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Postmodernism in Christian Bioethics Myths and Facts. A Proposal for Dialogue with Prof. Denis Müller¹

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Abstract: *To the dialogue invitation proposed by professor Denis Müller from the University of Laussane, Switzerland, it is well and even necessary to receive an answer in the way it was suggested: that of the openness to social reality described by the Swiss author as secular, with a multipolar orientation and system of values. In the name of this advice, we are bound by the interlocutor's intellectual rigor to determine that not all the European societies resemble the Swiss one, that there is a great diversity in unity and this diversity directly determines the tackling methodology of the main topics of ethics in general, of bioethics in particular and of the christian bioethics in our case. If the Western side of the continent feels the necessity to rejuvenate Christian spirituality through the debate from secular and postmodern approaches or by using a platform that also includes the postmodern secularism, the nations on the Eastern continent, subject for more than a half century to the soviet union, practitioner of an aggressive and frequently repressive atheism, need time to freely deepen the faith they actually never gave up, assuming the rigors and risks of clandestinity. Thus, we find ourselves facing two complementary challenges, laid-down equally before the theologian and the bioethicist, to which the author tries to respond with pleasure, but also from the necessity to clarify some speculative assumptions, not entirely*

wrong though, from the lack of knowledge of concrete reality. In the contemporary society, in the melting pot of common Europe, we also identify the eagerness to be identical with the models, to imitate their behaviour, with the resulting pseudo-culture, without roots in the profound society and, probably, without any other consequences, but a certain media effervescence, in this circumstance, the refusal to respond to a challenge of such an authentic intellectual quality, as is the one proposed by professor Denis Müller, would be equivalent to that of hiding the truth in bad faith. Naturally the need for dialogue dispersed by professor Denis Müller is permanent, and this essay does not have any claim for completeness. I hope that the attention drawn by this essay would be fruitful.

Keywords: *Christian bioethics, postmodernism, debate.*

1. Introduction

In the era of an unprecedented expansion of science, of a unique multiplication of philosophical perspectives, of the most daring intellectual initiatives, of the globalization of sciences, trades, communications, to make the religion

the main pillar may seem to some a gesture of trying to forcibly bring into the present a form of spiritual life that is not only very old, but that inevitably bears the scars of time. In this context, the views of Professor Denis Müller definitively lack a very important element: the finding according to which the beliefs of any kind, including the Christian traditionalist ones, cannot be put on the same plane with the attitudes, regardless of their being postmodern, in terms of temporary and secular employment in their expression. Faith is based on a system of values and practices, while secularism has no system of values or practices. Secularism comes down to denying the traditional values of faith, to anticlericalism and, sometimes, to atheism. If all who believe in salvation by following the path shown by Jesus Christ have a system of values, and also a common goal, those who deny this system of values are together only in the negation, otherwise they can be very different and even opponents. It remains to be shown whether the postmodernism is synonymous with such a fragmentation of society or with a certain degree of alienation, if the individual is to be seen as the axis of our discussion. In this context, the Hegelian term of "Aufhebung", to which Professor Denis Müller is referring, and which is translated as

"presumption", could be replaced by "Verfremdung", or "alienation".

2. Who is able to use the binomial "laicity" and open secularity versus ideological secularism, and for whom is it useful?

In the view consistently expressed by Professor Denis Müller, the contemporaneity is defined as pluri-religious and secular, an accurate description, validated both by the situation in Switzerland and in Romania, even though the two countries have more differences than similarities, with the consequence of preserving the meaning of some concepts in both cultures, the Swiss and the Romanian, but with different nuances. Experience teaches us to cherish the detail, and we will demonstrate below that this detail makes the whole functional or, conversely, a failure.

The issue addressed by Professor Denis Müller derives from the concern for the religious intolerance and indifference, which he aims to combat through laicity or open secularity, to which he assigns a positive meaning² (1), (2).

The author sometimes lets us believe that he forgot about or that he no longer takes account of the fact that we are concerned, in the last analysis, by a set of moral rules also in terms of Christian bioethics, constituting the

ethics de facto, with the need for some acceptable and understandable benchmarks, especially when the profession (We are referring to doctors) requires practical and fast solutions, in accordance with the evolution of the patient's needs. We should intervene here with some nuances. In our opinion, both intolerance and religious indifference must first be managed, and only after they're efficiently managed, are we in a situation that allows us to set up a coherent project to fight them. We are talking here about two distinct phases of the same process, which involve different contexts and strategies, but which, by their importance for Christian bioethics, cannot be placed in the relatively comfortable space of assumptions.

