

Anti-Semitism, Capitalism, and Democracy

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Among the many striking characteristics of anti-Semitism, one in particular has caught my attention—its universality. Anti-Semitism seems to observe no boundaries of time or space. It is as much at home in ancient pagan cultures of Europe and the Middle East as it is in medieval Christian Europe or in modern, atheistic, post-Enlightenment culture. This phenomenon of universality seems to me to be quite odd for a number of reasons, and it is precisely the oddness of the prejudice that I wish to consider here.

Ironically, if there is any teaching of the Jewish scriptures that almost anyone, even the most religiously ignorant, would identify with the Jewish people, aside from creation and the Flood, it would be the Ten Commandments—a list of moral precepts all grounded upon the principle of justice toward God and neighbor. Indeed, nowhere, perhaps, is it possible for anyone to find a normal person's just responsibilities toward God and other human beings stated so clearly and succinctly. How odd, then, that the very people who have been responsible for preserving and for transmitting this message for thousands of years to other peoples of the earth should find themselves so often and universally subjected to acts of injustice. Given the Jewish people's own sense of the centrality of justice in human life, and given the necessary connection between the habit of justice and political peace and stability, the phenomenon of anti-Semitism is a paradox of the highest order.

In many ways, the paradox of anti-Semitism is similar to the paradox of the treatment of Socrates at the hands of his fellow Greeks;

and, so, I would like to begin my analysis of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism—in particular, of anti-Semitism and its relationship to capitalism and to democracy—by noting some things about the life, death, and character of Socrates.

The Socratic Parallel

The one word that I think describes the character of Socrates as presented in the dialogues of Plato is “misfit.” Because Socrates was a wise man—because, that is, he claimed to know “only what he actually did know” and never claimed to know “what he actually did not know”¹—Socrates constantly found himself in trouble. For he lived among a great number of people—highly cultured and, for that time, democratic people—who claimed to know both what they actually knew and what they actually did not know. As Socrates tells us in Plato’s dialogue the *Phaedo*, the poets—who were the primary educators of the ancient Greeks—were “dinning” into the ears of the people that human beings could never sense anything precisely.² Given this essential human condition, the poets concluded that anyone who possessed precise knowledge or “skill” of any sort could do so only because of inspiration from the gods.

A majority of the ancient Greek populace accepted the poets’ epistemological analysis of the origin of human skill. Socrates, however, was an exception; he thought that skill could be acquired through “ordinary human inspiration”³ coming from sense objects in the physical world. This more than anything else explains why Socrates was put to death at the hands of the Athenian democracy. Socrates was not prosecuted by the ordinary people of Athens; he was prosecuted by, as one might call them today, “the beautiful people”—that is, by the *sophoi*: the artists, the politicians, the poets, and the craftsmen. He was prosecuted by those very individuals who had a monopolistic control over the education of the Athenian youth and over the Athenian economic, moral-cultural, and political structure; and he was put to death because his “ordinary human wisdom” threatened their monopolistic hold on power. From their perspective, since skill could only come through

¹Plato, *Apology*, 20E–23C.

²Plato, *Phaedo*, 65B.

³Plato, *Apology*, 20E.

inspiration from the gods and Socrates had skill (at argumentation), Socrates had to be inspired by the gods. In addition, since his inspiration was antagonistic towards the claims of inspiration being made by other people with skill, these others could not help but logically conclude that Socrates was being inspired by alien gods and that, being so inspired, his views, if publicly expressed, could only lead to the corruption of the youth.

