ *Iliad*, XV, 738 [“that we took refuge with a people that resisted for us”].

crowd¹⁴, or ordinary people.¹⁵ In turn, *laos* corresponded to troop,¹⁶ infantry¹⁷ and people.¹⁸ Homer employs an additional meaning in the *Odyssey*, which is the one that flourished hereafter: in verse 382 of hymn VIII¹⁹ *laos*, in the 20th century, was translated into English as “men” and people, as well as in French “hommes” and “peuples”, and in Spanish: “hombres” and “pueblo”; some also added “*ciudadanos/citizens*”.²⁰

Classical Latin does not record voices derived from *demos* nor *laos*. Its appearance occurs in medieval Latin. In England, for example, in the fourteenth century²¹ it was used *democratia* (as well *democrachiam*) in the sense of democracy, while *demus*, in the fifteenth century, was equivalent to policeman. On the other hand, in the ninth century *laicus* corresponded to *lego* (layman), as opposed to *clericus*, recognized since the 6th century, corresponding to clergyman, which in English became clerk and which by explainable extension became equivalent to literate. In medieval England, those who performed secretarial, notarial, accounting and scriptural work in general were called clerk, and towards the 13th century it was applied to women and men who knew how to read and write.²²

¹⁴ Iliad, XXIV, 776 [“the countless people joined their lament”].

¹⁵ Iliad, XII, 231 [“being one of the people”].

¹⁶ Iliad, II, 115 [“after losing a lot of troops”]; II, 675 [“he was weak and few troops followed him”]; XVIII, 453 [“and at his side a lot of troops put”]; IV, 47 [“Priam’s troop”] reiterated in V, 165, and VI, 449.

¹⁷ Iliad, VII, 342 [“that the horse and the troops contain”]; XVIII, 153 [“the troops had caught up with the horses”].

¹⁸ Iliad, XVIII, 503 [“the people acclaimed one and the other”].

¹⁹ Odyssey, VIII, 382: “King Alcinous, the most enlightened of all”, is repeated literally in XI, 355 and 378, and XIII, 38.

²⁰ *Cfr.* Odyssey, translation by Luis Segalá y Estalella, Barcelona, Jonás, 1943.

²¹ *Cfr.* Latham, R. E., Revised Medieval Latin Word-list from British and Irish Sources, Londres, The British Academy, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 138. The dating corresponds to 1343.

²² *Cfr.* Oxford English Dictionary, 2a. ed., 1989.

Other complementary voices also appeared in England: *laicalis* (simple, without instruction), *laicaliter* (in the manner of a *lego*), *laicanus* (*lego*), *laicatura* (lay status, referring to the Church), *laicatus* (belonging to the laity).²³

In Italy, medieval Latin does not present records associated with *demos*, while *laicalis* and *laicus* were already in common use in the 11th century.²⁴ In Germany, too, there are no traces of *demos*; instead, *laicus* can be found.²⁵

This brief account of the use of both words serves to identify the meaning that the words derived from *laos*, whose common root makes it difficult to distinguish them in spontaneous use and attribute antagonistic meanings to them, as is done when stating that secularism and secularity be antithetical voices.

V. SECULARISM IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

As a first approximation, it is convenient to see the evolution of the voices secularism and secularity in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (DRAE)*. It should be borne in mind that lexicons are not prescriptive texts but only descriptive ones, which record the dominant use of voices at a given moment. That is what interests me: to see the current use of words, because that is what connects the norm and the institutions with their context, and what, for that same reason, contributes to shaping the legal culture of a community.

The voice secularism appeared for the first time in the 14th. ed. the *DRAE*, in 1914. It was defined like this: “doctrine that

²³ Cfr. Howlet, D. R. et al., *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, London, The British Academy, Oxford University Press, fasc. V, p. 1542.

²⁴ Cfr. *Latinitatis italicae medii aevi lexicon* (saec. V ex.–saec. XI in.), Florencia, Si-smel, 2001, pp. 267 and 1339.