If we admit that it is good that the Christian Bioethics demarches be oriented towards the man in distress, it is impossible to overlook the fact that he rarely lives the moral, theological or ethical disputes argued by academics on a personal level. What comes first is the disease, but he already has his personality shaped (except for the children), and therefore, religious or not, atheist or not, and placed in the pretty crowded space-time area that his bio-psychosocial and spiritual approach implies, any attempt to convert in both directions will hardly find its place. That is why a systemic

approach to a field known as difficult and controversial, such as bioethics, necessarily involves a road map and a map with strategic flags, the necessary tools in a context that cannot be definitively solved by its very nature, but that, however, has to be permanently managed, step by step.

Traditionally, bioethicists' reference system is rooted in religion, in general, and in Christianity in our particular case, a tradition which Professor Denis Müller does not only admit, but he boldly and creatively develops, by noting that not every innovation is subsequently confirmed, due to the fact that it is possible - and we often face this situation - that the practice does not validate the findings from the seminar podium. Only thus can we explain the author's focus on a (in fact some, because it is about more highly topical and contemporaneous issues) - theological debate of which the ethical element, specifically the Christian bioethics, gradually disappears in the face of some strategic, important and useful positioning when we take account of the problem in general, but less productive in trying to apply them to a particular case. With high respect for the erudition and vigor of the theological demonstration of Professor Denis Müller, we have to remember here that bioethics, in this case Christian bioethics, in Romania

and elsewhere, faces concrete problems that are impossible to solve only through a demonstration of theological eloquence (3).

In the unconditional availability to the "open" debate, Professor Denis Müller sees an advantage of postmodernism pragmatically addressed by secular means and in accordance with the present reality³ (1), (2). The experience of the past 25 years in Romania shows that such debates usually start from the premise of intellectual openness toward a pluralistic system of values, but not all end up the same way. Good intentions and the correct procedures do not always lead to expected results, and sometimes, in spite of positive motivation, events can register a negative, unwanted turn, and this precisely because of *the* openness of these discussions, opening up targetting not just theologians, moralists and physicians in good faith, but also the radical elements, frozen on harsh positions, that see in this challenge an opportunity, and that constantly search for a certain type of hegemony. And as such debates are usually related to specific decision-making acts, it is impossible to separate them from the sphere of politics, a circumstance that we have to take into account and which further complicates things.

It should not be understood in any way that we are against open discussion, against reasonable and respectful approach of the otherness of sensitive issues such as alternative sexual behaviors, abortion, transplant etc. Such discussions are sometimes needed, sometimes are even inevitable, but they should not be inflicted for the sake of demonstration; they are not a purpose in itself and it is better that every time we provoke such a debate, we priorly weigh the advantages and disadvantages that may result in the end, as the first condition for doing good is to try as much as possible to do no harm.

We believe that Professor Denis Müller overbids the differences between the official positions of the different religions in his desire to reconcile the secular spirit with the religious one on the platform of tolerance and of relative indifference that is politically correct and postmodern. In our view, it is less significant if, through the authorized representatives of the church, a cult maintains an official position in an ethical issue under discussion, a thing which is, ultimately and at the same time, one of its purposes. Such an official position is, first of all, an honoured duty to the members of that community of faith, which they expect and which strengthens them in their belief. We do not think that it

would be productive to ask the churches to rebate such delimitations in the name and spirit of the faith they practice. It is something different and, obviously, much less productive when the official position of the church includes, in certain cases and circumstances, the calling to the rejection, by whatever means, of a certain formal decision or of an attitude manifested in society, of a group behavior under public debate from the perspective of Christian bioethics.

We will continue to refer to an example that does not directly belong to the field of Christian bioethics, but that is related to a general question of ethics: the parliamentary debates, but also the Romanian civil society debates on the issue of legalizing prostitution. The Romanian Orthodox Church has exposed their unequivocal official position: for this church, legalizing prostitution is unacceptable because it leads to the infringement of the church's norms; it is a clear position against the issue, that makes it impossible to return to the debate. This position was considered "traditionalist" by Professor Denis Müller, who urged to bear further "open" discussions between the representatives of the Orthodox Church and the civil society, especially those groups and organizations that advocate legalizing

prostitution. But we ask two questions:

1. Who would have used these discussions?
2. What would have been the outcome of these discussions?

A possible answer to the first question would be: the open discussions would have turned useful to the radical elements of both sides, finding in them the opportunity to make their positions public, even more emphatically. No one would have guaranteed that the discussions would remain only at the level of rational, scientific, ethical or religious arguments. Who would have stemmed the attacks on persons or institutions, when the spirits had stirred? The press, for which such unwanted amplification would have been the strong point of the approach? Politicians seeking votes for the next election? We ask this question from the standpoint of the moral responsibility of any activist in the post-modern society, regarding the consequences of his/her actions, but also in terms of the message that they convey to the members of society.