Given his epistemological view of the origin of human skill, Socrates could not help but become a misfit within Athenian society. While he was a citizen of Athens—indeed, while he seems to have loved Athens and identified himself with it and respected its laws like no other Athenian of his time—he never seems to have been able to “fit in.” His views were commonly at odds with theirs. While he never did anything he considered to be unjust, nonetheless, he seemed to have had the uncanny habit of irritating those around him to the point where they wanted him dead. Furthermore, while he always considered himself to be a citizen of Athens, he also considered himself to be an alien. For he claimed, simultaneously, to be a super-hero, like Achilles and Hercules, who had been placed on the state to wake it up—just like a gadfly around a sleeping horse.⁴

In many ways there are striking parallels between the prejudice against Socrates and the persistent prejudice against the Jewish people. One example is the charge that Socrates himself was doing something that caused the prejudice against him, a charge often directed at Jews as well. As the character Socrates says in Plato’s *Apology*:

Here perhaps one of you might interrupt me and say, But what is it that you do, Socrates? How is it that you have been misrepresented like this? Surely all this talk and gossip about you would never have arisen if you had confined yourself to ordinary activities, but only if your behavior was abnormal. Tell us the explanation, if you do not want us to invent it for ourselves.⁵

According to Socrates, what got him into trouble was a “kind of wisdom,”⁶ but this claim on his part is only part of the answer to the prejudice against him. For, as he also explains, what got him

⁴Ibid., 20E–23C.

⁵Ibid., 20C.

⁶Ibid., 20E.

into trouble was also activity in which he became involved as a result of his wisdom, activity that essentially involved his resistance to monopolistic power and demands on his part for simple justice.

In similar fashion, these same things are also very often what have gotten the Jewish people into trouble. It is precisely because they claim to have a special inspiration that they stubbornly refuse to abandon that the Jewish people are, and always will be, misfits. It is precisely because they so stubbornly demand justice that they so often experience injustice, and it is precisely because they so often make these claims and demands in "alien" homelands in resistance to monopolistic power that the Jewish people often experience anti-Semitism.

Enlightenment and non-Christian Anti-Semitism

In order to make my Socratic parallel clearer, however, I would like to move from the life of Socrates in democratic Athens to the life of the Jewish people in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Clearly part of the long-standing anti-Semitism in Europe traces itself to Christian theological interpretations, which associated the crime of deicide with the Jewish people. What the charge of deicide cannot explain, however, is the universality of anti-Semitism, especially of modern anti-Semitism. One can understand how early medieval Christians could be driven to virulent anti-Semitism by such a charge, but how is one to explain the anti-Semitism of modern, enlightened, atheistic Socialists of the Marxist persuasion or of the Nazi kind? Surely the charge of deicide cannot be the answer; nor is it adequate to reply with some sort of unverifiable mytho-psychological analysis that attempts to reduce anti-Semitism to the Freudian recesses of personality.

Clearly anti-Semitism is a complex phenomenon; and there can be as many causes for it as there are relationships between Jewish people and other people. Still, among these causes, there are some (such as the charge of deicide) that tend to be more universal and tend to predominate. One way in which we might effectively tease out some other general causes is by examining extreme cases of anti-Semitism, cases where one might not normally expect it to be present, and then to consider why it exists. For this limited purpose, let us consider two extreme cases in which anti-Semitism has been found in recent times.

One extreme case is the modern Socialist movement and the other is the modern liberal, Christian democratic movement. In both these

areas, as John Hellman's essay in this volume clearly shows,⁷ anti-Semitism has been present, and yet its presence is odd to say the least. Anti-Semitism is odd in the Socialist movement (apart from Nazism) because very often Jews have been active participants—indeed, leaders—in this movement; and anti-Semitism is odd in the liberal, Christian democratic movement because, while one might reasonably expect that Jews would not be leaders of this movement, one would expect the leaders of this movement to be sympathetic to Jews. The principles of liberalism, of modern Christianity, and of pluralistic democracy seem to be not only *not opposed* to Judaism but conducive to its flourishing. Why, then, would anti-Semitism not only be present from these movements, but tend to be healthy within them?

In order to answer this latter question, it is necessary to consider three factors related to anti-Semitism in the modern age: (1) the long-standing lack of a secure Jewish homeland; (2) the nature of democratic capitalism; and (3) the political issue of the separation of church and state.