²⁵ Cfr. Diefenbach, Lorenz, *Novum glossarium latino-germanicum mediae et infimae aetatis*, Fráncfort, Sauerländer’s Verlag, 1867, p. 227.

defends the independence of man or society from any ecclesiastical or religious influence”. On the 18th ed., of 1956, the definition was amended, underlining the importance of the state: “doctrine that defends the independence of man or society, and more particularly of the state, from any ecclesiastical or religious influence”, and the 22nd of 2001, included new elements: “doctrine that defends the independence of man or society, and more particularly of the state, with respect to any organization or religious denomination”. In this case, the content was expanded to include all religious associations, while the previous allusion to the Church gave the impression of only contemplating the Catholic one. The same criterion applied when the term “religious” was replaced by the more encompassing expression of “religious confession”. The entire spectrum of institutions and beliefs was thus included.

As to secularity, in 1927, the edition of *Diccionario manual de la Real Academia* said: “useless neologism for secularism”; the motto was repeated in the edition of the *Manual* from 1950. The word will appear for the first time in the *DRAE* on his 23rd ed., published at the end of 2014 and will include two meanings: “lay status”, and “principle of separation of civil society and religious society”. As can be seen, the differences are noted as follows: secularism as a general doctrine of independence and secularity as a specific principle of separation. It is a philological and not a technical criterion, but what is relevant is that it records the dominant use in our time after a prolonged absence from its register throughout the entire 20th century. This does not imply that it has not been used; indicates only that its frequency was less than secularism, and that prevails with a different meaning from the one assigned by part of the Spanish doctrine and Church.

Other voices of the same family are secularist “supporter of secularism” (*Diccionario manual e ilustrado de la lengua española*, 1927), and “of or relating to secularism”, according to the 2001 edition. *Laicizar*/secularize and *laicización*/ secularization entered during the period of the Republic in the 16th. ed., of 1936, with

the meaning of “making secular or independent of all religious influence” and “action and effect of laicizing”, respectively. In the case of secularity note that the association is made with secularism.

Joan Coromines, in the first edition of his remarkable repertoire, includes the voice secularism among those derived from *lego* but it does not pick up secularity.²⁶ The same happens with María Moliner in 1988, who defines secularism as “laity quality”, “absence of religious or ecclesiastical influence in any institution, particularly in the state”, and “doctrine favorable to that absence of influence”.²⁷ On the other hand, Manuel Seco, in 1999, welcomes both voices but does not define secularity but in that entry it refers to secularism, defined in the same way as the DRAE does.²⁸

And how have these terms been used in Spanish-language literature? The poet and essayist Octavio Paz refers that “Justo Sierra suspected the insufficiency of the liberal secularism and positivism”²⁹ and later adds: “the need to give the people something more than the liberal secularism produces the reform of the third article of the Constitution”.³⁰ In another text, secularism is equated to “religious indifference,”³¹ Chilean novelist Jorge Edwards alludes to the fact that one of his characters “will be an observant Catholic, because secularism and Freemasonry has already gone out of fashion,”³² and the Argentine essayist Salvador Ferla writes: “it was not easy to pass Perón on the left, from whom he had even removed the flags of divorce and state secularism”.³³

²⁶ See the voice “lego”, *Diccionario crítico etimológico*, Madrid, Gredos, 1955.

²⁷ *Diccionario de uso del español*, Madrid, Gredos, 1988, vol. II, p. 215.

²⁸ Seco, Manuel et al., *Diccionario del español actual*, Madrid, Aguilar, 1999, Vol. II, p. 2775.

²⁹ *El laberinto de la soledad, México*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999, p. 165.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 168.

³¹ “Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe”, *México en la obra de Octavio Paz*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987, vol. I, p. 147.

³² *El anfitrión*, Barcelona, Plaza y Janés, 1987, p. 116.

³³ *El drama político de la Argentina contemporánea*, Buenos Aires, Lugar Editorial, 1985, p. 141.

On the other hand, in a sense opposite to the one conferred on it by part of the doctrine, there are those who use secularity with a militant anticlerical connotation. The Peruvian writer Juan Carlos Mariátegui said that France, after the Revolution, had surrendered “to the most severe and formalistic freemason secularity”,³⁴ and the critic Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, alluding to the film work of the Mexican filmmaker Arturo Ripstein, said: “*La viuda negra* points its darts at the sanctimoniousness of a society whose institutional *secularity* has not separated her from Catholicism at all”.³⁵ In these examples the voice secularity is used in the negative sense that other sources attribute to *secularism*.