The second question has an even more discouraging answer. The predictable result would be a hardening of harsh, radical positions, a deepening of the trenches populated by extremist elements of both sides,

and certainly not a clarification of the issue in the eyes of the civil society, as the status quo would be damaged, and not improved. On the other hand, it is obvious that the same existing condition in Romania does not reclaim such a debate, because the Romanian Orthodox Church, in spite of its intransigent position in this dispute, has not called for repressive measures against those who are involved in practicing prostitution, has not insinuated that it will call for civil disobedience in case of legalization, and has not undertaken any demarche resulting in that the persons involved will no longer receive the spiritual assistance of the church, which, of course, cannot be provided outside its compliance. The opening, in our view, should be exercised in addressing each case in particular, not in finding general solutions, as the common denominator may be located very far from the original message so that it is diluted to incomprehensibility. If the traditional churches will accept in haste and for fear that it may seem outdated, a relativization of their positions of principle, the only thing that will come out of this would be a possible dilution of their message, which will become confused and will baffle the adherents, with no guarantee that the deliberate closeness, practiced with the best

thoughts by Professor Denis Müller, would be mutual.

3. Why shouldn't bioethics (still) have their reservations regarding the traditional positions?

Professor Denis Müller is ready to declare the traditional approaches in bioethics as anachronistic⁴ (1), (2). The following demonstration can be validated or rejected in a theological dispute, but its importance for Christian Bioethics remains secondary.

This way, we might miss the opportunity to use the Christian bioethics to build a bridge between the Christian religions, and not to make another aspect of divergence, as Professor Denis Müller urges us. In the end, we inevitably ask ourselves: to what extent is this about Christian bioethics? The question seems justified given that bioethics is not a monopoly of the Christian religion, just like the prayer or morality are not exclusive domains belonging to Christianity. As Christian bioethicists, by the attitudes we adopt, we have to keep those limits proper to the Christian thought and confession, as conscious and voluntary acceptance of such limits ultimately makes us Christians and distinguishes us from non-Christians. We have already used the term "limits". We are actually speaking about the religion's lines of force in which we believe and that we

profess. They will be considered as "limits" by the non-Christians, may they be atheists or not, due to the different value system. The use of the term "limits" in this article was intentional, meant to draw attention to the hidden danger of the relativizations undertaken by Professor Denis Müller.

As long as the adherence to a moral code will be considered a "traditional" approach, with the speculation of its uselessness in a laic, postmodern secular world, just because not everyone respects and recognizes that moral code, and as long as the parties will settle at the same table of discussions for the sake of political correctness that is somewhat understood mechanically, we will fail to do something else than to sow confusion, especially among those who have made a lifestyle out of complying with a moral code. Those who have renounced the privilege to observe a moral code will not be encouraged in any way to approach such a lifestyle governed by a moral code; they will understand that even the devotees of the "traditional" moral code began to doubt its timeliness, will find the call for dialogue as a confirmation of the fact that the moral code itself is obsolete and requires its revision, replacing some severe principles with other more relaxed ones, meaning to dilute the moral rigor up to the loss of relevance, to its

transformation into a common denominator, based on the principle "anything goes".

Professor Denis Müller offers very instructive examples of the Swiss social organization, of which some are worthy of imitation, but it should be understood that the Swiss society is not yet a standard for the whole world. It couldn't meet this quality as long as the historical, political, social, economic and religious conditions are so different, even if we limit ourselves only to the European continent, without resorting to the comparisons approved by Professor Denis Müller with the oversea realities.

We do not consider the Romanian experience as opposed to the Swiss one, but we dare note that they do differ. In December 1947, Romania became the People's Republic of Romania, a more or less laic state - an expression that can surprise, but that is justified, because the state was laic, but the authorities were practicing, in plain sight, an aggressive atheism that turned into the state's religion. These authorities did not hesitate to persecute the church and the Christian practitioners, and even if such persecutions didn't always take extreme forms, they left deep scars in people's consciousness. This didn't prevent the members of the nomenclature to use, in different circumstances, the help of the church.

Of course, the regime wanted to simulate an authentic religious freedom, for which the Romanian Orthodox Church of the '50s had a number of priests almost double compared to that of the Soviet Union from the same era; the monachism was stronger than the one during the inter-war period: "If in 1938 there were 154 monasteries with 4,100 monks and nuns, in 1958 there were 191 monasteries with 6,400 monks and nuns" (4).