The Lack of a Secure Jewish Homeland

The long-standing lack of a Jewish homeland is, as far as I can see, one of the main reasons for the universality and oddness of anti-Semitism. Ethnic and religious prejudice is not uncommon to the human spirit, and, like all moral disorders, it has its roots in disordered human appetites—particularly in the emotions of hatred and anger. One of the things common to all human emotions is their relationship to events that are in some way sensed. Human emotions are estimational reactions to sense events, and they depend upon the possession of sense organs. Thus, for example, a person can get emotionally attracted by something seen, heard, touched, or smelled if, and only if, a person has the requisite sense organs to see, to hear, to touch, or to smell. Sense organs, however, are rooted in the present. They only react to things that exist in time and space. For this reason, since the human emotions react to organic stimuli, the more remote something is from immediate sensation, the more difficult it is to become emotionally attracted or repelled by it. An

⁷See John Hellman's chapter, "The Jews in the 'New Middle Ages': Jacques Maritain's Anti-Semitism in its Times," in this volume pp. 89–103.

emotion such as fear tends to increase with the increasing realization of the unavoidability of a great danger. The closer the object of danger is recognized by a person to be spatially and temporally present to a person the more this recognition tends to increase the emotion of fear. For a similar reason anger tends to subside as a person recognizes the object of dislike receding in time and space. A person in anger hopes for revenge, and the more a person recognizes the impossibility of achieving revenge (due, for example, to a lack of time or the extent of distance to cover) the less possible it becomes for that person to maintain a state of anger.⁸

The relevance of these observations regarding the emotions to a lack of a secure Jewish homeland is this: anti-Semitism is a moral disorder rooted primarily in hatred and anger, and it tends to be much easier for a person to dislike and to seek to attack something close, near at hand, and easy to reach than it is to dislike something remote and hard to reach. Thus Christians, for example, share much more in common with Jews than they do with people of many other religions—with Hindus, say, or with Muslims. Common interests, however, tend to be a condition and cause of friendship, not of enmity. Why, then, is it the case of historical fact that European and American Christians have had a more long-standing relationship of strain with Jews than they have had with Muslims and with Hindus? Clearly the answer seems to lie in the lack of familiarity between European Christians and these latter groups.

With the Jewish people, on the other hand, the situation has been quite different. For centuries dispossessed from their homeland and forced to become assimilated into alien lands and alien cultures in order to maintain their religious identity, Jews have, by necessity, had to be both in the culture and not of the culture. On the one hand, the Jewish people in Christian cultures have in a sense had the unhappy status of an unwelcome relative who has been forced to come for a long visit. European Christians, on the other hand, have tended to see their Jewish brothers and sisters as annoying relatives whose alien habits have prevented Christians from having a normal home life. Precisely because they lived with their Christian brothers and

⁸My analysis of the emotions and the way they operate is primarily based upon my reading of Saint Thomas Aquinas's analysis in his *Summa theologiae*, I-II, qq. 22–48.

sisters, the Jews and the Christians could come to hate one another so intensely.

The Nature of Democratic Capitalism

The mere cohabitation of the European continent by Jews and Christians, however, does not explain the phenomena of Socialist and liberal Christian democratic anti-Semitism. To understand these phenomena it is necessary to consider the existence of European Jewry as Obstacle.

Anger is an emotion that can only be caused by certain kinds of mental states. Not everything can make a person angry, any more than everything can cause a person to experience fear. If nothing dangerous for humans could be recognized, then the experience of fear would be impossible. It is only because of the recognition that real dangers can and do exist that people can sense fear. In a similar fashion, not everything can make a person angry. To become angry a person must become confronted by an obstacle, by something that a person estimates to be unjustly standing in the way of achieving an object of actual desire.⁹

Clearly the relationship of European Jewry to European Christianity, at least during portions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been one of anger on both sides. To understand this relationship and to recognize within it the roots of modern anti-Semitism, it is helpful to consider some of the observations made by Jacques Maritain and, more recently, by Michael Novak regarding the nature of democratic capitalism and of socialism.

