

## A FREE CULTURE:

### LIVING THE PRIMACY OF THE FOR-ITSELF

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A culture might be called “free” in any of a number of senses of the term “free.” One sense of the term, namely, “that which is for-itself,” receives relatively little attention in the vast literature of freedom. This, it seems to me, is much to the impoverishment of this literature, as well as of contemporary discussions of freedom, even among thinkers working in the broad Thomistic tradition. Here I will suggest that this sense of freedom, at the heart of the Aristotelian and Thomistic understanding of freedom, gives us the critical measure of the freedom of a culture. Indeed, a culture is most truly called free if it is free in this sense: its structures bespeak the ordering of all things toward what is for-itself.

The plan for this paper is as follows. In the first section, I consider the notion of “*causa sui*” as at the heart of the notion of freedom. This allows us to look anew at the different senses of freedom and to conceptualize a “freedom of the for-itself.” This freedom of the for-itself is most properly found in the contemplative life. In the second section, I argue that this understanding of freedom allows us to make judgments regarding what constitutes a “free culture.” Here I suggest that the “status” of the contemplative life and of economics are two key litmus tests for the freedom of a culture. In the final section, I seek to dovetail my treatment with Pope John Paul II’s notion of a culture of life, or death.

#### Freedom and the For-Itself

Aquinas seems to take as the main *ratio* of freedom what is *causa sui*, on account of itself. In numerous texts, Aquinas uses this phrase, taken from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, to explain freedom.<sup>1</sup> Let us consider how it can be used to explain different senses of freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Metaphysics* text is 982b25ff. See, e.g., *Summa theologiae* I 83.1ad3 on free will (judgment), I 96.4 on servitude in the state of innocence, II-II 19.4 on

We are perhaps all familiar with Maritain's distinction between two basic kinds of freedom: freedom of choice and freedom of autonomy.<sup>2</sup> Freedom of choice implies an active indifference of the will toward particular goods, an indifference rooted in its natural determination to goodness as such.<sup>3</sup> This freedom has the *ratio* of freedom inasmuch as the will is said to move itself to action. It is not determined to this action by nature or by the object, but by its own judgment. Thus it acts "*causa sui*" – on account of itself.<sup>4</sup>

Freedom of autonomy is not a natural endowment of the person, but rather it must be achieved and, in its truest form, can be seen as the very goal of the moral life. This is the freedom of always acting from one's own desires. In explanation of this freedom in *Freedom in the Modern World*, Maritain quotes a key text from Book IV of the *Summa contra gentiles* where Aquinas explains how the Holy Spirit moves us toward God. Aquinas says:

We must observe, however, that the sons of God are led by the Holy Ghost, not as though they were slaves, but as being free. For, since to be free is to be cause of one's own actions [*sit qui causa sui est*], we are said to do freely what we do of ourselves. Now this is what we do willingly: and what we do unwillingly, we do, not freely but under compulsion.<sup>5</sup>

Thus to act from "our own" will or desires is to be free. This is distinct from freedom of choice, for one can "freely" choose to do something that is against his own desires – as when one obeys a law

servile fear, and *Summa contra gentiles* IV.22, on how the Holy Spirit moves man.

<sup>2</sup> See the first chapter of *Freedom in the Modern World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).

<sup>3</sup> On the natural determination of the will, see *Summa theologiae* I-II 10.1; on the indifference of a "super-determinate cause," see Yves Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (Notre Dame, 1993), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> See *Summa theologiae* I 83.1ad3, where Aquinas says that the will is "*causa sui motus*."