Returning after 1989 to a normal legal situation did not automatically

mean an alignment of consciences to the standards of Western Europe. These noticeable differences were highlighted by demographic studies and must be seen as a reality, just as, for Professor Denis Müller, the existence of a predominantly laic society and the need for dialogue are a reality. Applying the assumptions stated by Professor Müller (valid in Switzerland) in a country such as Romania, would be a "postmodern approach", as unrealistic as the "traditionalist approach" in the Western society (see Figure 1).

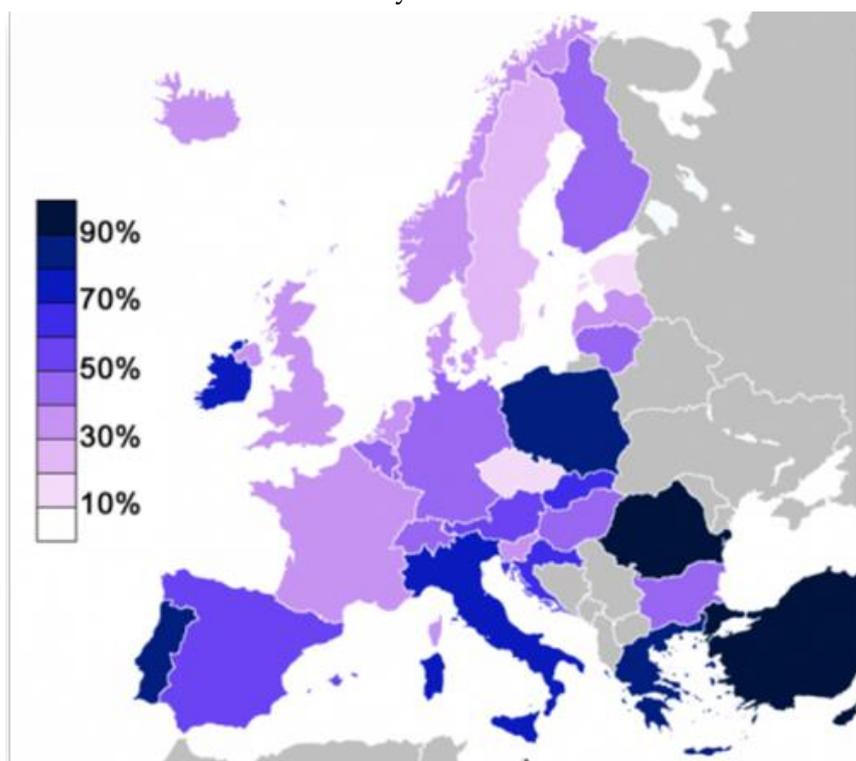


Figure 1. Eurobarometer of 2005. The percentage of those who believe in God in each country

As Kevin Wildes was already showing, "Christian bioethics is not a change of direction, it is the fulfillment of a journey" (5). There is, of course, an older debate between the supporters of the synchronism and those of the diachronism, a debate which is related rather to the field of cultural philosophy than to morals. For the Romanians, the synchronism constituted at best an aspiration that applies to certain academic circles and that has not comprised, until now, any significant layers of society.

The return to the "European normality" after December 1989 was neither simple nor quick. It did not

look anything like a nightmare that ended on the Christmas day of 1989 in order to make room for sunny and happy days. It was rather like replacing a nightmare with another nightmare. The reinsertion of the nation among the Western democracies has been a difficult and lengthy process that is not yet fully complete, a process that proves to be dotted with ups and downs, marked by dramatic moments and numerous crises, a process whose management denounces more than the mere closeness through dialogue of the groups with different theological views (see Figure 2).