The Spanish constitutionalist Raúl Morodo, when making the balance of the Spanish constitutional process of 1977, opposes confessional and secularity: “Some comparativists, such as Rokkan, have even gone so far as to globalize this process, taking as a basis four division or dissociations: center/periphery, confessionalism/secularism, countryside-city/industry, workers-employers/capitalism”.³⁶ In turn, the Spanish politician and writer Alfonso Guerra defines *secularism*:

Thought and personal attitude that tries to prevent the influence of the power of the Church in public affairs. It proclaims, therefore, the separation of Church and state. *Secularism* is not anti-religious, but rather the opposite, it is as respectful of the worship and beliefs of all religions as it wants the Churches to be with citizens.³⁷

Guerra was a constituent member in 1978 and is one of the most brilliant tribunes and communicators of contemporary

³⁴ Article published in the weekly *Varietades*, Lima, February 16, 1929, http://www.patriaraja.org.pe/docs_adic/obras_mariategui/Figuras%20y%20aspectos%20de%20la%20vida%20III/paginas/la%20liquidacion.htm.

³⁵ Paranaguá, Paulo Antonio, Arturo Ripstein, Madrid, *Cátedra-Filmoteca Española*, 1997, p. 160.

³⁶ *Por una sociedad democrática y progresista*, Madrid, Turner, 1982, p. 199.

³⁷ *Diccionario de la Izquierda*, Madrid, Planeta, 1998, p. 139.

democratic Spain; he is characterized by a prose of exceptional elegance and precision.

In the media of Latin America and Spain it is possible to find many other cases along the same lines. The *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* de la Real Academia offers 112 records in 70 documents.³⁸ It is evident that a few examples are not enough to affirm that secularism only has one possible meaning; but that is not my purpose either. What I am interested in showing is that there is a current use of the concept that is assimilated to the one that in a part of the doctrine corresponds to secularity and that, in essence, the use of both voices is not mutually exclusive but rather complementary, as was previously pointed out when referring to the construction of suffixes. The precision of language is crucial in the social sciences, but the standardized use of words is also a factor that must be considered.

In an opposite direction, the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy attributes a negative meaning to the concepts of secularism/*secularismo* and secularism/*laicismo*, and “maintains an alarming speech, with a tendency —as reflected in the intentional use of language— to interpret it in a negative sense”, which explains that in the Plenary Assembly of the Spanish Episcopate, in 1988, a cardinal alluded “to the militant secularism of a non-secular culture, but secularist. This militant secularism has power... and is convinced that the moral and religious dimension of man is an obstacle to the realization of its modern project of society”.³⁹

From the foregoing, it is possible to conclude that in America and in Spain there is a coincidence in the use of the words secularism and secularity, and that the differences that are intended to be introduced have an ideological origin alien to historical reality, since secularism has not been exclusive or factious, and the dominant collective understanding.

³⁸ Consultation made on July 27, 2014.

³⁹ *Cit.* by La Parra López, Emilio and Fernández Sebastián, Javier, “Secularización”, *Diccionario político y social del siglo XX español*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2008, p. 1087.

VI. SECULARISM IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Regardless of the differences to which some doctrinal currents take refuge, the common use of *secularism* and *secularity* in French has registers analogous to Spanish. The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* identify the use of the secularity voice in the 19th century and defines it as “a character of religious neutrality, of independence in relation to churches and denominations. The secularity of an educational establishment, of a law, of an institution”. Later in the entrance *laïque*, points out that its roots date back to the 13th century and, as a second meaning, points out the following:

which is alien to any confession or religious doctrine. Secular morality. A secular state that does not recognize any religion as a state religion. The secular laws of Jules Ferry, inspired by secularism... A layman, a laywoman: person who holds secularism, secularity.⁴⁰

In turn, in the voice *secularism* (*laïcisme*), as in the case of secularity, the Academy identifies it from the nineteenth century, says: “doctrine tending to confer on institutions, especially education, a non-religious character, to establish them according to the principles of secularity”.⁴¹ It is noted that common use does not imply any discriminatory or intolerant bias, but rather points to aspects that are compatible and even equivalent.