<sup>5</sup> *Summa contra gentiles* IV.22. Maritain's translation from *Freedom in the Modern World*, p. 37.

simply out of fear of punishment. We see again the notion of *causa sui*: here the person acts *causa sui*, or as cause of his own actions not only in the sense of acting from his own judgment, but also in the sense of acting from desires which are "his own."<sup>6</sup>

Now there is another sense of freedom, mentioned by Maritain in *Freedom in the Modern World*, which receives significantly less attention than the aforementioned kinds of freedom. Maritain speaks of the adhesion of the intellect to the last end, and he calls this a "freedom of exultation."<sup>7</sup> I think that we can call this third freedom, the freedom of the for-itself. Here we see the aspect of *causa sui* in its highest expression. If to be free is to be *causa sui*, then we should distinguish between two orders of causality: final and efficient or agent causality. In the first two kinds of freedom, the focus is on agent causality. For instance, Aquinas says, "*liberum arbitrium* is *causa sui motus*, because through *liberum arbitrium* man moves himself to action."<sup>8</sup> But the term "free" is also applied to what is *causa sui* in the order of final causality. Indeed, the text in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to which Aquinas often refers is the following: "...but as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake [*causa sui*] and not for another's, so we pursue [wisdom] as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake."<sup>9</sup> Thus, the phrase *causa sui* can mean "to be for one's own sake," as in either the case of the master or of the science of wisdom. To be *causa sui* in the order of final causality, the most noble of causes, is precisely to be "for oneself" as opposed to "for another."

In considering freedom, I think we too often focus exclusively on what is self-moved in the realm of agency. When Aristotle and Aquinas consider the nature of slavery, they focus not so much on the fact that

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<sup>6</sup> Of course in freedom of choice too one always acts from a desire in some sense "one's own;" but in freedom of autonomy the desire is in some further sense "one's own" – where the agent can say, "I really am acting from my own desire, not something imposed by another."

<sup>7</sup> Maritain, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Summa theologiae* I 83.1ad3.

<sup>9</sup> *Metaphysics* I.2 982b25-27. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). All subsequent translations of Aristotle are from McKeon.

the slave's actions do not spring from his own desires, as on the fact that he is not ruled for his own sake.<sup>10</sup> We might say that the good of the slave does not have that characteristic which Aristotle assigns to the ultimate or chief good: that it is "final." He says: "[W]e call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else...."<sup>11</sup>

Now, having seen how the ratio of freedom, to be *causa sui*, applies differently to three senses of freedom, let us look more closely at the last two – the freedom of autonomy and the freedom of the for-itself. Grasping what is meant by each of these freedoms, we can ask what these freedoms look like in their highest forms. As regards the freedom of autonomy, we should return to the above quoted *Summa contra gentiles* text where we see that the truest sense of the freedom of autonomy is to act from one's own desires *when* one's own desires are in accord with what Aquinas calls the "natural order of the will." He explains that the Holy Spirit moves us as free persons precisely because He gives us a *love* of things in accord with the natural order of our own wills. Thus, as moved by the Holy Spirit, we always act from our own truest desires since we love what is truly good for us. In other words, our own personal desires correspond with our deepest (natural) desires as human persons.<sup>12</sup>

Now where can we find the highest freedom of the for-itself? We can connect this question to our understanding of freedom of autonomy by asking another question: What does a person who has the freedom of autonomy actually *do*? In other words, if we say that the end of freedom of choice is to come to a freedom of autonomy in which all of one's actions spring from one's own truest desires, then just what kind of action is most characteristic of the truly free person? While of course such a person performs many kinds of actions, Aquinas's answer

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<sup>10</sup> See Aquinas on the slave in *Summa theologiae* I 96.4, and Aristotle's *Politics* I.6 1255b10, where he speaks of the slave as a "part" of the master.

<sup>11</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7 1097a30-32.

<sup>12</sup> Thus, this freedom of autonomy is of course higher than a freedom of autonomy in which I always act from my own bad desires. These latter desires, Aquinas explains, are not most truly my own, from the viewpoint of "the natural order of the will."

to this question is clear. Freedom of autonomy is ultimately a freedom for contemplation. If with the true freedom of autonomy I act most truly from my own love, then the act that I most love to do because it is most for-itself is the act of contemplation.<sup>13</sup> Contemplation itself, or the contemplative life, then, has the freedom of the for-itself in its highest manifestation.<sup>14</sup>

