

Discussion of the papers
by M. Schooyans and R. Minnerath

UTZ

Ich möchte nur auf den Grund hinweisen, warum die katholische Kirche sich so spät für die Demokratie als Staatsform eingesetzt hat. Die Kirche war immer mit Thomas von Aquin in dem Grundsatz einig, daß die Entscheidung für das Gemeinwohl wesentlich moralischer Natur ist. Der Mehrheitsentscheid kommt aber durch eine technische Methode zustande. Es gibt kein bestimmtes Subjekt, das man für den Entscheid verantwortlich machen könnte. Das ist der tiefste Grund, warum sich Thomas für die Monarchie entschieden hat, wenngleich er auch die gesamte Mehrheit (tota pluralitas) anerkennt, aber nur unter der Bedingung, daß die Mehrheit die gleiche moralische Orientierung hat. Dies setzt voraus, daß in der Abstimmung nicht über moralisch gut oder böse, sondern über zwei unterschiedlich gute Objekte abgestimmt wird. In der modernen Demokratie gibt es den moralischen Konsens nicht mehr. Man spricht vom neutralen oder pluralistischen Staat. Vom moralischen Gesichtspunkt aus kann die Demokratie zur Destruktion der gesamten gesellschaftlichen Moral führen. Trotzdem befürwortet die Kirche heute die Demokratie, weil diese ihr wenigstens die Freiheit garantiert, ihre Moral zu verkündigen.

SCHASCHING

Studying the origins of the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* it is fascinating to see how Pius XI tried to solve the question of “civil society”. He did not trust the political parties because they were strongly influenced by ideologies. He preferred the corporatist system as an intermediate force between the individual and the state. The principle of subsidiarity constituted the philosophical basis of this system.

FLORIA

I would like to make two comments on the text by Father Schooyans. It seems to me that the Church did have a very reticent reaction to democracy for many years. I think recognizing this is simply a question of

intellectual honesty and the acceptance of history, and I don't think it's particularly surprising that this was the case because the democracy that we're speaking of today is not an old system – it's a modern democracy, a contemporary type of democracy, and that is what we should focus our attention on.

Now, I would like to mention by way of reference some ideological movements; I'm thinking now of a French example: Action Française and Charles Maurras. This was a very anti-democratic type of movement with ideas which argued that democracy was an “obscene system”, and there are other types of literature by Maurras that are very similar. Many Catholics followed this type of thinking and followed the thinking of Maurras who was a brilliant man, but who believed in an élite type of authoritarianism.

The final comment I would like to make is that in the social teachings of the Church, and particularly those of Pius XI, as I understand it, you do find ideas, intuitions and precisions which were very profound for their time, and there was really a type of warning about the danger of the thinking of Maurras in 1926. There was a type of mission that was given to certain Jesuits, a draft encyclical on human beings that was really quite anti-semitic, and this is something that I recently read last year, and I was very surprised nonetheless by some of the intuition and profound thought that was part of that text. And then, if we look at *Centesimus Annus*, there's a type of thinking which is a “systemic” way by which to deal with democracy in a way which is easier to understand for people of all beliefs of good will who want to take political questions seriously.

It's a kind of systemic approach where democracy is seen not as something which creates truth, but rather as one of the better, or best, political systems created by human thinking, particularly Western thinking and Western society, which could try to make life more just for mankind. And finally I think I would like to come back to what you said: the quote you gave us of John the XXIII. *Pacem in Terris* was a great encyclical and I believe that in it there was a distinction made, which was then repeated by Paul VI in his own apostolic letter, between ideas, ideologies, historical movements and political regimes.

VYMĚTALÍK

I would like to observe that there are many different approaches to democracy in politics and economics. While political democracy is usually accepted, the possibility of economic democracy is often denied. I mean by this intra-corporate democracy, the democratic participation of managers and employees in an enterprise. Is it necessary? Can it bring about greater

economic efficiency and under what conditions? Economic democracy – should it be supported or rejected? These questions deserve our attention as well.