Socialism and democratic capitalism are modern economic, cultural, and political movements that have grown out of the progressive European and American march away from monolithic, monarchical governments and toward pluralistic, democratic rule. In both these movements European Jewry has had a mixed relationship that, to a certain extent, has been a source of anti-Semitism. To get a better understanding of why this has occurred it is necessary to get some idea of the nature of both democratic capitalism and of socialism.

Democratic capitalism, as far as I can determine from my reading of Michael Novak, is an economic, cultural, and political system of

⁹Saint Thomas Aquinas, *S.T.*, I-II, qq. 40–48.

sustained, long-term, incremental, individual empowerment achieved through the integrated prudential judgment of free people. Its origins in Europe trace themselves partly to Reformation Protestant Christianity, and, for this reason alone, for centuries democratic capitalism has been viewed as suspect within traditional Catholic circles. Indeed, so deep has this suspicion run within Catholicism that Novak has remarked how the liberal Catholic thinker Jacques Maritain (who, it seems, coined the term “democratic capitalism”)

reported his own shock on coming to know the United States. For him, capitalism had always been an evil word. In *Reflections on America*, he wrote: “The American economy is growing beyond capitalism, in the proper classical sense of this word.” The United States has discovered a new direction “beyond capitalism and beyond socialism . . . personalist and community-minded at the same time.” Under democratic capitalism—one from among the names he suggested to describe the new reality—“free enterprise and private ownership function now in a social context.”¹⁰

According to Novak, this economic/cultural/political system that Maritain discovered in the United States was the outgrowth of its founders’ insight, by which they recognized that political societies always have at least three competing sources of power that must exist separately if democratic government and free enterprise are to flourish. These three competing systems are the governmental bureaucracy, the moral-cultural order, and the economic order:

What the founders of democratic capitalism most feared is the gathering of all power into one. No human being, they believed, is wise or good enough to be entrusted with undivided, unitary power. For this reason, they separated moral-cultural institutions like the press, the universities, the Church, and voluntary associations of free speech from the State. But they also separated economic institutions from the State.

In earlier eras clergymen and aristocrats alike had much to say about economic life. Bureaucrats of Church and State controlled economic activities, bestowed licenses, imposed taxes and tariffs. Similarly, clergymen meddled in politics and political leaders in religion. Both censored intellect and the arts. It is a distinctive invention of democratic capitalism to have

¹⁰Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1991), 135.

conceived a way of differentiating three major spheres of life, and to have assigned to each relatively autonomous networks of institutions.

This differentiation of systems sets individuals possessed of the will-to-power on three separate tracks. Political activists may compete for eminence in the political system, economic activists in the economic system, religious activists and intellectuals in the various parts of the moral-cultural system. But the powers of each of the three systems over the others, while in each case substantial, are firmly limited. It is not likely that one person or party can gain complete dominance over all three systems, and should such misfortune come to pass, there remain plural roads by which offended forces may attack each pretender at his weakest point.¹¹

According to Novak, democratic capitalism is “uncommitted to any one vision of a social order.”¹² I disagree somewhat with this conclusion because I think Novak is not being precise enough according to his own principles. Democratic capitalism is committed to one vision of a social order, but to a vision that sees the highest human good politically conceived as not perfectly conceptualizable theoretically, and as, therefore open-ended practically. Because no one theoretical vision of the political good completely exhausts the good pursued by natural human desire, democratic capitalism is vigilantly on guard against any monopolization of power that would institutionalize theoretically conceived structures for determining and achieving the common good.

Indeed, as Novak himself so perceptively observes:

The invention of democratic capitalism was aimed at the discovery of *practical principles* that would make such common life possible, while holding sacred the singular sphere of each human person. Democratic capitalism is not a system aimed at defining the whole of life. Its aim is to establish the practical substructure of cooperative social life. Traditional societies aimed to provide considerably more than this. They provided a (usually) religious vision. Socialist societies, too, attempt to suffuse political and economic structures with moral values like justice and equality. Solidarity—not only in practical cooperation but in moral values and meaning—is the common aim of all social systems except democratic capitalism.