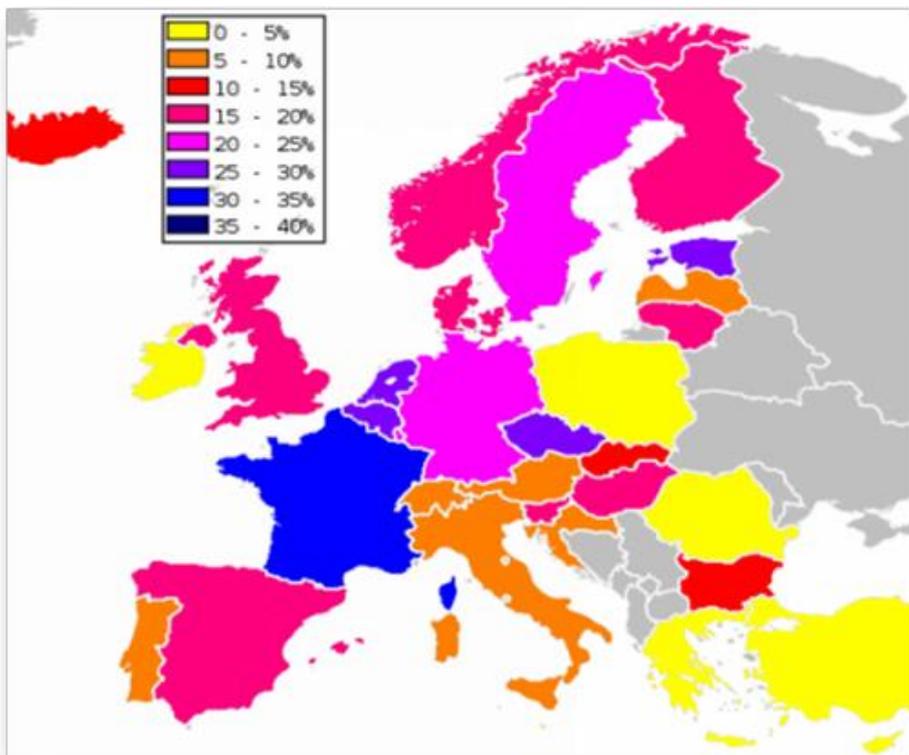


Figure 2. The map of the percentage of atheists, under the same Eurobarometer

In the midst of this process where time is an essential factor and where the desire of burning the stages is always present, Romanians have imported, with zeal and often without much discernment, the problems of the Western society. Given that they have no real background in Romania, they rather reflect the desire to urgently minimize the differences between the Western societies and Eastern ones, if not in terms of content, at least in terms of form, in some cases becoming some simple mimicry exercises. An example of such a mimetic attitude is the anticlericalism, a manifestation that, in our view, does not justify its real roots in the Romanian society, a society that only now overcomes the traumas of a half a century of repressive atheist regime.

From the perspective of the Christian bioethics, opening a dialogue on such a theme, in fact false, would firstly show a recognition of the real existence of the problem, a recognition that, in our view, would constitute a fraud, because, as we underlined, the Romanian anticlericalism is an imitation, and it doesn't come from tense or really critical situations in the core of our society. In reality, the Romanian Orthodox Church reacted very wisely to these challenges... by not offering any answer, while it was not appropriate to make statements that

legitimize a spurious phenomenon. The same church also abstained from condemning the obviously provocative attacks against the clergy, attacks that took rise from the desire of legitimacy by all means of a certain type of activism, and not from a real need that enjoys the real support and that reclaims proper attention, including that of the Christian theologians and bioethicists.

In our view, the main problem that arises in the present Romanian society is a way to determine the public to reach informed decisions, an attitude that is the best cure against manipulation. We have great reservations whether the dialogue with the manipulator or manipulators is a realistic method, with more chances of obtaining tangible results in the field that interests us than the method Professor Denis Müller calls "traditional"⁵ (1), (2). In our opinion, it is not the case of a potential nostalgia for a traumatic past in a country like Romania which has to find its own solutions to return to normalcy, including in the field of Christian bioethics.

Professor Denis Müller has an accurate and complete view of the present of his society, the Swiss one⁶ (1), (2). We are grateful for his efforts, and we try to find common points that bring us closer and also for the challenges posed by this society to

theologians and bioethicists Christians alike⁷. Burning the stages in the process of returning to normality after half a century of totalitarianism, seems to be more of a myth than a reality, the latter remaining complex and forcing us to be patient and to persevere. *While on the West European continent, scholars just like Professor Denis Müller question the inclusion of secular approaches in the broader scheme of the social dialogue, to the Eastern part of the continent and especially for Romania, the current problem is to prevent the replacement of a type of manipulation (by totalitarianism) with another type of manipulation, the manipulation within an open society, because the freedom of expression works equally for both the honest citizen and the manipulator agent who pursues interests that are completely different than those that can be identified in the common field of bioethics and theology.* Professor Denis Müller abides by dividing the people into believers and seculars, and he is not under the necessity to distinguish between those of good and of bad faith like we are.

Professor Denis Müller operates a difference between secularity and secularism that is welcome for any Christian bioethics debate, but in Romania's case, we have to appeal again to the nuances, because the state is secular, but the citizen is not necessarily so or does not see the moral problems unconditionally, in

terms of secularism. The Romanian citizen still feels the consequences of the trauma of a half of century in which he did not exercise the freedom of conscience under normal conditions- those that coincide precisely with what the West now considers a "traditional approach". For us, setting the secular groups at the same level⁸ (1), (2) is a position easily interpretable as a return to the past, and it would not be considered a step forward, towards an era when theology and reason are no longer disjunctive notions.

