

## *Discussion of the paper by J.J. Di Iulio*

ARCHER

Since democratic participation is always contested, I would like to question the radical role which has been assigned to the Church in the promotion of enfranchisement. I suggest that there are only two conditions under which it has played this radical part. The first is when the Church and its members have suffered severe political discrimination, as in England until the nineteenth century. The second is where Catholics previously enjoyed democratic representation but then suffered exclusion, as in Communist Poland where the Church then acted as the only alternative organisational base from which to advocate inclusive citizenship. Unless these conditions hold, can one really argue that the Church played a radical role in the historical promotion of democracy?

FLORIA

I would refer to one of the quotes that Professor Di Iulio gave us regarding Richard Putnam and Italian democracy, where he describes how there are historical, institutional and cultural differences when you look at North and South. In the North you have a more horizontal form of power, in the South you always have the master, the “padrino”, the “mafia” type of structure, a vertical structure instead of a horizontal one.

Now, I was rather severe and critical of the Church’s role and what it said regarding democracy, but I think that when you look at the transitional phases of this, if you refer to Latin America, the Church has played a very important role and, generally speaking, with episcopates of different strength. Let’s say the Church was a fundamental bridge to bring us back to democratic regimes after the authoritarian or military regimes that covered almost all of Latin America in the sixties or seventies.

Now, I think the Church was able to discover that if they didn’t conform to a political theory, they did try to push for greater pluralism, greater flexibility and basically moved toward democracy. Thank you.

MORANDE

I would like to say that the difference between democracy as a procedure and democracy as an end in itself is something that needs to be considered in

its relation to human rights. If basic human rights are respected in a given period of history, in a given society, democracy can be understood as a procedure. But if this is not the case, the legitimization of democracy needs something which is more than just an efficient mechanism of decision making. I would have liked to have heard from the previous speaker some reference to the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* which I think is very important to our understanding of democracy today. What seems to be at stake now is human existence itself, when, for instance, the cause of pro-abortion presupposes that the most defenseless and innocent human beings one could imagine can be considered by society as unjust aggressors. In this case, the value neutrality of democratic procedure implies a hidden option against the human right to existence. So, whether democracy is an end or a means depends on the ways in which this difference can be considered neutral in relation to human existence itself.

ZIOLKOWSKI

His Holiness, on his first visit to Poland in 1979, spoke of human rights and by the same token of democracy. Without his pilgrimage to his native country most probably “Solidarnosc” would not have been born. It was with good reason that the Pope in his first encyclical *Laborem Exercens* referred to workers deprived of human rights. You speak rightly about the mission of the Church in this regard. Therefore, it would be advisable to say something about the dynamic process which has led to the introduction of human rights and democracy in countries of Central Europe over the last ten years or so.

VON BEYME

This statement crashes in an open door. I would, however, challenge the use of Huntington’s waves of democratisation. His first wave extended over the 100 years after the 1820s. The changes in this period – with few exceptions, such as France in 1848 – were aiming at parliamentarisation and liberalisation of the legal state but not democracy proper, for which the minimal criterion must be universal suffrage. Most principles in representative governments are taken from the liberal legal state, such as human rights or division of powers, or even federalism.

Even in the twentieth century, in the self-description of democratic constitutions to be found in the preambles from Spain to Russia, we find variations of the self-definition of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany: a democratic, federal, social and legalized state. Democracy is hardly the central notion, rarely parliamentary democracy is mentioned – from Bulgaria to Sweden. Sometimes a “Repubblica del Lavoro” is invoked, as in Italy, but this is only another sweet sounding variation of the welfare

state. This little comparison raises the suspicion that democracy is somewhat considered in a procedural and instrumental way and the substance of liberty is taken from the principles of the “*Rechtsstaat*”.

VILLACORTA

Thank you. I think nowhere more than in the Philippines can we appreciate the importance of democracy as a value, as an end rather than as a means. For too long in the Philippines we have regarded democracy as a method for elections and policy making. We sometimes forget that democracy has the ultimate objective of choosing the right kind of leader – the right kind of leader defined in terms of competence, morality, commitment to human rights, the human person, as well as social justice. Now, it seems that discussing the philosophy and ideology of democracy is a much simpler exercise, but if we look at the realities of Third World democracies it is a much more complex matter. It is more complex than just the choice between authoritarianism and democracy, and more complex than the democratic choices that people in a highly developed country such as the United States face. For example, in a developing country where the media determine to a great extent the popularity of candidates, you find the preponderance of show-business people, actors, sports heroes, as aspirants for public office. There, you find a situation where electoral mechanisms are controlled by the government, where money, political machinery, political influence and rampant cheating determine who the winners are.