Aquinas argues on numerous occasions that contemplation stands apart from all other human actions as the action most sought for its own sake.<sup>15</sup> But not only is contemplation most sought for its own sake, it is also the end of all other actions.<sup>16</sup> According to the “natural order of the will,” to use again the phrase from the *Summa contra gentiles* text, what is not for its own sake is ordered to what is for its own sake. We might also say, then, that true freedom of autonomy implies acting according to a love that orders all things to contemplation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, #86: “Freedom then is rooted in the truth about man, and it is ultimately directed toward communion.” We should note that the freedom of the for-itself and the freedom of autonomy are both present, in their truest forms, in the perfection of man. Maritain explains that the first refers to the essential attaining of the end by the intellect, and the second to the will in adhering to the end. Maritain, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Maritain has a beautiful treatment of contemplation at the end of *The Peasant of the Garonne*.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance, *Summa theologiae* I-II 3.5c and *Summa contra gentiles* III 37.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance *Summa contra gentiles* III.37: “Further, all other human operations seem to be ordered to this as to their end;” and In NE #2101: “This is contemplative happiness to which the whole of political life seems directed;” and *Summa theologiae* I-II 3.5ad2: “And if this good [contemplation of truth] be perfect, the whole man is perfected and made good thereby; such a good the practical intellect has not; but it directs man thereto;” and II-II 180.4c: “... because this contemplation is the end of the whole human life. Hence, Augustine says (De Trin. I.8) that ‘the contemplation of God is promised us as being the goal of all our actions and the everlasting perfection of our joys.’”

<sup>17</sup> Those who live what Aquinas calls the “active life” immediately order their actions to “the requirements of the present life in accord with right reason;” (*Summa theologiae* II-II 179.2ad3) but these actions are more ultimately

It goes without saying that the distinction between freedom of choice, too often mistaken for an end in itself, and freedom of autonomy which is the *telos* of that freedom, is a key first principle in conceptualizing what a free culture should look like. But as the third sense of freedom is freedom in the highest sense of *causa sui* since it is free in the realm of final causality, it is central to conceptualizing a free culture.

### A Free Culture

In his great work *Happiness and Contemplation*, Josef Pieper defends the Thomistic thesis that man's perfection and happiness consist essentially in an act of the speculative intellect: contemplation. Late in the book he addresses several objections, one of them being the "common sense" assertion that surely this view is undervaluing the genuine goodness of the practical or active life. Here Pieper uses a phrase that captures a principle of the first importance in Aquinas's worldview. The key to getting this matter straight, says Pieper, is "hierarchical thinking." He explains:

The hierarchical point of view admits no doubt about difference in levels and their location; but it also never despises lower levels in the hierarchy. Thus the inherent dignity of practice (as opposed to *theoria*) is in no way denied. ... But practice does become meaningless the moment it sees itself as an end in itself. For this means converting what is by nature a servant into a master – with the inevitable result that it no longer serves any useful purpose.<sup>18</sup>

Let us take a moment to appreciate the role of hierarchical order, and thus of hierarchical thinking, in the thought of Aquinas. Few principles show up in Aquinas's work with the regularity of this principle: the end provides the *ratio* of what is *ad finem*, or for the sake

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ordered to contemplation, as the active life itself is ordered to the contemplative life – see, e.g., II-II 181.1ad3.

<sup>18</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), p. 95.

of the end.<sup>19</sup> Put otherwise, what is for the end receives its goodness (its dignity, importance, and meaning) from its relation to the end. Indeed, Aquinas speaks of final causality as exercised in a *per se* series of causality. In a *per se* series of causality, the very character of causing is precisely from this member's being caused by the prior member. Thus, as regards final causality, or having that desirability which is goodness, a thing's goodness is caused by what is prior in the series of final causality, and ultimately by what is first in that series.<sup>20</sup> When arguing that a person desires all that he desires on account of the ultimate end, Aquinas says: "Hence secondary desirable things move the appetite only as ordered to a primary desirable thing, which is the ultimate end."<sup>21</sup> He is not making here simply the psychological point that I find something desirable only to the extent that I desire it as ordered to my end. Also implied is that the real desirability of what is for the end comes from its relation to the end.<sup>22</sup>

The significance of this emphasis on hierarchical thinking in Aquinas is this: for Aquinas, to remove from its order to the end that which is naturally ordered to the end is to destroy the root of its goodness. As Pieper held above, to remove that which naturally serves some end and to treat it as a master is anything but to emancipate. It is to wreak havoc. Here we touch upon the key to understanding what I will call an "unfree culture," but let us consider first a few characteristics of a free culture.