However, we have our founded reserves against Professor Denis Müller's claims of a perfect political correctness⁹ (1), (2). We believe that atheism is a product of theological thought that does not precede it in any way. Consequently, Professor Denis Müller is right when he focuses against exclusion, against radical or conflict-generating attitudes, that are and remain counterproductive. Reaching maturity, it is natural for a healthy theological thinking to produce a reasonable dose of atheism, ultimately proving, in this less orthodox way, its viability and even its force, just like a healthy body produces its own antibodies.

But Professor Denis Müller's premise is wrong, because we don't have a mature theological thought everywhere, refined through

centuries of spiritual experience, that is extended to the whole society, and not just around the specialized departments of the major ecclesiastic institutes or universities. The Romanian society is matured in its spiritual thinking through the tests it was subjected to, some perverse, others violent, and it has made a goal of keeping the values of faith, and not of debating them. Too little time has passed since the historical moment when our society had again the right to enjoy the real conscious liberty in order to subject it, in mass, to a new test, even if post-modernity leaves the impression of a strong secularization, and therefore appears to impose such an attitude. It is a situation comparable to that of a teenager who went prematurely into the mysteries of the adult life; even if the initiation is made under the sign of prophylaxis, he might discover some of these mysteries untimely, under the sign of curiosity and not that of maturation.

4. Some comments as a conclusion to the comments of Professor Denis Müller

First of all, a noticeable detail stands out- Professor Denis Müller criticizes the statements of Herman Tristram Engelhardt jr. and Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes, but without entering into an argument with them. Avoiding controversy, Professor Denis Müller

elegantly avoids the obligation to give the reader an alternative.

In fact, he politely and kindly suggests, the statements' limits of the cited authors, limits that are admitted to a point even by the authors themselves. After all, there is only a difference of employment between Professor Denis Müller and those who try to enter into an argument.

- Herman Tristram Engelhardt Jr. and Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes see the bioethics in relation to their own beliefs, which may be situated in the generic name of "traditional Christianity" (6), (7), (8), (9).
- In terms of this position "within the faith", Professor Denis Müller takes a step backward, widening the frame that for him also comprises¹⁰ the secular postmodernity that is willing to accept the value system of traditional Christianity only sometimes and only up to a point, arbitrarily set by each pensive subject.

Continuing his commentary, Professor Denis Müller notes the inefficiency of the radical attitudes¹¹ (he calls them "positions") within traditional Christianity and which exclude, if not even condemn the secular postmodernity, i.e. the separation and even the generation of antagonistic attitudes embracing the faith and its rigors, from those who

have begun to consider them "traditional" only because otherwise, the secular postmodernity would become a trivial abandonment of the rigor, a replacement of order with adventure.

The observations of Professor Denis Müller are correct, but devoid of purpose. He reminds us just that, through globalization, our world is multicultural, with multiple value systems, and a multipolar orientation. Decades ago, Professor Leon Birnbaum published his studies on multipolar logics, where "true" or "false" were just particular cases in the multipolar system of thinking (10). But Professor Denis Müller recognizes that the doctor cannot leave his faith and his system of values at the hospital's locker room with the intention to demonstrate, while doing his job, the viability of a bioethics inspired by a multipolar and largely secular postmodernism, while respecting the rigors of political correctness. The dilemma insinuated but not named by Professor Denis Müller (because he does not know what to do with it next) is the tension (that is, in fact, felt by everyone) between a multipolar world, on the one hand, and the person on the other hand, a person that can have multiple identities only in a particular situation that belongs to the pathology.

Nonetheless, a fact that cannot stand to be ignored is that Professor Denis Müller writes and thinks in accordance with the vital experience offered by a balanced, tolerant, and prosperous society. The prestigious University of Lausanne, where Professor Denis Müller teaches, is established in a confederation with a democratic tradition of eight centuries, neutral and spared by wars, with three major cultures (French, German and Italian) harmoniously intersecting, a society that can always be a model, but that is, at least for now, risky for us to take as a standard. With the same realism shown by Professor Denis Müller, we have to admit that we live in a world that is rather unbalanced, or rather seeking for soothing balance, we live in a world that is often intolerant, and still far from being prosperous for everyone.

Unfortunately, the approach suggested by Professor Denis Müller, the one to open all channels of communication between tradition and innovation, between traditional Christianity and secular postmodernity, between science and faith, is as risky as the boundaries more or less radical of the "closed" positions¹². If the barricades that are naturally or artificially raised between attitudes generate potential conflicts, hence becoming counterproductive, their demolition through the

unreserved opening of global communication seems to be, at least in practice, a project that exceeds the management ability of those who initiated it. We have the example of the European Union, a grandiose project which has so far faced huge problems that stemmed precisely because of the measures taken in order to solve other previous problems; we have, within the society, the example of ecumenism, whose acceptance radicalized and mobilized far more followers of the radical or harsh religious currents than the proselytism ever did.

