

# *Education for Politics: Knowing, Responsibility, and Cultural Development*

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## Introduction: Political Culture

The matter which I want to discuss is political responsibility regarding cultural development, a subject which is part of the study of "political culture." The concept of "political culture" stands for ideas citizens have about what ought to happen in a political system (according to norms and values), what probably will happen (expectations), what is desirable and worth striving for (interests and goals), and fundamental views on political phenomena (worldviews). Empirical research about the ideas citizens have on these questions is the task of political scientists. However, the fundamental worldview orientations of people are philosophically most interesting, and these will be my topic in what follows.

Almond and Verba distinguish three kinds of fundamental orientations: a) "cognitive orientation," that is, knowledge of and belief about political phenomena; b) "affective orientation," or feelings about these phenomena; and c) "evaluative orientation," judgments and opinions about these phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In short, we can summarize these orientations in three questions: *What* political phenomena does a person discuss? *Why* does a person like or dislike certain phenomena? *How* does she/he judge certain political phenomena.

The political phenomenon I shall discuss is the responsibility of the state for cultural development. I shall compare the philosophical theories of the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) and the Calvinist

<sup>1</sup> G.A. Almond and S. Verba. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 15.

philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977) on this subject. My central question is: “What cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations do Maritain and Dooyeweerd have concerning the responsibility of the state in relation to cultural development?” *First*, I shall discuss Maritain’s philosophy of political society in relationship to the state and his theory of “degeneration and revitalization” in cultural development. *Second*, I shall discuss Dooyeweerd’s philosophy of the state in relationship to the political society, and his theory of “differentiation and integration” in cultural development. *Third*, I shall compare their “cognitive,” “affective” and “evaluative orientations.”

### The Political Society and the State

In our time the concepts “state” and “political society” are often used synonymously. However, Maritain made a distinction between these two, and considered the state as a part of political society. In Maritain’s view the political society is by its nature the most perfect society (“*societas perfecta*”).<sup>2</sup> He argues that political society should promote the “common good” of the entire nation, in which everyone has the economic right to labor and property, and also possesses civic and political rights, and cultural participatory rights.<sup>3</sup> As such the “common good” is the most general goal of political society. Therefore, the “common good” as a general goal should not be confused with concrete goals of the government’s policy in, for example, the fields of education, social security, or public health care. The “common good” is also a normative idea by which the effects of government’s policy can be judged.<sup>4</sup> As a general goal and as a normative idea the “common good” refers to what is “common to the whole and the parts.”<sup>5</sup> According to Maritain, this last phrase presupposes a just distribu-

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> T.R. Rourke and C.E. Cochran, “The Common Good and Economic Justice: Reflections on the Thought of Yves R. Simon,” *The Review of Politics* 54 (1991): pp. 231–252; and Ralph McInerney, *Art and Prudence: Studies in the Thought of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 87–91.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, with an introduction by Donald Gallagher (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 94. Cf. C.P. O’Donnell, “Maritain and the Future of Democratic Authority” in Peter Redpath, ed., *From Twilight to Dawn: The Cultural Vision of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame, Indiana: American Maritain Association/University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 74–76; and Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), p. 90, and *A General Theory of Authority* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), pp. 28–29.

tion of material and immaterial goods that can be achieved by justice. Therefore, Maritain uses "justice" and the "common good" as equivalents. In any case, the "common good" is not the sum of "particular goods," as liberals often argue, nor the interest of the community to which citizens are subordinated, but a normative idea: "integrity of life, the good and righteous human life of the multitude."<sup>6</sup>

According to Maritain, political society is a superior unity that comprises families and other social institutions, a unity that gives the greatest possible autonomy to these institutions. In this context "autonomy" means that every social institution governs itself, and carries out its duties according to its own competency and responsibility. As such, the true political society is characterized by a social pluralism in which all social institutions contribute to the vitality of political society.<sup>7</sup>

### The State as an Instrument

As a part of political society, the state has, in particular, the task of maintaining laws, of promoting public order and public interest. As such, the state is the totality of institutions which can wield power and force, and which at the same time serves the interests of citizens. In view of these particular tasks, Maritain characterized the state as a superior part of political society: superior, that is, in relationship to other parts of political society.<sup>8</sup> However, in this hierarchical social order the state should acknowledge the autonomy of other social institutions, though it can, if it is in the public interest, provide assistance subsidiarily if these "lower" social institutions cannot achieve their tasks.<sup>9</sup>