¹¹Ibid., 55.

¹²Ibid., 67.

Alone among the systems known to humankind, democratic capitalism has tried to preserve the sphere of the person inviolable. It glories in divergence, dissent, and singularity. It has done so by inventing a set of practical principles, embodied in institutions, and jealously guarded by rival interests each of considerable power, by which social cooperation may be achieved, without prior agreement on metaphysical, philosophical, or religious presuppositions. In order to agree to observe such practical principles, persons do not have to hold the same reasons for supporting them, nor do they need to have the same ends in view. Furthermore, when such practical principles prove their worth by their fruits, these practical principles themselves become worthy of honor. They themselves become substantive goods of a sort. They are not *mere* procedures. They become a proven body of practical principles, respect for which makes the pursuit of substantive goods possible. They are loved in and through the respect of persons for substantive goods. They are loved because they preserve the integrity of substantive goods and the pursuit by free persons of such goods. It is as proper to love the means which make ends attainable as to love the labor of writing for the work achieved.

The philosopher Jacques Maritain described adherence to such principles of practice as a *secular* faith, a *civic* faith, rooted in the practical nature of human beings. It is not a religious faith or a world view. It springs, in different languages and in different intellectual horizons, from the nature of practical life. Its secrets have not been universally discovered. In some cultures, practical cooperation is discouraged between persons of differing faiths. Prior agreement in faith and vision is considered necessary, no matter the practical costs. In the name of a single vision of humanity, inhumanities are often justified. So this civic faith, this practical faith, while accessible to all human beings, is not universally embraced and never perfectly fulfilled.¹³

One of the things that I find most interesting about Michael Novak's analysis is how heavily it relies upon the thought of Jacques Maritain, and, in particular, upon Maritain's conception of a "Christianly inspired body politic." Furthermore, I find a fruitful concept in the whole Maritainian view of a Christianly inspired body politic that is not a theocracy. Or as Charles P. O'Donnell has commented:

¹³Ibid., 65–66.

The Christianly inspired democratic political ideal foreshadowed by Maritain is not a Churchy State, nor a Church-State, nor a *Res Publica Christiana*. It is a secular political society inspired by a personalist and pluralist political philosophy whose contribution includes its advocacy of religious freedom and of spiritual over material values. It is a broadly ecumenical ideal. A secular political society where members are inspired to perfect their freedom would grant that each citizen would possess human rights whether or not they are members of a Church because all citizens are equal politically and faith cannot be inspired by force.¹⁴

Now why is this? Why is it that an evidently religious man like Maritain, a thoroughly committed Catholic and a spiritual confrere of Saint Thomas Aquinas, would ever come up with such an idea as a body politic based upon secular faith? To some extent I think one would have to attribute this position to the influence of Yves R. Simon, to Maritain's own analysis of political principles latent in the teachings of Saint Thomas, and to Maritain's practical experience of life in the United States as a leader of the French Resistance during World War II.¹⁵

To a certain extent all these brilliant insights were anticipated in the practical living of some European Jews centuries before either Maritain or Novak. John Hellman has keenly noted that to a large extent anti-Semitism among European Socialists and among early Christian democrats was due to the identification made by both of Jews with capitalism.¹⁶ Now if Novak's analysis of the nature of democratic capitalism is correct, then both the association of European Jews with capitalism and the anti-Semitism that this unleashed on the part of Christian democrats and Socialists at least becomes somewhat understandable.

For if what Christian democrats had envisioned creating was not the non-religious body politic conceived of by Jacques Maritain but a church-state, a *Res Publica Christiana*, then the separation of political

¹⁴Charles P. O'Donnell, "Maritain and the Future of Democratic Authority," *From Twilight to Dawn: The Cultural Vision of Jacques Maritain*, ed. Peter A. Redpath (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 79.

