

SOCIAL COHESION OF A PLURALIST CIVIL SOCIETY: A CHALLENGE TO MARITAIN'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Henk E.S. Woldring

I Introduction

The central question of this paper reads as follows: under what conditions can the spirit of the American people change socio-economic structures, generate a new phase in its civilization and, consequently, promote the social cohesion of society? The hidden conflict between the spirit of the people on the one hand, and the structure of industrial civilization on the other was a key element in Maritain's first impression of the United States.¹ He characterizes the spirit of the people as souls and vital energy that have the potency to change socio-economic structures. He considers the inner logic of the structure of the industrial civilization as inhuman and materialistic, and acknowledges that this economic structure generates certain patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values. However, Maritain argues that the result of the hidden conflict is that the spirit of the people has vanquished and transformed from within the logic of the structure of industrialized civilization. This transformation inaugurated a new phase in modern civilization that is characterized by a new morality, which includes the idea of social cohesion. However, Maritain does not analyze the precise inter-relationships between socio-economic structures and the spirit of the people, nor how this new morality arises. To clarify Maritain's position on these interrelationships I shall analyze his ideas more extensively with the help of Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber, and Max Scheler.

II Spirit of the People and Socio-economic Structures

Maritain characterizes the essence of the spirit of the American people as "their souls and vital energy, their dreams, their everyday effort, their idealism and generosity." He adds: "freedom-loving and mankind-loving people, people clinging to the importance of ethical

¹ Jacques Maritain, *Reflections on America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 22.

standards."² Elsewhere, he adds the good will, the sense of human fellowship, human reliability, helpfulness, and the extraordinary resilience that is "a sign of a perpetual alertness of the spirit."³ Next, Maritain argues that the spirit of the American people is directed "toward the good of man, the humble dignity of man."⁴ Moreover, moral values of the Gospel, like mercy, pity and the responsibility toward all those in distress, are "hidden in the secret life of souls."⁵ Maritain believes that these spiritual ideas are decisive for the development of the American society of the future.

However, material factors, such as the structure of industrial civilization, also play a role in the development of society. The inner logic of the structure of industrial civilization, which is originally grounded in the fecundity of money and the primacy of individual profit, is characterized by inhumanity and materialism.⁶ Another material factor that Maritain discusses is the social structure of the segregation of black and white population groups. In the southern United States and in the highly industrialized areas of the North, many African Americans and whites live in separate neighbourhoods.⁷ At the same time, American society is characterized as a classless society. Maritain argues that the genuine concept of class implies a certain element of fate and inevitability; it refers to both a social condition, which, as a rule, is hereditary, and to a relatively immobile social structure. However, in American society there is no hereditary stability in social conditions. American society is characterized by dynamic material conditions that make everyone liable to shifts in one's social position; this perpetual change is normal. Although Maritain holds that his statement about America as a classless society is basically true, he acknowledges that it will become more true in proportion to the

² Ibid., p. 22.

³ Ibid., pp. 33, 36-37, 67.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 50, 52

growth of equality of opportunity for everyone and decrease in economic differences between population groups.⁸

Maritain holds that socio-economic structures generate certain patterns of thought, behavior and moral values. The American classless society, for example, generates a climate of freedom of action, competition and career.⁹ Moreover, Maritain acknowledges that in industrialized nations "large areas in the common consciousness... have been infected by the miasmata that emanate from the structures... of our modern [industrial] civilization."¹⁰ He acknowledges that there are people who measure everything in terms of success, practical power and personal aims. However, he does not want to pay too much attention to these people because, according to him, they do not represent true American mentality and life style.¹¹ Maritain also acknowledges that the structural segregation of African Americans and whites pervaded all aspects of social life. Although federal law stood for the complete equality of all citizens, the social structure of segregation generated feelings and behavior of large parts of the white population opposed to the federal law. This social structure of segregation "corresponds not only to ingrained prejudices, but also to ingrained customs and traditions to which the daily activities... have been adjusted."¹² However, Maritain argues that those customs and prejudices are incompatible with the spirit of the American people. He is convinced that spiritual energies will, ultimately, conquer those customs and prejudices.¹³

Maritain holds that patterns of thought, behavior and moral values which are generated from socio-economic structures of society are not strong enough to resist the power of spirit. He argues: "[T]he people... were keeping their own souls apart from it." Next, he concludes that

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-78.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 160, 178.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-57.