In integrum, blaming Professor Denis Müller's comments is by no means useful. Instead they should be read and interpreted by through the dialectical-critical device suggested by the author himself. The limits that the professor from Lausanne finds in other authors, otherwise correct, are applicable and valid in his own comments, too. In a comparison that some may find frivolous, yet related to the alert and casual style of the author, Professor Denis Müller urges us "to love all football, and not only your favorite team". The idea is generous and fruitful to the point where we are forced to determine what football actually is. We will then note that for some it is a sport, for others a source of money, big money, and therefore a business, for the public it is a source of entertainment,

by being a part of the behaviors of the consumerist society. There are probably other interpretations, too; the list is not and has no reason to be exhaustive, since we have already shown that if we "love football", it is possible to love a phenomenon whose complexity we do not understand or we understand partially, because everybody loves football (obviously, among those who have this preference) for the thing football means to them, and not for what football actually is. And if every follower loves football for what he thinks football is and not for what football actually is, it is clear that the follower will manifest himself only through his attitude as a supporter of his favorite team, meaning that the speculative edifice built by Professor Müller is deconstructing itself.

Perhaps these fluid structures, that build and deconstruct themselves by their own mechanics, constitute one of the solutions for the uncertain future in an even more uncertain world. But let's not forget a detail. It is repeatedly mentioned by Professor Denis Müller himself, in his own articles. He emphatically defines himself as a Protestant-Presbyterian-Trinitarian; in other words, Professor Denis Müller himself starts from within what he calls traditional Christianity. The authors commented by him also start within the traditional Christianity. They declare themselves defenders of

tradition, a position that Professor Denis Müller relativizes without denying it to the end, even if his demonstrations sometimes begin with a categorical denial, a denial that is lost along the way in eclecticism.

However, at this point in Professor Müller's demonstrations, a fundamental dilemma appears: if each time we consider it necessary to include the otherness in our thinking, i.e. if the traditionalist Christian is called, in the name of the pragmatism to include the secular and postmodern positions in his thoughts (these being more supposed than defined), will we not reach the next level, the one to consider these secular postmodern positions as acceptable, and not only existing? And the acceptability of those positions which, I repeat, yet lack a definition, will it not lead as a consequence to the non-acceptability of the traditional Christian positions, which will no longer be considered a system of values, but will become a limit attitude, lying somewhere in marginal areas of extremism? Is the final result that thinkers, theologians or bioethicists, like Professor Denis Müller, will no longer have a tradition from which they will openly and courageously look toward reality, but they will come from a reality that no longer understands the word tradition, seeing it only as an abstract concept, revoluted and defunct?

A nuance of Professor Denis Müller's comments is worthy of attention. He believes that, by default, any manifestation of traditional Christianity may be interpreted as a challenge to secular postmodernity. In other words, secular postmodernity should not be bothered too much with the ideas and manifestations of the traditional Christianity. Instead, while not being an atheist, nor a prophet of postmodernism, he cannot be concerned at the same extent and within the phenomenon, i.e. from inside the secular postmodernism, with the possible inconvenience that the secular postmodernism may rise to the traditionalist Christians. This part is simply missing from his conceptual construct, which is why his comments have the boomerang effect, conscientiously turning back to the author.

Professor Denis Müller's opinions eventually lack a very important element: the finding according to which the beliefs of any kind, including the Christian traditionalist ones, cannot be put on the same plane as attitudes, regardless of their being postmodern, temporary employment, and secular in their expression. Faith is based on a system of values and practices, while secularism has no system of values and practices, by being limited to the denial of the traditional values of faith, to anticlericalism, and, sometimes, to

atheism. All those who believe in salvation by following the path shown by Jesus Christ have a system of values and also a common goal. All those denying this system of values, are together only in this negation, otherwise they can be very different and even opponents. It remains to be shown whether postmodernism is synonymous with such a fragmentation of society, or with such a degree of alienation, if we speak of the individual. In the context, the Hegelian term "Aufhebung" which Professor Denis Müller refers to, translating it as "presumption", would rather be replaced by "Verfremdung", or "alienation".