BETANCUR

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. When Father Schasching was reminiscing about the disasters created in large part by the encyclical *Quadragesimus Annus*, when you look at the procedural form of the political parties, I must say I felt a very cool breeze, because I remembered some twenty years ago when we looked at the terms and contents found in *Quadragesimus Annus*. In Latin America a group of political leaders who then were young, we were young then, we were twenty years old ourselves, started fighting against the traditional political parties, and we were successful, and we obviously based many of our activities on pontifical thinking, because in our countries there is a majority of Catholics, so we were able to use that encyclical as a type of cane, or support, a tool, and we have seen what happened in those cases, because many errors had been made, they had used and abused certain powers, after having taken advantage of what they could find in Roman law. They had used and abused the almost blind acceptance of the community there, and the community in society drew some of its loyalty from loyalty to the family, to religion, and loyalty to the party. Then *Quadragesimus Annus* arrived and proclaimed a certain scepticism. Father Schasching: with regard to the existence of the political parties and their forms, and the members of some minority parties, and I am one of them, who were obviously thinking about obtaining power within our countries, and this was my own case, had no possibility of gaining power at that time, because we were members of minority parties, and what we did was to have very enjoyable discussions in our universities and elsewhere trying to increase confusion, so to speak, so that chaos would arrive within political parties, so that everything would explode. So, I was able to benefit from that catastrophe, so to speak, because the traditional discipline of political parties in Latin America was broken and new movements were able to begin.

VON BEYME

I think Father Schooyans was rather too defensive in his paper in relation to the problem why the Church did not recognize “democracy” early enough. The Church in this respect experienced the dilemma of all governmental systems of the nineteenth century: democracy was perceived along the lines of Aristotle, who had deeply penetrated the political teachings of the Church, as a deficient form of government, a *parekbasis*.

Secondly, democracy was a textbook type. In real life it was either marginal (Switzerland) or not yet taken seriously as a new political system (for example in the USA after the Jacksonian revolution which puzzled even Tocqueville). Thirdly, democracy at the time was identified with republicanism. The Vatican, after all, was a monarchy as most other political systems were in Europe until 1918. Therefore I would plead for "*miser cordia*" for the pardonable sin that the Church considered the democratic principle as a danger – in the light of the democratic revolution in Rome under Mazzini and Garibaldi (1848).

After the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) no form of government *per se* was considered as leading to "sin", as long as it respected the rights of the Church. The only thing we have to criticize *ex post facto* is that the Church at the time of rising Fascism expressed its concerns in "*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*" (1931) and "*Mit Brennender Sorge*" (1937), but was cautious in her favorable plea for the principles of democracy until the end of the Second World War.

MINNERATH

On observe que la lente et prudente approche de la démocratie par le magistère de l'Eglise se décante à partir des évolutions de la démocratie elle-même. Ce n'est que lorsque la démocratie politique est apparue comme l'antidote des régimes totalitaires qu'elle a été valorisée et promue. En même temps, la démocratie comme système politique est placée dans le cadre de la conception globale des rapports entre la personne et la communauté: famille, milieux de vie, Etat. Si la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise n'a expressément souhaité la démocratie que si tard, elle a au contraire énoncé très tôt, et en avance sur les pratiques contemporaines, quelles devaient être les conditions d'une vie sociale respectueuse de la dignité humaine et de la liberté. Elle a enseigné l'égalité fondamentale des êtres humains. Elle a promu une vision de la société distincte de l'Etat et insisté sur le rôle des corps intermédiaires. La "société civile" a sa place dans l'enseignement catholique depuis au moins Léon XIII, qui parle de la nécessité de l'organisation syndicale sur le plan professionnel, et depuis Pie XI qui lance le concept porteur de subsidiarité. Même l'idée de l'Etat de droit n'est pas nouvelle. Depuis le XIIIe siècle, l'Eglise enseigne que le pouvoir politique est illégitime s'il est arbitraire et qu'il est lié à l'ordre naturel. Ces dernières années, Jean Paul II montre clairement vers quelles dérives va la démocratie lorsqu'elle se prend pour une valeur absolue en elle-même — par rapport à laquelle toutes les autres valeurs devraient être relativisées. Démocratie, comme liberté, ne va pas sans recherche de la vérité ni sans responsabilité.