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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

Decoding the Global Gender Revolution

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Marguerite A. Peeters, *The Gender Revolution: A Global Agenda (A Tool for Discernment)* (St. Louis: En Route, 2024).

Peeters turns the light of communio theology onto the global gender revolution driven by Western elites.^[1]

Marguerite Peeters is a *key authority* on the European *anti-gender circuit*, leading a wave of *anti-feminist activism*—a clear case of *political genderphobia*, *distinctively postfascist*, and with Putinism *eerily convergent*. And so naturally this is an *anti-gender book*. The critics are gender studies academics, naturally, but with their last point Cardinal Sarah seems to agree: “Thank you’ were the first words that sprang to my lips while reading this book....”^[2]

Peeters worked as a Catholic journalist in the 1990s, covering the United Nations, and she was even on the scene at the 1995 Beijing Conference when the global gender revolution was getting its debutante ball. At the end of that decade she wrote a dissertation on “The Emergence of Global Governance as a Political Revolution: New Political Paradigms and the Shift to Postmodern Politics,” and she has stayed with this same subject since. She has written several books and hundreds of private reports and given many seminars and lectures (many available on youtube.com). Here she comes across as reserved and good-humored, gentle and resolved, not putting herself all out there on the surface but keeping something in reserve—I recognize the stamp of *old Christian Europe* and can’t help but like her. Above all, she’s a woman with a well-formed conscience and real knowledge of how power works in the global system—a unique convergence, with nothing eerie about it at all.

In *The Gender Revolution* she pursues what seem to be disparate themes. But she pulls them together deftly in the closing chapters, where her second subtitle comes to the fore.

“Nobody who enters the framework controlled by the apparatchiks is safe from being induced to move in a direction in which he did not intend to go.”

Gender Theory

Peeters casts the 1950s and 60s as the early history, when American sociologists and psychologists invented the concept of *gender* as something that could be distinct from sex, as well as the allied notions of *gender roles*, and *gender identity*. In the 1970s and 80s academic feminists inserted these concepts into French postmodern theory. In the 1990s the next generation of academics shifted the terms, and gender feminism became “queer theory.” Peeters’s treatment of gender theory is a primer, a capsule history, hitting the big names and basic concepts.

Of course, her main points here all circle round the central point of gender theory, according to which everyone can and should “discover” or “explore” his or her own “gender” identity and act it out fully, entirely independent of all human tradition and bodily reality. You or I or the mythical man on the street may reject this point; yet, there are ideas behind it, an entire conceptual framework that is omnipresent in our society and culture, and it is being coded into our everyday language. The result is that if we don’t understand that theory, we will not really be able to reject it at its roots but will gradually absorb its premises. This will undermine and finally collapse the ability of most well-meaning people to reject the central point.

The value of Peeters’s primer is that it will arm readers to reject gender theory in a deeper way, but, beyond that, her comments on the gender theorists are a tour de force. Peeters is devastating on many points: how the reductive presuppositions of gender as a concept divorced from the body reduced the person to social function and later to social performance; left men and women unable to connect with each other; set up unsolvable inner conflicts; reduced basic human needs to stereotypes; made the real and virtual indistinguishable; and began to dissolve personality and even the very notion of the human.

Global Agenda

Of this theme, the early history was the 1970s and 80s. It was then that the postmodern theorists networked with elite foundations and heavyweights in government and politics and created the agenda that they introduced to the world in the 1990s. Much of it has already been imposed on the U.S. and Europe, but the plan is to impose it on the entire world.

This began to happen above all at nine U.N. conferences that took place between 1990 and 1996, where, at great staged pageants promoted by the U.S. and Western European governments, the word *gender* was debuted on the global stage, left purposely undefined, and unsuspecting Third World governments were led up the garden path to ratify and commit to a gender agenda that hardly any of them understood.

The 2000s she casts as the time when the underlying agenda was unveiled. The terms were defined, commitments began to be monitored, made into conditions for U.S. and E.U. foreign aid and part of the operations of global aid NGOs, while governments themselves joined

universities and NGOs in imposing the new gender culture internally.