A free culture is one in which, on the whole, the practical life is ordered to the contemplative life.<sup>23</sup> Many important aspects of such a

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<sup>19</sup> See for instance, *Summa theologiae* I-II 1.prologue and 12.4, and II-II 44.2ad3 and ad4.

<sup>20</sup> See *Summa theologiae* I-II 1.4.

<sup>21</sup> *Summa theologiae* I-II 1.6. Translation from J. Oesterle, *Treatise on Happiness* (Notre Dame, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> Note that even the goodness of a created person is ultimately said in relation to the whole, of which he is a part, as an end to which he is ordered; although he is ordered to it, for his own sake, in the sense that he performs the principle action of the whole. See *Summa contra gentiles* III.112.

<sup>23</sup> See *Summa contra gentiles* III.37 where Aquinas says, "Ad hanc etiam omnes aliae humanae operationes ordinari videntur sicut ad finem." And "Ut sic, si

society will certainly escape our description here. For the sake of illustration, a brief reflection on two general characteristics will suffice: a) in this society the contemplative life itself has a certain status, and b) the social and economic structures of the society reflect the pre-eminence of the contemplative life. We begin with the status of the contemplative life.

In his commentary on the *Sentences*, Aquinas says the following: "It is requisite for the good of the human community that there should be persons who devote themselves to the life of contemplation."<sup>24</sup> Now why is this so? Surely society needs contemplatives to see the highest things and then to share with the rest of us what they see, things that otherwise we would never see. But there is more implied in this text. Contemplatives should have a place of pre-eminence in society; indeed, they should stand as a reminder to all the rest of us what the end of life is – the end of life in *this* life, as well as the next. It is not unreasonable to conclude that a critical test of the freedom of a culture or society is this: As a whole, how does this society look upon the activity of contemplation, and more specifically, upon those persons exclusively devoted to it? Is the contemplative life generally held to be the highest life? Indeed, is it held, at least in some general way, as something served by other ways of life? In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas makes an even stronger statement than the one above. He says: "[A]ll human occupations appear to serve those who contemplate the truth."<sup>25</sup>

This brings us to the second point mentioned above: that the social and economic structures reflect the primacy of the contemplative life.

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recte considerentur, omnia humana officia servire videantur contemplantibus veritatem." In *The Peasant of the Garonne* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 224, Maritain quotes from Pope Paul VI's discourse at the close of the Vatican Council: "[C]ontemplation is the most noble and the most perfect form of human activity, against which one measures, in the pyramid of human acts, the proper value of these acts, each according to its kind."

<sup>24</sup> 4d26, I, 2. Translation from Pieper, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> *Summa contra gentiles* III.37. Translation from A. Pegis, *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: The Modern Library, 1948).



Here I will restrict myself to a brief consideration of a representative issue – the status, as it were, of economics in society. In the great Western tradition, what today we call economics (the realm of wealth production and distribution) was fundamentally seen as a matter of providing for human needs in order that, and in such a way that, higher human goods could be pursued. Aristotle and Aquinas could not be clearer on this point. Allow me to quote at some length from Book III of Aristotle's *Politics*:

Whence it may be inferred that virtue must be the care of a state which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name: for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances of which the members live apart; and law is only a convention, 'a surety to one another of justice,' as the sophist Lycophron says, and has no real power to make the citizens good and just.<sup>26</sup>

It is clear then that a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and *for the sake of exchange*. These are *conditions* without which a state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, *for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing* life. ... The end of the state is the good life, and these are the means towards it. ...Our conclusion, then, is that political society exists for the sake of *noble actions*, and not of mere companionship.<sup>27</sup>

For Aristotle and Aquinas, economics ("wealth-getting" for them) is ordered *immediately* to providing for basic human needs and *ultimately* to the life of virtue and contemplation.<sup>28</sup> A key word here for Aristotle and Aquinas is "needs." The basic needs of the community need to be met in order that higher goods can be pursued.