"the spirit of the people is gradually overcoming and breaking" the logic of the socio-economic structures. Moreover, this spirit has transformed from within the inner dynamic and historical trend of the structures, and inaugurated a "really new phase in modern civilization."¹⁴ However, Maritain does not explain what 'from within' means. What is the precise link between the spirit of the people on the one hand, and the socio-economic structures that generate patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values on the other, that makes this process of transformation possible? Before answering these questions, I will describe Maritain's view of the new phase of civilization.

III A New Phase of Civilization

Maritain argues that the new phase in modern civilization gave American society a material and moral outlook fit to free human beings and fit to build a civilization genuinely original in character, capable of captivating the "hearts of men."¹⁵ This new phase of civilization is characterized by a general state of mind, a common consciousness, and a coherent social life that is dominated by the original characteristics of the spirit of the American people: generosity, good will, general kindness, a sense of human fellowship, moral conscience, the gradual realization of the American ideal of equal opportunity for all, and progress in social justice.¹⁶ Of course, there are egoistic and greedy individuals, but, according to Maritain, America is neither egoist nor avaricious. On the contrary, American people know the importance of money not only for improving their own lives, but also for improving the lives of others and for the service of the common good.¹⁷

Maritain does not say that the new phase of American civilization is a new Christendom. He argues that this civilization may become a fertile ground for the development of a new Christendom if the spiritual renewal takes place in souls that will make Christian faith and morality actually prevail in common consciousness and behavior. Next,

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 23, 111, 197.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 23, 29.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 33-38, 70, 112.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 33-35.

he asks the important question: "[H]ow can you have the face to speak of a new Christendom to come, when you see the state of our present world, with all the threats of degradation and even destruction to which mankind is being subjected, and had you not better speak of new barbarism already come?"¹⁸ Although he answers that the ferment of justice is more or less secretly making headway, and that Christian faith is still alive, he does not really answer the question: how can the spirit of the people transform socio-economic structures, and its patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values into a new phase of civilization that might be a fertile ground for a new Christendom, and not for some kind of barbarism?

Regarding this question, Maritain connects the new phase of civilization to democracy. He argues that the inner transformation of socio-economic structures should be aimed at the primacy of *human welfare* and the political *common good*. "These phenomena taken together," he continues, "are great signs foreshadowing a new age in the development of democratic societies."¹⁹ He means an "existential democracy: not as a set of abstract slogans, or as a lofty ideal, but... democracy as a living reality."²⁰ He argues that a favourable condition for the sound development of democracy is a pluralist civil society: in this type of society, participating citizens belong to a variety of autonomous social communities that are in possession of authority commensurate with their function, and have their proper rights, freedoms and responsibilities (social plurality or differentiation). Moreover, in a pluralist civil society, participating citizens belong to very different philosophical and religious creeds (worldview plurality), and they should cooperate for the ultimate goal of the common good.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 190.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 161-62.

²¹ Ibid., p. 179. See Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), pp. 162-76.