The state possesses political authority but it does not have this authority of its own right. The state has this authority by virtue of the political soci-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>7</sup> Maritain, *Man and the State*, pp. 9–12. Cf. Yves R. Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), p. 15; *A General Theory of Authority*, pp. 137–139; and David T. Koyzis, "Yves R. Simon's Contribution to A Structural Political Pluralism" in Michael D. Torre, ed., *Freedom in the Modern World: Jacques Maritain, Yves R. Simon, Mortimer J. Adler* (Notre Dame, Indiana: American Maritain Association/University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 138–139.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. John P. Hittinger, "Jacques Maritain and Yves R. Simon's Use of Thomas Aquinas in Their Defense of Liberal Democracy," in David Gallagher, ed., *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), pp. 149–172.

ety to which it is subordinate: it wields this authority in service of the "common good." So, Maritain did not mark his position only in relationship to liberalism but also in relationship to collectivism. According to Maritain, in our time we are not confronted with a subsidiary state but with an "absorbing" state which controls political society<sup>10</sup>—a situation that he criticizes: "The State is not a kind of collective superman."<sup>11</sup>

Maritain characterized his theory of the state as an "instrumentalistic" one, in order to make the political significance of the state as clear as possible. The state is not a goal in itself but a means to promote the "common good," including the achievement of social justice, economic improvement, and self-protection against totalitarian threats.

### Instrument of Justice

Maritain's view is not meant to disqualify the state. He recognizes that laws for employment and labor are necessary for achieving the "common good." He characterizes the modern state as a "juridical machine," with its laws, its power, its discipline and organization of the social and economic life as "part of normal progress." However, Maritain affirms that a degeneration of this progress could occur if the state becomes identified with political society. In that case, one could speak of an "absorbing," and perhaps even totalitarian, state, that not only from a political point of view has supervision on the "common good," but organizes and controls economics, science and other social sectors. In totalitarian states progress is suffocated but in democratic states it contains risks, in particular risks of social justice.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the state should promote decentralization and depoliticize social life, in order to enforce a pluriform society.

So, the task of the state is to promote the "common good" of the multitude or social justice; that is, the betterment of the material conditions of human life and the improvement of moral and spiritual capacities. In short, Maritain holds that "the political task is essentially a task of civilization and culture, of helping man to conquer his genuine freedom of expansion or autonomy."<sup>13</sup> Although the task of politicians is always embedded in a given culture, they also have the task of transcending the given culture, of forming culture. Insofar as the state can achieve this task of civilization and

<sup>10</sup> Maritain, *Man and the State*, pp. 14–15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55. Cf. Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, p. 126.

culture. Maritain speaks of growth and progress. He adds: "Maybe man will not become better. At least his state of life will become better. The structures of human life and humanity's conscience will progress."<sup>14</sup> Still, Maritain also speaks of regression and degradation of culture.

### Degradation and Revitalization

Maritain pays particular attention to ideas of progress and regression in regard to democracy. In relation to these phenomena he discusses the "consciousness of self" ("*prise de conscience*"), that is, "the growth in awareness of an offended and humiliated human dignity."<sup>15</sup> This growth in awareness appears as a historical gain: it means the rise toward liberty and personality. For Maritain, all forms of progress of the modern age, of art, of science, of philosophy, also of politics, exhibit this growth of awareness.

There is a movement of progression in societies themselves evolving in history. According to Maritain, this movement depends upon "the double law of the degradation and revitalization of the energy of history, or of the mass of human activity upon which the movement of history depends."<sup>16</sup> This means that while the wear and tear of time and mental passivity degrade the moral energy of human beings. Creative forces which are so characteristic of the spirit of human dignity and liberty and which normally find their application in the efforts of the few (who are destined to be sacrificed), constantly revitalize the quality of this energy. Thus, a political society advances thanks to the vitalization of moral energy springing from this spirit and liberty. This means that progress will not take place by itself but by the ascent of consciousness that is linked to a superior level of organization: a civilized community. This community cannot be achieved by external forces and compulsion but only by the progress of moral consciousness and relationships of justice and brotherhood or civic friendship.<sup>17</sup> Justice and brotherhood are the "essential foundations" of this community or political society which, in particular, should be promoted by the state.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, p. 127.

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), p. 231. Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, pp. 36–37.