Both Aristotle and Aquinas express serious concern about the form of wealth-getting that is not limited by human needs and has as its end

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<sup>26</sup> III.9 1280b6-10.

<sup>27</sup> 1280b30-1281a3 [emphasis added].

<sup>28</sup> See Aquinas's *On Kingship*, I, 15 [114-115].

profit in the form of money. Whence the concern? At risk of oversimplifying a very complex issue, I think we can point to two fundamental concerns. First, when the fulfilling of human needs, and here "needs" is opposed to "desires," is not the explicit *telos* of economic activity, then in fact those needs will often not be fulfilled for the community as a whole. To defend this point requires a separate argument that cannot be given here. Second, without the natural limit of serving human needs, this other form of wealth-getting has a tendency to corrupt moral character.<sup>29</sup>

I know that here I raise issues as controversial as they are complex. I raise them, however, because I think that they should be considered and discussed precisely in the context of a consideration of the "freedom" of a culture. While "economic freedom" is an issue given much attention, very little attention is given to the question of whether economic structures properly serve that which is for-itself. Just how economic structures should serve virtue and contemplation is open to question, but *that* they should serve them is, for Aristotle and Aquinas, beyond question. Further, while economic structures serve what is higher through attending to human needs, they can and should also serve them through *the ways in which* human needs are met. In other words, apart from the question of how well economic structures fulfill the human needs they directly concern is the question of how they

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<sup>29</sup> See *Summa theologiae* II-II 77.4ad3, where Aquinas argues that clerics should not engage in "trading," i.e., trading for the sake of "profit" as opposed to for the "necessities of life." He says that this trading is not evil in itself, but it is "open to so many vices, since 'a merchant is hardly free from sins of the lips' (Ecclus 26:28). There is also another reason, because trading engages the mind too much with worldly cares, and consequently withdraws it from spiritual cares." Aquinas makes similar arguments regarding the danger of "trade" in *On Kingship*, II, 3 [139]. Here he makes a remarkable statement concerning a society in which there is a preponderance of "tradesmen:" "The result is that everything in the city will become venal; good faith will be destroyed and the way opened to all kinds of trickery; each one will work only for his own profit, despising the public good; the cultivation of virtue will fail since honour, virtue's reward, will be bestowed upon the rich. Thus, in such a city, civic life will necessarily be corrupted." *On Kingship: To the King of Cyprus*, translated by Gerald Phelan (Toronto: PIMS, 1982), pp. 76-77.

dispose, or indispose, toward virtue and contemplation. The realm of economics is not only lower than, it is essentially *sub-ordinate* to the life of virtue and contemplation. As such, it should be judged in terms of how well it disposes toward it.

### Culture of Death and Culture of Life

In his social encyclicals, Pope John Paul II developed a profound critique of contemporary culture. One major expression of this critique is through opposing the notions of “being” and “having.” In *Evangelium Vitae*, in the context of describing what he calls the “culture of death,” the Pope says:

The values of being are replaced by those of having. The only goal which counts is the pursuit of one’s own material well-being. The so-called ‘quality of life’ is interpreted primarily or exclusively as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty and pleasure, to the neglect of more profound dimensions – interpersonal, spiritual and religious – of existence.<sup>30</sup>

How are we to interpret this distinction of being and having? I want to suggest that we would do well to see this distinction as corresponding to the distinction between what is for itself and what is for another, or, put otherwise, between the speculative and the practical.

When he introduces the notion of a culture of death, the Pope turns immediately to discover the root of this culture. He has this to say:

We have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: *the eclipse of the sense of God and of man*, typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism, which, with its ubiquitous tentacles, succeeds at times in putting Christian communities themselves to the test.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> EV #23.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., #21; emphasis in the original.