IV Pluralist Democracy

To clarify the relationship between the new phase of civilization and pluralist democracy, I will now discuss some theoretical distinctions in Maritain's philosophy on democracy which, although unique with respect to their mutual connection in politico-philosophical literature, are extremely useful. First, he argues that a genuine democracy implies a fundamental agreement with respect to communal life, i.e., it must "*bear within itself a common human creed, the creed of freedom.*"²² This faith is not a religious faith, but a *secular* or *civic* one. He criticizes libertarian theories, which see democratic society as an arena in which all private conceptions of communal life are met without any common thought for the well-being of society. Second, this secular faith is implemented by practical tenets or a *practical charter* that contains a legal structure, articles, formal rules, and procedures that together lead citizens toward the political organization of a democratic state. Third, citizens can try to justify this *practical charter* from very different philosophical or religious outlooks. Fourth, Maritain argues that, notwithstanding the diversity of worldviews, the democratic élan should be kept alive by the adherence to a *moral charter* or the code of public morality that underlies the practical charter and makes its workings possible. The moral charter deals with, for instance, public moral values such as: rights, liberties and responsibilities of persons who are members of associations; human equality; fraternity; mutual tolerance and respect; and the obligations of each person and the state toward the common good. Fifth, Maritain also identifies a *common ethos*: the inner energy of both the secular democratic faith and the public morality that underlies the active participation of citizens in political life.²³

Maritain wishes to strengthen the practical charter through comprehensive philosophical and religious outlooks in order to revitalize democracy, and, consequently, to promote the new phase of civilization. However, what is the precise link between theoretical justifications of the practical charter on the one hand, and public

²² Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 109.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-13, 145.

morality that characterizes the new phase of civilization on the other? Maritain introduces the idea of a common ethos that includes the idea of social cohesion. However, he does not analyse how a common ethos and, consequently, social cohesion arises. Social cohesion is an inclusive concept that needs to be clarified more specifically. Robert Bellah *et al.* formulate social cohesion as a central problem. They formulate the question as follows:

The fundamental question we posed, and that was repeatedly posed to us, was how to preserve or create a morally coherent life. But the kind of life we want depends on the kind of people we are—on our character. Our inquiry can thus be located in a longstanding discussion of the relationship between character and society.²⁴

Regarding the relationship between character and society, these authors refer to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville did not use the term *social cohesion*, but he had this idea in mind and related it to a common ethos. In the following sections, I shall discuss the arguments of Tocqueville, Weber and Scheler to gain more insight into the relationship between a common ethos and social cohesion.

V Alexis de Tocqueville on Mores

According to Tocqueville (1805-1859), the existence and survival of any society depends on an integrated alliance between people's participation in social institutions (material life conditions) and their commitment to certain ideas, behavior and moral values (non-material factors). Material life conditions can be determined by a hierarchical social structure (e.g. feudal structure), relationships of social equality, or other social and political institutions. Material life conditions inevitably generate certain patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values which, at the same time, also maintain and legitimize these conditions. In the introduction of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville writes:

²⁴ Robert N. Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p. vi.

No novelty in the United States struck me more vividly during my stay there than the equality of conditions. It was easy to see the immense influence of this basic fact on the whole course of society. It gives a particular turn to public opinion and a particular twist to the laws, new maxims to those who govern and particular habits to the governed. I soon realized that the influence of this fact extends far beyond political norms and laws, exercising dominion over civil society as much as over the government; it creates opinions, gives birth to feelings, suggests customs, and modifies whatever it does not create.²⁵

Before the Revolution of 1789, the material life conditions of the French people in the feudal era were determined by a hierarchical structure. This social structure seemed to be unchangeable because it produced patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values that legitimized the material life conditions. The revolutionary ideas of freedom and equality of the Enlightenment philosophers could not be realized because of those dominant patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values. However, before the French Revolution, the feudal structure was in a process of disintegration. Many citizens who were striving for more social freedom and equality were encouraged by some revolts that had already occurred. As a consequence, traditional patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values disintegrated more and more, and this process of disintegration created space for achieving ideas of freedom and equality. Tocqueville shows how these ideas supported a process of growing social and political freedom and the equality of citizens to participate in free social and political associations and the state government.²⁶

Tocqueville argues that the French Revolution was possible because of the lack of universally shared social consciousness, opinions, and moral values.²⁷ There was an ideological vacuum that could be filled by the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophy. But this could not happen

²⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 9.

²⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancient Regime* (London: Dent and Sons, 1988), pp. 140-41.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

overnight. To achieve this, Enlightenment ideas first had to be rooted in material life conditions and its pattern of thought, behavior and moral values. In French society, in the second part of the eighteenth century, material life conditions and its patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values were changing, which made the people susceptible to new ideas of freedom and equality. Albert Salomon argues correctly that Tocqueville does not defend a one-sided materialistic interpretation of society, because that would diminish the significance of non-material factors.²⁸ I hold similarly that Tocqueville does not have an idealistic approach, starting with philosophical and moral ideas, because that would diminish the significance of material factors. This position is in contrast with the ideas of Richard Herr.²⁹

Many critics of Tocqueville argue, and rightly so, that he uses an integrated alliance of material life conditions on the one hand, and non-material conditions, on the other hand, as a method of social research. However, in discussing his method of research, these critics do not clarify what the precise relationship is between these material and non-material factors. My thesis is that the interaction between material life conditions and non-material factors (patterns of thought, behavior and moral values) generates *mores*: various notions, opinions, and ideas that shape mental habits. I characterize these *mores* as basic elements of a common or *social ethos*. These *mores* make people susceptible to new ideas. In an historical context, these *mores* linked up with the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers and were then pursued in a revolutionary direction. These *mores* or basic elements of a social ethos that shape mental habits show precisely the link of that integrated alliance in Tocqueville's method of research. Discussing the ideas and arguments of the Enlightenment philosophers, Tocqueville writes: "Arguments of this kind can not succeed till certain changes in the conditions, customs, and minds [*moeurs*] of men have prepared a way for their reception."³⁰ This means that interaction between

²⁸ Albert Salomon, "Tocqueville, Moralistic and Sociologist," in *Social Research*, vol. 2 (1935): 417.

²⁹ Richard Herr, *Tocqueville and the Old Regime* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 36.

³⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Ancient Regime*, p. 11.

changing material life conditions and changing patterns of thought, customs and moral values generates new *mores* that shape mental habits.

Tocqueville considers *mores* "to be one of the great general causes responsible for the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States."³¹ He continues:

I here mean the term "mores" (*moeurs*) to have its original Latin meaning; I mean it to apply not only to "*moeurs*" in the strict sense, which might be called the habits of the heart, but also to the different notions possessed by men, the various opinions current among them, and the sum of ideas that shape mental habits. So I use the word to cover the whole moral and intellectual state of a people.... I am only looking for the elements in them which help to support political institutions.

Thus, Tocqueville discusses *mores* as the "great general causes" for maintaining the democratic republic. His precise thinking was that these *mores*, or basic elements of a social ethos, which are the result of the interaction between material and non-material life conditions, underlie the idea of social cohesion. Moreover, changes in material life conditions (by a combination of whatever political, social and ideological causes) create space for new ideas and make people susceptible to these ideas. These new ideas may strengthen or weaken the *mores*. He was investigating, in particular, those *mores* that could be strengthened to promote social cohesion.

VI Max Weber and Max Scheler on Ethos

Max Weber (1864-1919) and Max Scheler (1874-1928) discuss the problem of *mores* in a way that is comparable to Tocqueville. According to Weber, in any given era, socio-economic relationships may produce certain moral values, social norms and other ideas. At the same time, those relationships often are the result of a worldview and life style that transform socio-economic conditions into a particular economic system. Weber argues that one should investigate the processes of socio-cultural development in two ways: in terms of ideas and in terms

³¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 287.

of socio-economic structures. In his essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he investigates mainly the working of ideas. His study on *The Religion of China* begins with an analysis of the sociological foundations of the development of monetary policy in medieval China, and of the development of the Chinese political structure.³² His *Economy and Society* begins with an analysis of economic relationships, and continues with analyses of philosophical ideas and religious systems.³³ Weber therefore says:

[I]t is, of course, not my aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and of history. Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth.³⁴

Like Weber, Scheler distinguishes "ideal factors," such as philosophical thoughts, moral values, and religious ideas and expectations that people have, and which they intend to realize in society. On the other hand, he also discusses "real factors," such as economic relationships of production, political relationships of power, and family relationships, which are based on human passions. Scheler tries to show that societies develop through an interaction between the ideal and real factors. He presents an insight into the mutual influence of ideas and thoughts on the one hand, and the socio-cultural circumstances in which these ideas and thoughts are active, on the other. In developing these two complementary perspectives, he intends to avoid both an idealistic and a materialistic view of society:

[S]ociology's ultimate and proper task consists in examining the kinds and the orderly sequence of the *reciprocal effects* of ideal

³² Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, ed. by H.H. Gerth (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), pp. 3-104.