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Notes

1. This paper is not a polemic approach to the views of Professor Denis Müller of the University of Lausanne, but it is the answer to the exhortation to dialogue launched by the Professor himself. The purpose of the author of this paper is not to plead the cause of the Romanian "exceptionalism", about which he believes to be as unrealistic as the attempts of "postmodernization" of a society that has not yet started to be not even modern, while all these are happening under the sign of a mechanically understood synchronism. The author starts from the Orthodox vision of Christian bioethics, confessing this belief that is dominant in Romania, but believes that the problems of bioethics mentioned in the lines above, in relation to the Romanian society, are valid for the whole society of and for the members of other faiths, or for those who do not show any religious belief.
2. "To avoid religious intolerance and religious indifference, we must develop a positive notion of an open laicity or secularity that allows us to respect both

the pluri-religious situation and the contemporary secular situation" (Müller, 2009).

3. This approach fights for the rights of each embryo which is given spiritual and personal life, it defends the traditional view of marriage and family (and, therefore, it strongly opposes every positive recognition of homosexual experience or partnership), and adopts a restrictive approach against all attempts to introduce the individual choice in the field of assisted suicide and euthanasia. On the other hand, represented mainly by Protestant churches and their shared commitment to the so-called Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, it can be considered a more liberal position, not necessarily in all these cases, but willing to accept the challenge to an open, critical and controversial discussion in the churches and among the Christians" (Müller, 2009).
 4. "Once recognized the importance of this situation, it will be understood why the traditional approach of different meanings of "theology" (see Engelhardt, 2007), while it looks so impressive at an analytical level, it completely loses the idea of our real situation in the modern contemporary society in Europe, and probably in America, too" (Müller, 2009).
 5. "Because Switzerland is not an island (by showing respect to the conservative majority of today's Swiss people), it shares the political, ethical and religious destiny of modern Western Europe. If one interprets the transition from classical Protestant theology of the covenant for the contemporary understanding of the Swiss in its secular Constitution in a nostalgic way, we might be tempted to look at this as a
- desertion, and even a betrayal of the Christian past of the Biblical theology of the covenant" (Müller, 2009).
 6. "Today we live in a very secular country, but it is a country with such a strong sense of both freedom of religion and freedom of expression. The practice of religion has become increasingly free and individualized. But we are divided between fascination and disappointment (see Campiche, 2004). And Christianity is not the only actor: the time has come for the pluri- and interconfessional religious practices and rituals" (Müller, 2009).
 7. The objectors of Christianity and especially of the Orthodox Church can roll their eyes and indignantly say: in Romania there are 18,300 churches, 4,700 schools and 425 hospitals!(with the implied corollary "if the majority are Orthodox people, then the churches are Orthodox")... According to the 2009 census, the Orthodox have 14,574 places of worship, while the rest up to 18,300 belong to other cults. It looks better to say "18,300 churches"; we shouldn't complicate ourselves by giving details such as "there are only 10.580 Orthodox parish churches (the remainder up to 14,574 are chapels, monasteries, branch churches, etc.)". But let us look at the numbers of localities in Romania: 13 285 villages, 320 towns, 103 cities plus Bucharest (2.19 million, over 10% of the population). And now let's count again: 13,709 localities and 10.580 Orthodox parish churches. So there isn't a church in every village, we still have to build.
 8. "When we talk with Gogarten (or Weber, Blumenberg, or Gauchet) about the meaning of secularization, we consider a social and cultural setting, and not the particular and subjective commitment of individuals, which can

be, of course, very different from one person to the other living in the same frame. The other side of secularization is, of course, in the practical realities of daily religious life. As secularization and laicity meant only a formal frame and not an ideological one, no one is obliged to adhere to any particular interpretation of such a frame" (Müller, 2009).

9. "Both the religious faith and atheism can and must exist together in the same frame. This also means, positively, that the state must remain neutral in terms of religion and ideologies, a position that will be seen as an advantage and a guarantee and not a disadvantage for the believers of any religious communities and, of course, for agnostics or atheists. The neutrality of the State results not only from a political necessity, but also from the theological demand to respect the free dimension of any belief" (Müller, 2009).
10. "Frame" is a unilateral expression, because while Professor Müller is

concerned by secular-postmoderns, he does not seem to be equally concerned with the confessing believers.

11. Inefficiency evidently refers to the effect that such attitudes have on those outside the religious group, by giving the advantage to the latter, because the concern to communicate with them belongs to those inside faith, while the outsiders are free (too free?) to choose whether the communication level pleases them or not. The refusal to accept communication from those with secular attitudes is a penalty to the believers. Is the believers' refusal to bother themselves with the nonbelievers radical, unrealistic, and counterproductive?
12. It should be established how "open" the opinions or attitudes of the secular postmoderns can be considered in relation with and regarding the practicing believers who have become "traditional" in this chronology.