He sounds here a theme that he sounded often, quoting Vatican II, "But when God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible."<sup>32</sup> Or as he says also in the next section of *Evangelium Vitae*: "By living 'as if God did not exist,' man not only loses sight of the mystery of God, but also of the world and the mystery of his own being."<sup>33</sup>

But just what is it about human nature that is lost sight of here? In the next chapter of *Evangelium Vitae*, entitled "I came that They May Have Life," the Pope expounds the Christian notion of human life and its end. He says, "The life which God bestows upon man is much more than mere existence in time. It is a drive towards fullness of life..."<sup>34</sup> And what is the fullness of human life? It is the Eternal Life of God that He shares with us. I quote again:

Here the Christian truth about life becomes most sublime. The dignity of this life is linked not only to its beginning, to the fact that it comes from God, but also to its final end, to its destiny of fellowship with God in knowledge and love of him. In the light of this truth Saint Irenaeus qualifies and completes his praise of man: 'the glory of God' is indeed, 'man, living man,' but 'the life of man consists in the vision of God.'<sup>35</sup>

The Pope is arguing, then, that man does not understand himself especially when he does not understand his end as the contemplation of God.

But how then does man live when he loses sight of who he is? Speaking of "life issues," the Pope says, "[Man] is concerned only with 'doing,' and, using all kinds of technology, he busies himself with programming, controlling and dominating birth and death." This is where the Pope says the values of being are replaced by those of having. This same point was presented in his earlier encyclical *Centesimus Annus*:

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<sup>32</sup> He quotes this text from *Gaudium et Spes*, 36 in *Ibid.*, #22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, #22.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, #34.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, #38.

It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed toward 'having' rather than 'being' and which wants to have more not in order to be more, but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.<sup>36</sup>

After making this statement about the disorder of seeking what is for the end as though it were the end, he proceeds immediately to make the following strong claim about the proper subordination of economics:

It is therefore necessary to create lifestyles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings, and investments.

Striking here is the way in which the Pope presents the contemplative endeavor, "the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others," as providing principles for economic decisions. Near the end of *Evangelium Vitae*, he makes a similar statement:

In a word, we can say that the cultural change we are calling for demands from everyone the courage to *adopt a new life-style*, consisting in making practical choices – at the personal, family, social and international level – on the basis of a correct scale of values: *the primacy of being over having, of the person over things*.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Beginning with the root Aristotelian notion of freedom – what is *causa sui* – what is "on account of itself," I have argued that to develop a proper notion of a "free culture," we should use the notion of free as that which is for-itself. A free culture is one that is ordered to contemplation. In the rich and complex "order to contemplation," other goods participate, in lower and higher degrees, in the for-

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<sup>36</sup> CA, #36.

<sup>37</sup> EV, #98. Emphasis in the original. The statement "the primacy of being over having" is footnoted to *Gaudium et Spes*, 35, and Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 15: AAS 59 (1967), 265.

itselfness of the ultimate end. These other goods have their proper place and dignity precisely as serving that which is most truly for-itself. Again, the key here is "hierarchical thinking:" To be ordered to what is for-itself pertains to the proper goodness of all lower things in the order. An *unfree* culture is one in which what is for-itself does not provide the first principles of order in society, and what is for another, as for instance economics, is treated as though it is for-itself.

I have also argued that this point is implied in John Paul II's distinction between the culture of life and the culture of death. The culture of death has lost sight of who man is; it has lost sight of higher and lower, of what is for-itself and what is not. The Pope has issued a call for a cultural change: He says that we must have the courage to "adopt a new life style, consisting in making practical choices – at the personal, family, social and international level – on the basis of a correct scale of values: *the primacy of being over having.*" One pivotal area in which we must do this is economics. The realm of economics should be seen and lived as subordinated to the end of contemplation. How should this be done? Again, this is a very difficult question. But it will never be answered until we first have a shared conviction that it is *the right question to ask.* Indeed, as regards the culture of death, the devil is not really in the details; he is in the first principles. In calling for a cultural change, Pope John Paul II pointed to the only true foundation for a culture of life and freedom: living the primacy of the for-itself.