³³ Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978), in particular Part II, Chapter VI.

³⁴ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 183.

and real factors, as well as of the spiritual and drive factors that determine the contents of human life.³⁵

Scheler argues that ideal factors manifest themselves in society according to their own "logical meaning" ("*Sinnlogik*"), or their own cognitive and moral steering principles that regulate the origin and decay of ideas. This "logical meaning" determines what possibilities on the idealistic level are present in society. He argues that the development of real factors occurs in quite another manner, that is, according to an "effective primacy" ("*Wirkprimat*"). He rejects the "vulgar Marxian" idea of economic determination. He acknowledges that economic factors have an important significance for constituting society, but he argues that other factors are also active, such as political, religious and moral ideas.³⁶ The core of his theory is that the real factors determine the conditions and limits of what can be realized from the ideal factors.

However, in what manner does the interaction process between real and ideal factors take place? In other words, how can we conceptualize the interaction between these factors? Scheler answers this question by using the concept "*ethos*": elementary notions of moral values and norms that give direction to people's thoughts and actions.³⁷ This ethos may be called a social ethos: it not only regulates morality, it is also the link between ideas of a just social order and the factual order.³⁸ Scheler argues that real factors contain an elementary notion of moral values and, as such, the stirrings of a social ethos. Next, the ideal factors purify the information presented by real factors and they transform that information into a more distinct social ethos. Depending on the normative context in which it operates, the social ethos can be transformed, weakened or reinforced. By changing the social ethos, the development of political and economic power structures can be altered. The social ethos is generated by real factors and shaped by ideal

³⁵ Max Scheler, *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 36.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64, 93, 101.

factors. As such, the social ethos serves as a matrix for the development of moral, economic and political knowledge, and actions to change real factors, i.e., socio-economic structures.³⁹

To clarify the mutual relationships between material and ideal factors, Weber uses the concept "elective affinity" ("*Wahlverwandtschaft*" or an inner connection). In his essay on the Protestant ethic, he does not describe the entire history of capitalism in the West. He argues that its economic, legal and political institutions produce a certain spirit or what he calls an "*ethos*" that is characterized "ideal typically" by a rational and systematic organization of labour and life style.⁴⁰ He does not present a theological examination of the Calvinist ethic, either. He merely describes its "ideal typical" characteristics: asceticism, sobriety, perseverance, avoidance of luxury and frivolous pleasure. Finally, he argues that Protestant asceticism corresponds to the spirit of capitalism and, moreover, that there is an "elective affinity" between the religious ethic of Protestantism and the spirit of early capitalism that came to expression in a mutually reinforcing ethos.

I conclude that Weber and Scheler, like Tocqueville, present a non-deterministic interpretation of the relationship between social structures on the one hand, and thought, moral values and other ideas on the other. They argue that society is constituted by an interaction between material and non-material factors. Tocqueville argues that this interaction is mediated by stirrings of a *social ethos*: notions, opinions, ideas and moral values. Weber and Scheler hold that real factors (institutions) already contain these stirrings, which will be strengthened by ideal factors. All three argue that the social ethos shapes mental habits that make people susceptible to new ideas, which in turn shape the social ethos. They consider this social ethos essential to the social cohesion of society.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 47-52.

⁴⁰ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 51.

