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# LIBERAL VALUES DOGMATISM

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In Europe, there is a form of populism that is not often labelled as such. It is often identified as belonging to the Left but, in fact supporters can easily be found in the Centre or Right of politics. It has to do with that characteristic of populism: the appropriation of “popular will”, of “what is right”, of “unquestionable orthodoxy”.

The basic premise of this new dogmatism is that the common public square is neutral, and consequently no code of values –and specifically Christian values– should be accepted as normative. Of course, this is impossible because no society –and especially no political system– is morally neutral. It cannot function without a well-defined code of shared values. In fact, in many areas, a code of values is being imposed, but they are described as “universal values”. It is the case with, for example, gender ideology, which has its origins in the left, but is now enthusiastically supported by many right wing followers.

Gender ideology fulfils the criteria of populism in two aspects: it self-proclaims itself to be expressing the will of the people, and it traces a sharp boundary between “we, the orthodoxia” and “the others”, who are labelled as ultraconservative, homophobic, etc. This ideology assumes the exclusive right to define what is “normal”, what everybody should recognize and believe, often ignoring the most basic scientific evidence. When medical issues are concerned, scientific fact is left behind and is supplanted by ideology; it is ideology that defines what is truth and what is lie. This is made in a soft, subtle process, not always easy to detect, although sometimes it is reinforced by threat and fear. When I ask my doctor colleagues why they remain silent before statements that defy science and common sense, they usually answer: “And who dares to oppose? Should we do so, the LGBTBI lobby would crush us”. In Europe, attempts are being made to impose a new form of totalitarianism, in which a lobby decides what is true and what is false, what is permitted and what is forbidden, with the unavoidable consequences upon democratic rights of free thinking, freedom of speech and the right to dissent.

In the battle of language, this diffuse form of populism is defining what is “progressive” and what is not, and thus imposing its ideas on society. It is hard to find a rational reason for why abortion or a certain sexual orientation is progressive but nobody is supposed to ask this question. When I asked a right-wing friend why he supported a law that established anti-democratic privileges for the LGBTBI community, he simply answered: “Because it has to do with the unavoidable progress of society”.

Confirming some of the characteristics mentioned before, this form of populism is appropriating for itself the right to define what all of us are expected to recognize as progressive, a right that should instead be in the hands of everybody. They are succeeding in doing so.

In Latin America; I personally know two Evangelicals: One of them is a leader of Partido Encuentro Social (PES) in Mexico; its political programme is really progressive, clearly favouring poor people and advocating for a redistribution of wealth and the leading role of civil society. The party declared its support for López Obrador<sup>1</sup>, a presidential candidate of another party, a left-wing one, and, in turn, PES obtained from Obrador the withdrawing of LGBTI agenda from his programme. Simply for this reason, all the media, from both left and right, labelled PES as “ultraconservative”, ignoring PES’ real political programme.

The other example is Fabricio Alvarado, the recent candidate to the Presidency of Costa Rica; his programme supports a regeneration of politics in his country, with an effective fight against corruption, but, as he insisted in rejecting the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (CIDH) resolution which tried to impose gender ideology on his country, he was disqualified as “ultraconservative”.

It is important to help society see that our common right to freely decide what is right and what is not is being taken away from us. This new form of totalitarian populism is establishing what is orthodox and what is not, what one may believe and what is forbidden to believe. As the Roman Catholic Church decreed in Trent five centuries ago, this populism now decrees, “Heresy has no rights”. Unfortunately, many of us are regarded as “heretics”.

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<sup>1</sup> He finally became President of Mexico in June 2018.