In France the use of voices coincided in time clericalism, anticlericalism and secularism (*cléricisme*, *anticléricisme*, *laïcisme*). There are records of the first from 1865, and it meant the interference of the clergy in politics. The origin of the word

⁴⁰ 2. Qui est étranger à toute confession ou doctrine religieuse. Morale laïque. Un État laïque, qui ne reconnaît aucune religion comme religion d'État. Les lois laïques de Jules Ferry, inspirées par le laïcisme. L'enseignement laïque, conforme aux principes de la laïcité. L'école laïque et, subst. (fam. et vieilli), la laïque. Subst. Un laïque, une laïque, personne qui soutient le laïcisme, la laïcité”.

⁴¹ “2. Doctrine tendant à donner aux institutions, notamment à l'enseignement, un caractère non religieux, à les établir suivant les principes de la laïcité”.

is attributed to the French socialists. Secularist and secularism, in turn, have records in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, as a doctrine that tends to reserve some sectors of the century was understood as “a doctrine that tends to imprint institutions with a non-religious meaning”. In none of the cases did it have a connotation of animosity or against any religion. *Secularity* (*laïcité*) is identified around 1871 with the meaning of “secular character,” and after that date as the “political conception that implies the separation of civil society and religious society in which the state does not exercise any religious power nor the churches political power,” and by extension “character of what is organized according to secularism”.⁴²

The above data regarding clericalism, contributed by the philologists and linguists of *Le Grand Robert de langue française*, had also been identified by researchers collaborating with Émile Littré in its monumental *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, published in 1866. That voice is recorded there as a neologism and, in addition, *clericalize* (*cléricaiser*: “inspire the spirit of clericalism”) and *clericalization* (*cléricalisation*: “act of clericalizing”). From the perspective of Littré, they were voices coined in response to ultramontane doctrines.⁴³ Unlike those lexicons, in 1968, Olivier de la Brosse defined secularism as “a state from which it is subtracted from the jurisdiction of the Church and is non-denominational”, and as secularism to the “aggressive movement to defend and promote secularism”.⁴⁴ Specific elements of the ecclesiastical position are included here, which are not part of the language of current use of French speakers and, from their own perspective, the contradiction of affirming that secularism promotes secularity incurs.

⁴² See *Le Grand Robert de langue française*, París, Dictionnaires Robert, 2001, t. II, p. 205 y, t. IV, p. 622 ; Rey, Alain, *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, París, LeRobert, 2006, vol. II, p. 1962.

⁴³ Véase Littré, Émile, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, París, reimpression por Partenaire Livres (1998), vol. I, p. 966.

⁴⁴ De La Brosse, Olivier *et al.*, *Dictionnaire de la Foi chrétienne*, París, Cerf, 1968. Spanish translation, with the title *Diccionario del cristianismo*, Madrid, Herder, 1986, p. 418.

Other lexical repertoires in France, such as the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, also do not distinguish between secularism and secularity. This does not exclude, of course, the technical distinction carried out by the doctrine; it only shows that in the ordinary use of the language to speak for the secularity and against the secularism it can cause confusion to the detriment of what every cultural construction aims to do: make itself intelligible to the largest number of people and thus generate forms of behavior and adherence to the rules that ensure the effectiveness of institutions.

Moreover, the concepts from the Enlightenment, especially those collected by the *Encyclopédie* de Diderot and D'Almbert, denote a French tradition alien to the inquisitorial and persecutory purposes that a part of the contemporary doctrine attributes to secularism. In the Age of Enlightenment, *Laïque* applied to people and things outside the Church; Lay powers were also referred to in order to differentiate them from spiritual powers, and a distinction was made between lay judges who acted in the name of the “prince and the Republic”, and ecclesiastical judges who acted in accordance with the authority “of God himself.”⁴⁵ The largest articles corresponded to the voices *seculaire* and *seculier*, that had different shades, also *sécularisation* and *secularisé*, linked to a historical process that had culminated in the Peace of Westphalia, none of which had implications contrary to religious dogma. The most that was achieved was to explain that the secularization of a considerable number of properties in Germany had been intended to compensate the nobility for the expenses incurred as a result of the Thirty Years' War, and that these assets had in turn been accumulated by the high clergy due to “ignorance and of superstition” with which many individuals acted against “the temporary greatness of the sacred ministry”.⁴⁶ Here too there is no tendentious use of concepts.

⁴⁵ *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Neuf-chastel, Samuel Faulche et Compagnie, 1765, Vol. IX, p. 198.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. XIV, pp. 881 and et seq.