<sup>16</sup> Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, p. 113.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115; 118.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

However, at the time of World War II Maritain was prompted to ask this embarrassing question: "What is the reason for the failure of modern democracies to realize democracy?" During this war, when many people were victims of a demonic ideology and of the totalitarian Nazi regime, Maritain wrote his book on democracy. For him the main question was not how to win the war, but how to win the peace. His purpose was to indicate a direction in which he believed we would have to proceed: "In any event it [World War II] will not be truly won until the concrete outline for a new spiritual and social world will have its appearance in history."<sup>19</sup> He did not believe that these things could be done easily, or that the internal conflicts would be surmounted without trouble. He continues: "Public opinion has understood that in order to escape from the base frivolity and the infamous weakness of politicians who were not all bad, but whose inner life was dust, we must exact from our leaders moral consistency, the strength of one who acts on principles and not honesty alone, but virtue."<sup>20</sup>

This mission can be achieved only by great political vigilance activated by a process of education.<sup>21</sup> This political vigilance and process of education should be activated, in turn, by the authority and the right of the rulers.<sup>22</sup> But what happens when the political leaders have become morally bankrupt? Then it is time "to call upon the moral and spiritual reserves of the people, of common humanity—the last reserves of civilization. And these moral and spiritual reserves are not a tool in the hands of those with authority; they are the very power, and the source of initiative, of men cognizant of their personal dignity and their responsibility."<sup>23</sup>

An important reason for the failure of the modern democracies to realize democracy was "the fact that this realization inevitably demanded accomplishment in the social as well as in the political order, and that this demand was not complied with."<sup>24</sup> Yet political and social democracy are not merely manners of organizing society. First and foremost they designate a general philosophy of human and political life and a state of mind, in which human dignity and the right of the person are the "essential bases." Therefore, according to Maritain, the principal reason for the failure of modern democracies is a spiritual one: "This form and this ideal of common life,

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

which we call 'democracy,' springs in its essentials from the inspiration of the Gospel and cannot subsist without it."<sup>25</sup>

Maritain summarized the meaning of the Gospel for democracy and for its revitalization: the unity of the human race, the natural equality of all men, the inalienable dignity of human beings, of labor, and of the poor, compassion with the weak and the suffering, the inviolability of conscience, and viewing every human being as our neighbor. These characteristics are the basis of his ideal of "personalistic democracy." By virtue of the "hidden work" of the evangelical inspiration, secular political philosophical theories contain ideas of inalienable rights of the person, e.g. equality, the government as representative of the multitude, political rights of the people whose consent is implied by any political regime, relations of justice and the legal order at the base of society, the ideal of fraternity, and promotion of the "common good" of the multitude.<sup>26</sup>

### Structure of the State

Dooyeweerd distinguishes clearly between the structure of the state and the structure of other social institutions. As he puts it, the state is an organization that is based on a monopolist "power of the sword" (judicial, police and military power) over a certain territorial cultural area. But since the state is qualified as a community of public law the use of power should be regulated by law.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, according to Dooyeweerd, the state should be considered as a community that is historically founded (upon power), and juridically qualified, that is, law should be its principal function.

For Dooyeweerd, the state is a juridically organized community of citizens and government. This means that the public interest, not particular interests, should dominate, and, at the same time, the interests of individual citizens and social institutions should be served. Therefore Dooyeweerd holds: "The internal political activity of the State should always be guided by the idea of public social justice."<sup>28</sup>

According to Dooyeweerd, "public social justice," the qualifying characteristic of the state, should be distinguished from the goals of the state. A government can have many goals, for example, to create employment, to

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34–41; 57–59.

<sup>27</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 3 (Amsterdam: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 412–414.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

cut down the expenses of health care, but in realizing these goals the criterion of "public social justice" should be decisive.

Dooyeweerd thus rejects a restrictive idea of law as a characteristic of the state, because in his view law is a normative aspect of reality (based upon the "divine creation order"), interwoven with other aspects, for example, with the aesthetic and the ethical. Insight into the connection of these aspects can deepen the understanding of the juridical aspect. This means that law can be deepened in an aesthetic direction: in achieving a balance and harmony of interests. Law can also be realized in a moral direction, by harmonizing private interests into a promotion of the public interest.