Conglomerated Power

Based in Brussels (a kind of co-capital with Washington of the elite NGO world) and covering the U.N. conferences, Peeters saw how the political, media, and economic power of the United States and Europe drove the gender revolution—that is, she saw the consensus and auto-coordination between elites in government, political parties, billionaires/oligarchs, elite NGOs and foundations, corporate and financial power, and media, education, and entertainment industries. Among these, she noted the special role played by elite NGOs, funded and favored by Western governments and oligarchs, a form of pseudo-civil society which operates as both a policy planning brain and a special operations task force of the conglomerated elite.

At the UN the leading role of NGOs is on open display. They sit at the table and negotiate policy with government officials, and the ambassadors of small and medium-sized countries understand well that the bloc of UN-favored NGOs is far more powerful than even large countries.

Strategy and Tactics

Backed up by the conglomerated power of the wealthy West, the gender ideologues pursue a long-term strategy, using well-tested tactics. The former involves pressure by Western governments and NGOs on poor or target countries, the creation of a support network for the gender program in the target countries (through funding of NGOs, offer of jobs, travel, Western favor by which they draw key vectors of media, politics, finance, armed forces, justice systems). The target countries must accede to the gender agenda and favor its recruited network in order to enjoy U.S. and E.U. favor and aid, including military aid. The promotion of the gender revolution (“our values”) is a prime purpose of the U.S. and E.U. global aid empires.

The tactics are those of seduction and manipulation—initial stealth, incremental advance (“salami tactics”). Does Peeters propose strategy and tactics for *the anti-gender circuit*? “Their political and financial power and ideological sophistication far outstrip our abilities to master them.”

Newspeak

This theme also runs throughout. Peeters pays close attention to the special vocabulary of gender ideology, and a lexicon could be extracted from the book. In general, the gender revolutionaries are determined to control language, to impose new words and meanings—and, equally, to banish old words. Newspeak is a “semantic and ethical package,” structured so as to make Oldthink impossible.

Newspeak reflects tactics as well as ideology; hence, it is systematically question-begging, euphemistic, sociologistic, and polysyllabic. Its adepts treat it as a protected property, a sacred tongue which may not be parodied or mocked. It also connects to a rhetoric, in which attempts to open free discussion, debate, examine premises, or resolve questions of fact are met with abuse, ad hominem attacks, and accusation.

A sampler of terms Peeters showcases:

Gender ideology...

binarism; framework; heteronormativity; identity boundary; patriarchal values; preferred gender; self-identifying; sexual orientation; social construct; social function; social reproduction; social role; stereotype; boundary transgression.

The term *gender* obeys the command to be fruitful and multiply...

gender analysis; gender approach; gender balance; gender-based violence; gender bias; gender budgeting; gender conformity; gender differences; gender disaggregated data; gender discrimination; gender disparities; gender diversity; gender equality; gender feminism; gender gap; gender identity; gender inclusive environment; gender lens; gender mainstreaming; gender marker; gender neutral; gender norms; gender order; gender perspective; gender planning; gender policies; gender relations; gender research; gender responsive; gender role; gender sensitivity/ sensitization; gender specialist; gender specific; gender stereotype; gender theory; gender training; gender transition; gender variant.

From the lexicon of conglomerated power...

alignment; change; cultural globalization; democratic stabilization; empowerment; ethical imperative; framework; global citizens; global governance; global redistribution of social power; new global consensus; new global ethic; new paradigm; social transformation.

Terms that mask Trojan-horse tactics of promoting the agenda...

accountability mechanism; capacity building; consensus building; gender mainstreaming, gender perspective; implementation; inclusive consultation; multistakeholder partnership; non-state actors; participatory democracy; performance indicator; stakeholder.

Evil

Peeters is the farthest thing from crude, shrill, or simplistic, but neither is she a woman to mince words. The gender revolution “belongs to the process of negation inherent in the mystery of evil which has confronted humanity from the beginning... It evokes the ancient temptation... of the man and woman who want to ‘be like gods’ and determine themselves independently from God’s design, denying the truth about their being and refusing love. But the gender phenomenon,” she warns, “leads the revolt against God to a cultural point never before reached: does it not challenge the sexual identity of man and woman, which corresponds to the primordial revelation of God to mankind?”

Peeters connects the gender revolt to *self-damnation*, the *death of humanity*, a *no-man’s land*, *totalitarianism*, “the choice between life and death, good and evil, reality and the negation of reality, the truth about man and woman and lies, hope and despair, love and hatred.” Her root image for it is “a giant with feet of clay”—the scriptural figure of an antichristic empire.