In many Third World countries the traditional notions of democracy do not always apply, especially if we are going to confine these notions to democracy as a means. This is because there are intervening factors such as the poverty and powerlessness of the majority. Even in many countries in Eastern Europe, liberal democracy has shown its deficiencies in terms of the security of the livelihood of the citizens. In many cases, this has led to the return to power of socialist parties. More and more, we hear from both the Right and the Left in many countries in the Third World, as well as in Eastern Europe, counter-arguments to liberal democracy. They come from the former socialist groups which used to be in power, and, in Third World countries, from the apologists for strongman rule.

So, I wish this seminar to address these issues and inject the Church's teachings on human rights and social justice, which go beyond the traditional notions of liberal democracy.

BETANCUR

I wanted to congratulate Professor Di Iulio on his presentation. Professor, for me it's very moving to see that there are Catholics who do not

just read the pontifical documents and look at their teachings, but also look at what our neighbours are writing on, in your reference to Professor Huntington.

However, I am concerned: how do we decide the moment when we need to establish a dichotomy between concepts, the ideas for example presented by the Holy Father in Cuba, and the praxis, the political praxis, because I'm afraid that in the praxis of politics we begin to involve the Church as an institution in religious struggles, and that's what I'm a bit concerned about. Thank you.

DI IULIO

Thank you very much for your comments. We're focusing here again and with justification on the role of the Church in particular in democratizing reforms. If you look at what actually is happening on the ground of the countries *vis-à-vis* democratizing reforms and the strengthening of civil institutions and civic traditions that favour democracy, the Church's role is to me at least that of a bellwether.

MENSAH

In view of the shortage of time, I was merely going to say that the proposition that democracy is a value appears to be contradicted by the facts on the ground. If one goes around the majority of the world's democracies one cannot find a common system everywhere. There are differences, even fundamental differences, in the various systems. Now, if democracy itself were a value one would expect it to have more or less the same face in the societies in which it is clearly accepted as operating. This proposition that democracy itself is a value can create problems for Third World countries, as my colleague from the Philippines has noted. For if we operate on the basis that democracy is a value in itself, there is the danger that we identify the so-called value with the localized form of democracy we find in the country we take as our model. This could lead to complications especially if certain of the local procedures and symbols come to lose their relevance or appeal in the new habitat. I myself believe that it is more helpful to consider democracy as a process and I wish to congratulate the Professor for so clearly articulating that idea. It is also important to stress that what makes a process democratic is the objective which it seeks to achieve for society. Of course we know that throughout history those in power have always claimed that their aim is to improve the lot of the people over whom they rule. But even where this is in fact their aim, the method – the process – used for achieving the aim may be wholly undemocratic. Democracy is not

merely about the ultimate objective – the value – which a government is supposed to seek: it is also about the means, the process by which a society tries to attain values on which there may be no disagreement. The reason why democracy, as it has come to be understood since the eighteenth century, and especially since the end of the Second World War, has been supported is that it emphasizes certain basic requirements which satisfy the natural inclination of most human beings: the idea that every person must be treated in a democratic society as worthy of respect, in his or her own right, somebody who has the right to play a part in decisions affecting him or her. If you look at it in that way, democracy must be considered primarily as a process which enables this aim to be achieved. It also means that the process will not necessarily have the same form in every society: it will have different forms according to the circumstances and histories of different people, but the major characteristic will be present everywhere. If we keep that basic ingredient in mind we do not have to be “relativist”, in the sense that we accept every system that claims to be “democratic”, but we will ask in each particular situation, in each particular process – whether elections are by universal suffrage or through electoral colleges or whatever – whether the process enables the individuals in the society to feel that they are in fact able to participate effectively in shaping the system that determines how their lives are run. I think that this criterion for evaluation is very, very important. The proposition that democracy itself is a value can, I think, create a serious problem in societies where basic values and opinions differ between different sections. For instance, we have been speaking of the role of the Church, but what happens when you have different religious groups in the same society? By what yardstick do we determine the “democratic value” in that state? Which value of which religion is to be the predominant value? In my view, without having to select one overriding value, it is still possible to develop a process which will make individuals feel that they count. That, I think, is the most important element, indeed the main element of the democratic system.

ZACHER

I would like to contradict you when you separate the rule of law from democracy. There was a long history during which the democratic elements, rule of law elements, sometimes federalist, sometimes finally welfare state elements, came together to improve what government can be. This model of a modern *Verfassungsstaat* (constitutional government) cannot be thought of without democracy.