French doctrine has been careful to specify that its concept of secularity is not equivalent to Anglo-Saxon secularism. However, so that the English-speaking reader understands the scope of the expressions, French translations into English sometimes treat both terms as synonyms.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the records document the use in English of *laicity* and *laicality* just at the beginning of the 20th century, identified as Gallicisms. In current use it disappeared *laicality*, but its presence is explained by how innovative it was at the time it began to be used.

In Italian, the common usage of *laicità*, identifiable as of 1869, corresponds to “the quality or condition of who is or what is secular”, and secularism, dated in 1863, means an ideological position “that maintains the complete independence of the political thought and action of the citizens in relation to the ecclesiastical authority”. In this sense, the standardized use of the voice that identifies Salvatore Battaglia⁴⁸ corresponds to the “claim for intrinsic dignity and the complete autonomy of temporal and profane values with respect to religious ones”, as well as the “claim for reason and its free and critical exercise as a source of knowledge”. The same lexicon states that secularity is the “secular character of a civil or political institution that makes it independent of the ecclesiastical-religious authority.” Battaglia also shows the lexicological productivity of the voice *laico* from which they derive, among other words, *laicocefalia*, ownership of a layman headed an institution; *laicocracia*, political supremacy of the laity; political power exercised by the laity, and *laicología*, branch of ecclesial discipline that studies the mission of the laity in the ecclesiastical community. In 1937, a few years after the signing of

⁴⁷ See, for example, Liogier, Raphael, “Laïcité on the edge in France: between the theory of church-state separation and the praxis of state-church confusion”, en *Macquarie Law Journal*, Sidney, Macquarie Law School, 2009, vol. 9, p. 25: “Secularism, or laïcité, has been enshrined in French law and political praxis since 1905”.

⁴⁸ Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, Turín, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1973, t. VIII, pp. 697 et seq.

the Lateran Treaties and during the fascist regime, the appearance of the voice secular was registered, “relative to secularism; inspired by secularism”.⁴⁹

In German, the voices *Laizismus* and *Laizität* are equivalent, as Dieter Nohlen shows in his *Diccionario de ciencia política*. In Portuguese, the voice *secularity* (*laicidade*) is used to denote the lay condition of a person or an institution, and *secularism* has two meanings: doctrine that postulates the intervention of the state in the government of the Church, and doctrine that supports the non-religious character of institutions and especially of education. The current use of both terms is complementary and follows patterns similar to the Spanish language in terms of the formation of suffixes.⁵⁰ In general, in these three languages the dominant usage is similar to that prevailing in Spanish.

VII. SECULARISM IN THE CONSTITUENT CONGRESSES

In the Constituent Congress of 1856-1857, when discussing the project of article 15, referring to freedom of conscience, the most used expressions were freedom of conscience, freedom of worship and tolerance. It was kept in mind that to disqualify those who spoke out for these freedoms, they were described as socialists.⁵¹ According to the meaning that has been seen, the ecclesiastical hierarchy gave this word.

On the other hand, when it was discussed article 3 in the Constituent Congress of 1917 the references to secularism (N) and

⁴⁹ See lo Zingarelli, vocabolario della lingua italiana, Bolonia, Zanichelli, 2003, p. 971.

⁵⁰ Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea*, Lisboa, Verbo, vol. II, p. 2216.

⁵¹ See Zarco, Francisco, *Historia del Congreso Extraordinario Constituyente de 1856 y 1857*, Mexico, Ignacio Cumplido, 1857, vol. I, pp. 771 et seq., and vol. II, pp. 5 et seq.

secularism (A), as synonyms, prevailing in its use the first voice.⁵² In addition, it was fully aware that with both words alluded to the intention that education be secular, a position rejected by the Church.

Luis G. Monzón, deputy for Sonora, was in favor of a radical educational reform, so he understood that calling it laic and applying the principles of secularism was insufficient. These words, therefore, were considered condescending to the Church. In his private opinion, Monzón expressed:

It is excused to insist, after the above, that teaching in official schools must be secular. Giving this word the meaning of neutral, it has been understood that secularism closes the teacher's lips against any error dressed in some religious appearance. The commission understands by teaching that is alien to any religious belief, the teaching that transmits the truth and disabuses of error, inspired by a rigorously scientific criterion; the commission does not find another word that expresses its idea more than that of lay person, and it has used this, stating that it is not its purpose to give it the meaning of neutral indicated at the beginning.