Incidentally, she makes no mention of *Putin*.

Theology

How to respond? Discernment is a watchword, and Peeters insists on a few points. Above all: “do not enter the framework.” She urges us not to give way to the pressure to think, speak, or

act according to the concepts, language, or norms of gender ideology. “Nobody who enters the framework controlled by the apparatchiks is safe from being induced to move in a direction in which he did not intend to go.”

Peeters proposes another way. “This path is narrow, with the abyss of compromise to the left and the wall of confrontation to the right. The path which we want to take has its own rules of the road: always staking the reality and truth of who we are as the point of departure and perspective: a person, man or woman, son or daughter of a loving father, created out of love and for love...”

She seeks to engage postmodern theory rather than dismiss it. Postmodernists love to think they “break the binaries” of modernism (man-woman, hetero-homo, truth-lie), but they merely consume themselves in new ones (gender-sex, fluid-stable, woke-fascist). The task of Christians is not to dismiss the postmodernists but to solve the problems they cannot.

Postmoderns created the concept of binarism to characterize relations between individuals, societies, and the components of nature which they consider to be unjust and arbitrary relations of power and domination... they aim to ‘deconstruct’ ‘binary relations’ by abolishing the ‘identity boundaries’ that they create. ‘Binary’ relations ignore love and are in fact part of an outlook of possession, utility, selfish pleasure-seeking, power and domination. However, the right response to domination is not deconstruction of what is but, on the contrary, love of what is.

It is worth commenting on the postmodern expression ‘identity boundary.’ In the logic of love, identity could not be a ‘boundary.’ Identity, which is essential to love, does not separate those who love each other; on the contrary, the irreplaceable identity of the loved person is the very substance of the love of the person who loves and of the interpersonal communion of the two. The response to the boundaries that divide human beings is love and communion. The choice of negation, by contradistinction, makes love impossible...”

Since God is love, reality and the understanding of reality do not have to be structured by boundaries or oppositions—or de-structured by fantasies of their dissolution.

... the structure of love is not binary but triune: love given, love received, love shared (communion-love). A relation of love produces a fruit that proceeds from love given and received: communion. The absence of this fruit indicates an absence of love.

Consciences are confused and weak; this is the reason the “soft, seductive” tactics of the ideologues have proven unbeatable at the level of politics and publicity. We have no way to resist the evil of gender ideology and the conglomerated power behind it without engaging and educating consciences. “Our only weapon is the authority of truth, reality, and love, to which we cannot witness once we have entered the framework.”

It’s not easy to say who is Peeters’s intended audience. It’s also not easy to render a verdict on a book so *sui generis*. No doubt, much is left out; the book is only 145 pages long. Two things

you won't find much of: concrete facts of the history of the global gender revolution (that is, dates, events, names of specific foundations, NGOs, oligarchs and officials driving the revolution); or an attempt to connect gender ideology to larger aspects of the Western crisis. But to fill these gaps would not be to Peeters's purpose. She is not writing history, and she writes less to inform than to guide Christians in responding to the gender juggernaut. Yet beyond her "tool for discernment" she has, in fact, begun to sketch in some main lines of the "secret history" of our times, dragging out into the light things which others have left unreported or disconnected. Readers will have many 'aha' moments, as I did with her first book, *Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, and the interviews she gave for Zenit in 2008 and 2011. And as did Rod Dreher last year.

Probably the first circle of audience for *The Gender Revolution* will be Christians who engage directly with the U.N. and other intergovernmental and foreign aid or policy organizations. That's a small group. Yet the book, first published in 2012, has since been published in French, Italian, and Spanish, and now we have this second edition in English. I expect it's finding its way as a resource to Christians seeking to understand the crisis of our times. *The Gender Revolution* is neither popular nor scholarly, at least not in the usual sense. It is a demanding read and a valuable book, prophetic in the scriptural sense, which is not firstly to foretell the future but to speak deep truth about one's own time—by a Belgian Joan of Arc.

^[1] Cf. Étienne Gilson: "The modern Thomist too often is like unto a man holding a lamp, lost in the contemplation of its light and complaining that he sees nothing. Let us only turn our light on the world of things, and we shall have plenty to see and to say." In *The Spirit of Thomism* (1964), 93f.

^[2] Quote at p. i, as part of Cardinal Robert Sarah's introduction to the book.

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Posted on September 13, 2024

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