¹⁵See John Hellman's chapter, related to Maritain's political views and the influences upon him of both Yves R. Simon and World War, "World War II and the Anti-Democratic Impulse in Catholicism," *ibid.*, 95–116.

¹⁶See John Hellman's chapter in this volume.

powers into bureaucratic governmental/moral-cultural/and economic systems, which Michael Novak has identified as necessary concomitants of any complete system of democratic capitalism, would become necessarily impossible. In a *Res Publica Christiana*, at the very least, bureaucratic governmental and economic systems would have to be unified under a Christian culture and, in all likelihood, all three systems would have to be centralized. For whoever controls the economic system controls a substantial portion of the enabling means for effective practical action. Resistance from this sector dooms action from the other sectors of political society to inefficiency.

European Jewry, however, as a social group existing within an alien culture, had little choice but to seek property acquisition within Europe in order to guarantee its own long-term survival. For property ownership is a necessary element in personal empowerment. It is only by investing in personally possessed property that a person can put such property to productive personal use.¹⁷ Since Jewish people were not permitted access to many of the circumstantial avenues of property acquisition—such as participation in political offices, admission to certain schools, movement within certain social and cultural organizations, etc.—investment in money, creation of capital, became a necessary means through which they became able to survive and to maintain their religious/cultural identity in Europe for centuries. In a sense, the peculiar situation of the Jews in Europe placed a moral necessity upon them whereby many of them, seemingly by accident, came to discover the secrets of money as capital. They began, in short, to recognize the investment properties of money.¹⁸

This practical discovery on the part of some members of the Jewish community, however, could not help but become viewed as an obstacle by some members of the Christian and Socialist communities. For those who envisioned the creation of a *Res Publica Christiana*, indeed, economic empowerment of European Jewry would have to be viewed as a formidable obstacle—especially given an ever-growing spirit of non-religious, democratic pluralism—to their own monopolistic designs for a utopian state.

¹⁷My views here are largely influenced by Novak, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*.

¹⁸On this issue of the investment properties of money, see Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 97–127.

Paradoxically, for similar reasons, this same economic empowerment of European Jews would also have to be viewed as a formidable obstacle to the Socialist dream of a new, international, anti-capitalist, political world order. For, as Michael Novak has observed:

In its central historical vision, whether Marxist or non-Marxist, socialism was once presented, negatively, as a way of analyzing the deficiencies of democratic capitalism. Positively, socialism once meant the abolition of private property; State ownership of the means of production through nationalization of industries; State control over all aspects of the economy; the abolition of “bourgeois democracy” through the creation of a classless society; and an international order based upon a class analysis transcending national, cultural, and linguistic frontiers. Socialism meant the banishing of the profit motive, which was judged to be the root cause of the exploitation of labor. It also meant the abolition of imperialism, since capital and the profit motive were judged to be the root of empire. Socialism promised a social structure which would end competition between person and person and give to each according to need while taking from each according to ability, a social structure which would thus effect a change in what earlier generations had erroneously regarded as “human nature.” Socialism, it was confidently predicted, would bring about a new type of human being, “Socialist man.” Such a human being would act from motives of human solidarity, community, cooperation, and comradeship.¹⁹

Clearly, within the context of such a monopolistic vision of socialism, a capitalistically empowered European Jewry would necessarily present itself as an obstacle and an embodiment of all that is evil.

The Separation of Church and State

Related to the previous consideration of the Jew-as-Obstacle is the whole question of the relationship of anti-Semitism to the issue of the separation of church and state. For if what Christian democracy envisions is a *Res Publica Christiana*, then the existence of a substantial, economically empowered class of non-Christians within such a political order necessarily becomes an essential obstacle to the realization of the political dream. At the same time, the political dream of Christians necessarily becomes viewed as a political

¹⁹Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 189–90.

nightmare for a nationally dispossessed and relocated people. For the means of achieving their Christian political dream necessarily involves economic disenfranchisement of non-Christians.