...What is recommended by secularism?

Do not deal at all within the classrooms with any matter that transcends the Church and strictly respect the religious beliefs of home, however erroneous, absurd and irrational they may be.

... And don't say that secularism can attack abuse... No! Rather, it requires the teacher to refrain from discussing in the school—despite being the temple of truth— all kinds of religious matters, neither to recommend them nor to combat them

...Based on the foregoing and agreeing on the other points contained in the opinion of the constitutional reform commission, to which I have the high honor of belonging, I ask that article 3 be made. that I deal with, the only modification that the word laic, in all the times that it appears, it is replaced by the rational word.

⁵² See the debates of December 13, 14 and 16, 1916, corresponding to article 3, in Marván Laborde, Ignacio, *Diario de los Debates del Congreso Constituyente de 1916-1917*, Mexico, Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, 2005, vol. I, pp. 149 et seq.

Why did Monzón insist that education be rational and not laic? Precisely because he understood that secularism was equivalent to neutrality and respect, while rationalism would force mentors to explain all phenomena by denying the veracity of metaphysical considerations.

The Veracruz deputy Alberto Román stated that, before the Constituent Assembly, in Jalisco, Sonora, Veracruz and Yucatán “secularism had been accepted” as a modality of public education; in turn, the Guanajuato deputy Fernando Lizardi stated that “the entire assembly is for secularism in primary education”.

Pedro Chapa, from Tamaulipas, correctly used the voice secularity to refer to the school that acted in a secular way: “primary school—we all agree— must be secular; so the only thing we differ in is the procedure we must follow to obtain that secularity in primary education”.

Another constituent, Félix F. Palavicini, from Tabasco, expressed:

Mr. Calderón [Esteban Baca Calderón, from Jalisco] has exchanged ideas with whom he is speaking and has agreed that the essential modification is to put in this article 3 that secularism should be required in private schools and has agreed with me that in article 27 is the rest.

As can be seen, representatives from different parts of the country used the same concept of secularism and secularity, which were then in common use in Mexico and in no case had a factious meaning. On the contrary, as Monzón’s intervention indicates, secularism was considered a very soft concept and for that reason it was opposed to the education project laic, demanding a more radical definition which he called rational.

VIII. FINAL REMARKS

In the same papal proclamations where *secularism* was qualified from being an anti-religious doctrine, freedom of conscience was

called a “pestilential error”, freedom of the press was considered to be a “curse” whose purpose was to “freely spread active poisons”, “the greatest misfortunes” were foreseen for religion “if the wishes of those who seek the separation of Church and state were fulfilled”, the “writings that run everywhere” of the “doctrines that deny the fidelity and submission due to princes” were condemned, they described as conspiratorial the “abominable” opinions so that the “concord between the priesthood and the Empire” would disappear, it was pointed out that the flourishing states succumbed “due to the immoderate freedom of opinion, freedom in oratory and desire for novelties”, and secularism was prosecuted as the “plague of our times”.

It would be necessary to establish on what reasonable grounds it is possible to grant that the Church was right when it disqualified secularism but not when he censored everything else. By admitting that secularism corresponds to an intolerant position and that for this reason what proceeds in a constitutional state is secularity, in a certain way, it is accepted that the papacy was correct, since the 19th century, in condemning the theses held by the liberals of Latin America and Europa, and that for that reason it is necessary to rectify the liberal excesses.

By admitting the proscription of an ideological position that for a long time was based on the use of the expression secularism, the perception of a long struggle to build a constitutional state that includes and guarantees the rights of minorities can be eroded.

But aside from the historical disquisition, what is relevant is that the conventional differentiation between voices that have run parallel and that are the object of a complementary common use, runs the risk of generating confusion at the present time. It can lead those unfamiliar with a doctrinal distinction to consider that secularism is a factious attitude and that some arguments in favor of freedom are a trap to cover up attacks on religion. In a way, the expressions fundamentalism and secularism

would be equivalent, as radical forms of intolerance that seek the exclusion of non-believers, in the first case, and of believers, in the second.

Language is the best means to generate understanding; the greatest care must be taken not to turn it into an instrument that fosters confusion and bewilderment.

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