We have seen that Dooyeweerd defines the state as a juridically organized community. Although he sometimes used words such as "state" and "political society" as synonyms, he also distinguished the two concepts.<sup>29</sup> Identifying the two concepts is, according to him, a result of a totalitarian idea of the state.<sup>30</sup> However, his distinction between the political society and the state differs from that of Maritain. Dooyeweerd does not speak of the state as a part of the political society or as an "instrument of justice." He is particularly interested in the structural analysis of the state as a community *sui generis* which is distinguished from the differentiated social institutions within the territory of the state which comprise political society.

### Other Competencies

Dooyeweerd also discusses the competencies of these various social institutions. His theory of the variety of spheres of competency is founded on the neo-Calvinist principle of "sphere-sovereignty," understood as an utterance of God's "creation order." Based on this principle, family, school, industry, church and state are considered as realities *sui generis* that should be distinguished according to their own nature. He acknowledges that God is the absolute sovereign to whom all other forms of authority are subordinated. This acknowledgment means that no social institution can be self-sufficient or can have an absolute power, and that no institution derives its sovereignty and competency from another institution. It also means that human beings should never be considered as being

<sup>29</sup> Contra David T. Koyzis, "Toward a Christian Democratic Pluralism: A Comparative Study of Neothomist and Calvinist Political Theories" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1986), p. 357.

<sup>30</sup> Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, pp. 433, 446.



absorbed by, or as parts of any culture, social community or tradition, unless by force. Dooyeweerd speaks of a political society in which differentiated social institutions, although interwoven with each other, exist with their own competencies and responsibilities. In opposition to Maritain, Dooyeweerd does not consider the social order as a hierarchical one in which the state is the highest part and other institutions are lower parts. Rather, he sees their relationship as "horizontal." However, though all social institutions exist within the territory of the state and fall under the jurisdiction of the state, these institutions retain their own nature and should achieve their own competency (within the bounds of law). Moreover, the distinctive nature (or qualification) of the state can be a means to oppose both liberal and "absorbing" state visions.

Concerning the horizontal and vertical ordering of society, one more nuance must be noted. I have already pointed out that Maritain acknowledges a hierarchical order of political society but that social institutions are *primarily* characterized by autonomy. If a social institution falls short in achieving its own tasks, the state may then act *subsidiarily*. The criterion by which to judge when and how the state should act in this way depends on the "common good" of the political society.

Although Dooyeweerd starts from the idea of "sphere-sovereignty" and from a horizontal ordering of society, he also acknowledges the idea of subsidiarity. He admits that the qualifying function of the state requires an active role by the government. With an appeal to "public social justice" the government is empowered (by virtue of a judgement of the law-court) to deprive parents of parental rights, to put citizens in prison, and to make regulations for industries in order to protect the natural environment or the interests of consumers. Although we discover influences of different philosophical traditions in the thought of Maritain and Dooyeweerd, the differences between their visions of the social order in relationship to political practice are, in my judgment, only differences of accent.

### Differentiation and Integration

Regarding progress Dooyeweerd pays particular attention to processes of social differentiation. In his view there is a fundamental difference between differentiated and undifferentiated societies. In undifferentiated societies there is no room for the freedom of human actions and for the formation of distinctive life spheres according to their own nature. The entire life of the members of such a society is enclosed within the bonds of kinship,

tribe, church or dictatorship. In these societies tradition exercises an absolute power. Human beings cannot transcend the existing tradition.<sup>31</sup>

For Dooyeweerd, the process of cultural development always takes place in historical continuity. This means that cultural development is impossible without tradition. In his discussion of tradition Dooyeweerd does not mean to refer to conservatives who simply want to stick to the status quo, but rather to the embodiment of a communal heritage acquired by the passing generations. Tradition, in other words, is a communal and conserving power binding the past to the present. However, a dynamic culture does not vegetate upon its tradition but rather unfolds it. In this way new forms come from old ones, and in new phenomena old ones are always present. Tradition, therefore, is not the old-fashioned and unprofitable; for progress and renewal have a rightful place within it. On the other hand, not everything that is announced as a renewal contributes to true cultural progress. In retrospect it may be considered as conservative, reactionary or even as degenerative.<sup>32</sup>

For Dooyeweerd cultural development in the sense of progress is made possible when the inner nature of the different spheres of human society can freely unfold. In this context he speaks of "the progressive course of the opened development of culture." He argues that "cultural development as progress" can be realized by the double law: the "normative principle of cultural integration and differentiation." This means that the process of differentiation has its counterpart in the process of integration. The process of "opening" or "disclosure" of undifferentiated cultures produces new contacts with other cultural groups, new relationships and new forms of cooperation in art, scientific research, commerce and religion. The modern state is also an example of integration: the central government has carefully to weigh the various private interests against each other and against the public interest. Ultimately, private interests should be harmonized and integrated in the public interest under the idea of "public social justice."<sup>33</sup> So, at the same time, Dooyeweerd discusses the state as an example of differentiation