This issue of the separation of church and state is most important not only for understanding the existence of past anti-Semitism within Christian societies but also for eliminating a major obstacle to well-ordered political existence in present and future political societies. For I am of the opinion that the complexity of the issue has not been adequately distinguished and that, consequently, this issue is likely to continue to foster prejudices of all sorts in the future both within Christian and non-Christian societies.

On the one hand, the separation of church and state is necessary and good for democratic government. On the other hand, such a separation is nothing short of a disaster. Whether the separation is one or the other depends upon the way the terms “church,” “state,” and “separation” are being used. These terms are ambiguous and failure to distinguish precisely the sense in which they are being used can play havoc in resolving serious political disputes.

Very often, for example, we use the terms “state” and “church” to refer to bureaucratic bodies, to administrative associations through which people collectively exercise cooperative action. On the other hand, just as often, we use these terms to refer to the activity, or habit of activity, of the people themselves, independently of any bureaucracy—as, for example, when we say, “The State is the People,” or “The Church is the People of God” (in which case we seem to be referring to the state as an association of individual people existing in the integrated, non-bureaucratically assisted, exercise of political habits, and to the church as an association of individual people existing in the integrated, non-bureaucratically assisted, habits of religion).

Furthermore, regarding “separation,” sometimes we understand this term to refer to an “accidental” division between or among entities that share something “essentially”²⁰ (such as the separation of the different branches of our federal government participate in and derive their authority from the same constitution), and sometimes we understand “separation” to refer to an essential division between or among entities

²⁰I am using the words “accidental(ly)” and “essential(ly)” here in traditional Aristotelian senses of the terms.

that differ in kind but are not separate accidentally—for instance, in time or location (such as, the separation of the mayor of New York City and the cardinal archbishop of New York inasmuch as their duties are essentially different, but the lack of separation between them inasmuch as their activities are accidentally exercised within the same city at the same time).

Clearly, from the practical standpoint of the flourishing of democratic society, the essential union of the bureaucratic state body with any bureaucratic church body spells political disaster. The long-standing practical experience of the past verifies this practical truth. (Practical truth, it should be noted, is judged by the criteria of practical existence—not by principles of theoretical existence.)

But it seems just as dangerous to seek to separate the church from the state in accidental union when both are conceived of as activities, or habits of activities, of people, or even inasmuch as these entities act as corporate bodies, when they are *acting in accidental union* or in accidental bureaucratic union and when such accidental union is *essential for achieving cooperative activity for the good of the “state as body politic” or the “state as the people.”* If, for example, the church is identified with either the bureaucratic or non-bureaucratic religious activity of people directed towards the essential good of other people, rather than towards its own monopolization of bureaucratic or non-bureaucratic religious, economic, or moral-cultural power, and if accidental cooperation with the church by the “state as Bureaucracy” is necessary for provision by the “state as bureaucracy” of goods and services to which people are entitled by natural endowment, then separation of the church from this action of the state as body politic, even when the church must act in accidental concert with the state as bureaucracy, seems not only to deny to people a natural moral right to the free exercise of religion but also to be morally repugnant.

Natural and Political Rights

Freedom of religion is an endowment, not a political entitlement. People possess this right by nature, by natural endowment, not because it is given to them by some governmental bureaucracy or even by the consent of the body politic. Through this right all human beings enter political societies as religious “haves,” in the same way as the natural right to freedom of speech causes them to enter political society “having” the same species-specific right in kind to exercise free speech

within the realm of circumstantial justice. Just governments (states as bureaucracies) exist for at least two reasons. First, to secure such natural rights, and second, to determine and secure the fair exercise of such rights under different circumstances. Fairness, however, dictates that equals be treated equally and that unequals be treated unequally, according to their inequality in kind or degree. Where equals are equal (whether the equals be individuals or corporate bodies) in kind or in degree (as “haves”), they should be treated equally; where they are unequal, however, they should be treated unequally within the bounds of justice. This means that circumstantial inequalities that result from superior natural endowments, acquired achievements, or good luck cannot be allowed either to go unrewarded or to become so greatly rewarded that subsequent inequalities result, which prevent other people from actively exercising their natural rights.²¹

The import of these observations about the meanings of the terms “church” and “state” and the relationship of the way these terms are used to just and fair treatment of people is this. All human beings enter political societies endowed by nature as religious “haves.” One portion of political society is a bureaucratic structure sometimes referred to as the “state.” The “state” so conceived, however, is not the “state as body politic,” which exists by nature as prior to the “state as bureaucracy.” (The “state as body politic” is the “state as the people.”) Furthermore, the bureaucratic structure called the “state” is only one bureaucratic structure co-existing among many other structures (both bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic), which are accidental divisions or “separations” of the same essential “state as body politic.”

Another such division whose existence issues from endowed natural human right is the church as bureaucracy (as well as the church as the people). Consequently, within the context of the “state as body politic” both the “state as bureaucracy” and the “church as bureaucracy” occupy the same circumstantial political status. Both are accidental divisions of the same entitative body in much the same way

²¹My analysis of the application of standards of justice and fairness to the church/state issue is heavily influenced by my study of Mortimer J. Adler’s excellent, but highly under-read and under-appreciated book *Six Great Ideas* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982), 135–205 and 228–43. While Adler himself does not treat the church/state issue in his text, nonetheless, he has provided a precise analysis of the principles of justice and fairness which are readily applicable to this complex problem.

as the judiciary, the legislature, and the presidency of the United States are subdivisions of the same essential political power; and neither one, therefore, can make any just claim, authoritatively grounded upon natural right, to exclude the other from active participation within the “state as body politic” or in cooperation with the state as bureaucracy unless such a claim is grounded upon accurate identification of some unjust act of encroachment on the part of the other.

Apart from such a condition, for either to assert such a claim against the other would be both ludicrous and tyrannical. Moreover, human beings enter into the state (in both senses of “state”) already possessed (as “haves”) of endowed rights (among which are included religious rights), rights which (since they are natural endowments of “natural haves”) cannot be separated from people’s participation, either directly or, sometimes, as necessitated by circumstance, indirectly through bureaucratic agency, as “haves” in either the “state as bureaucracy” or the “state as people.” These rights in no way depend upon any prior theoretical commitment to any religious, ideological, or metaphysical view of a “state as bureaucracy” or the “state as people” for some degree of active participation in the state in either sense. In both forms of state association, it is only right and fair that unequal contributions of both individuals and of corporate bodies be publicly recognized and that unequal distributions be made according to principles of fairness within the boundaries of justice for unequal contributions to the common good.²²

Within the context of either understanding of “state,” there is a real and present danger that results from referring to the state as “secular,” the way Jacques Maritain and Michael Novak have done. For if Novak is correct about the need to divide systems of power into three distinct bodies in order to guarantee the secure possession of natural rights, then the conception of a state as a *Res Publica Secularis* is no less dangerous than is the conception of a *Res Publica Christiana*, or of a *Res Publica Judaica*. This should give many contemporary Jews food for sober political reflection regarding the future development of the state of Israel. Clearly the danger of conceiving of a state as secular is that one will understand the term “secular” in such a way that people who are religious will not only be seen as obstacles to

²²Ibid., 155–96.

the monopolistic consolidation of economic and political bureaucratic power in the hands of people who are non-religious but they will also tend to be disenfranchised from rightful participation in the activities of the state because they do not conform to the secular political ideal.

Consequently, it seems to me far better to drop the use of the term "secular" when referring to the contemporary forms of political democracy and to use, instead, a term that more accurately describes the state of the matter. Since these political organizations are neither essentially religious nor non-religious, demanding inspiration from neither one side nor the other, I would suggest, in a fashion reminiscent of the approach taken by Socrates, that a better term to describe them is as ordinary "human," or "personalist" republics. In this way, I suspect, we will be better able in the future to learn from, and to guard against the recurrence of, political mistakes and prejudices from the past like anti-Semitism.