<sup>31</sup> Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1955), pp. 346–368. See Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options* (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), pp. 74–75.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242–243; Cf. Dooyeweerd, *Roots*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>33</sup> Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 3, pp. 260–262; 446; 488; 491.

and in regard to its responsibility regarding cultural development: "The State may promote the interests of science and the fine arts, education, public health, trade, agriculture and industry, popular morality, and so on."<sup>34</sup>

According to Dooyeweerd, the ultimate reason for cultural development, in particular the promotion of differentiation and integration, is that such activity is based on God's "creation order." God gives humanity the cultural mandate to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it. This means that humanity has the calling to bring to realization the possibilities and potentials present in creation. Yet, does this cultural mandate imply that people should strive for differentiation and integration?

Of course, everyone will judge positively the fact that human beings and social institutions can achieve freedom and responsibility according to their own nature. However, compared with Western societies, people in less differentiated societies live differently. They have their own division of labor and other social tasks, and they may be happy, perhaps even happier than many people in Western countries who have a hurried existence and suffer from a murderous competition. Indeed, human beings in less differentiated societies have other ideas of freedom and responsibility, but their cultures cannot be characterized as necessarily being of a lower level than other cultures. Dooyeweerd criticizes these undifferentiated societies because of the compelling forces of tradition and morality which hinder possibilities of cultural development. To the extent that these compelling powers exist, they should be criticized. However, in Western culture, characterized in many respects by processes of differentiation and integration, the compelling powers of capitalistic world-economy are evident. Dooyeweerd would certainly agree with criticism of the dominance of the capitalistic world-economy. He would acknowledge that capitalism degenerates human life and social institutions in many respects.

However, in discussing the "norm" of cultural development by processes of differentiation and integration, Dooyeweerd seems to be a typical Western philosopher. He defends, for example, differentiation and integration as they arose in Western societies after the French and the Industrial Revolution. How could this differentiation and integration have taken place in Western culture? In his criticism of Dooyeweerd, Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that this question can only be answered by studying the rise of the capitalist world-economy. Although Dooyeweerd does not acknowledge

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 445-446.

cal society and other institutions, and characterized by relations of justice and brotherhood, then Maritain speaks of "cultural progress." He would certainly agree with the "historic law" of differentiation and integration as put forth by Dooyeweerd because he also defends the "autonomy" of social institutions. Therefore, like Dooyeweerd, Maritain rejects both a liberal and a totalitarian state, and defends a pluralist society. In other words, differentiation and integration are presupposed in his discussion of the "law of degeneration and revitalization."

However, Maritain does not stop with the law of "differentiation and integration." He finds it necessary to consider concrete social and political situations in order to judge whether the above moral characteristics are achieved. In his view these characteristics should be constantly revitalized. Thus, he not only discusses the structures of social institutions but, in particular, he pays attention to the moral quality of the politicians and other participants of these institutions.

Maritain would certainly hold that the historic law of "differentiation and integration" could not serve as an adequate criterion of cultural progress. He would not deny Dooyeweerd's idea that the modern state is an example of both integration and differentiation because it has to weigh carefully the various private interests against each other, and to integrate these interests in the public interest. However, he would not judge this idea of integration, as such, as progress. He would seek to determine this by asking the question of how this process of integration should be achieved morally. The answer to this question would determine whether this integration could be valued as progress or not.

So, however important it may be to distinguish social institutions according to their own nature, as Dooyeweerd held, more important is the question: "Are these institutions performing well in practice?" Dooyeweerd would probably answer the criticism that he analyzed "normative principles" of social relationships by saying that human beings have the responsibility to realize these principles in practice. In some sense Maritain could agree with this answer. However, Maritain would certainly conclude that a social and political philosophy should not only be "principle-oriented" but also "praxis-oriented."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, he would stress that a social and political philosophy should be responsible for misuse that could be prevented by an elaboration of basic values of "personalistic democracy" and social democracy. Dooyeweerd fails to verify his ideas of differentiation and integration by these values.

<sup>38</sup> See Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, pp. 170–173.