VII Common and Differentiated Ethos

Tocqueville, Weber and Scheler not only discuss the common ethos of society at large, they also give an account of a socially differentiated ethos, depending on the social group in question. What is the nature of the relationship between a differentiated ethos and the ethos of society at large? I have already discussed Maritain's idea of a democratic and pluralist civil society in which citizens participate in a variety of autonomous communities. The core of the idea of civil society is not only that society is socially differentiated in order to distribute power, it also refers to the nature and purpose of this differentiation: to promote an effective autonomy of communities according to their characteristics and the freedoms and responsibilities of the group members in accordance with human dignity. Next, we can argue that every community is characterized by an internal social integration and a social cohesion that are related to both material and non-material factors. Although the concept of *social cohesion* is rarely discussed in sociological literature or is used interchangeably with *social integration*, I shall distinguish between these two terms.

Material factors are 1) organizational rules and institutionalized patterns of participation to realize personal and group goals through interdependent activities in the group, and 2) the structural context of relationships with other communities. These material factors of a community generate certain patterns of thought, behavior and moral values, and stirrings of a social ethos, as well. The degree of integration of a community is determined by these material factors and its patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values. It is an empirical variable changing between communities and changing over time within the same community. Not all communities have a high degree of integration, in which every standardized activity or moral value is functional for this community as a unity.⁴¹

Non-material factors are 1) common ideas about the nature and characteristics of the specific community (school, family, industry, sportsclub, church, etc.), 2) commitment of the group members to

⁴¹ See Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 81.

concrete group goals, 3) group-identification, and 4) moral values of personal freedom, dignity and responsibility. The more these non-material factors tend to strengthen or to adjust the social ethos, the more these factors contribute to the social cohesion of a community. Unlike Merton, I hold that social cohesion is not generated solely from common moral values and norms that are internalized by members of a community.⁴² Social cohesion is related to a social ethos that arises from the interaction between material and non-material factors. This does not mean that social cohesion refers to a homogenous community in all respects, because every community consists of a heterogeneity of persons, social positions and responsibilities. However, social cohesion implies homogeneity as far as the non-material factors strengthen the social ethos. Ultimately, this is what makes a community a social unit.

Differentiated communities are often characterized as "mediating structures": communities that are located between the government and citizens. With a reference to Tocqueville, Philip Selznick judges them as being extremely important both for the social identity of the participants and the vitality of society. On the one hand, moral values and social virtues are transmitted within these communities to their participants. On the other hand, these communities promote the commitment of participants to the society as a whole; they inform and mobilize their participants to function in society at large.⁴³

The material factors of civil society consist of a variety of differentiated communities that act as mediating structures in generating stirrings of the social ethos of society at large. Like Maritain, Selznick considers this differentiated society the "infrastructure" of a pluralist democracy. Amitai Etzioni's idea that society contains a "moral infrastructure" consisting of families, schools, and other communities is compatible in this respect with Selznick's theory of mediating structures. Etzioni considers these communities essential for the cultivation and transmission of moral values and virtues. It is

⁴² Ibid., pp. 369-70.

⁴³ Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 517-18. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 515-17.

within the family that children learn specific moral values. School education builds further on the moral development of students' personalities—and may even correct it. Other communities also contribute to the student's moral development. In society as a whole, this process of the internalization of moral values and virtues is further broadened. The ultimate goal of Etzioni's theory is to contribute to a morally strong and coherent society.⁴⁴ To the extent that these material factors of civil society constitute a moral infrastructure they promote a greater degree of social integration of society. And to the extent this infrastructure contributes to a morally strong society, it promotes social cohesion. The nature of the relationship between a differentiated ethos and the ethos of society at large is precisely this process of learning and the internalization of moral values and virtues that begins in differentiated communities and is broadened in society at large.

VIII Conclusions

In my discussion of Maritain's thesis that the spirit of the American people has transformed socio-economic structures *from within*, I asked the question: what is the precise link between the spirit of the people on the one hand, and the socio-economic structures and its patterns of thought, behavior, and moral values, on the other, that makes this process of transformation possible? The theories of Tocqueville, Weber and Scheler are very helpful in answering this question. The process of interaction between socio-economic structures and its patterns of thought, behavior and moral values produces certain *mores* or stirrings of a social ethos. In a dynamic society, socio-economic structures and these patterns of thought change continuously, and, consequently, the social ethos will change as well. If, and only if, the stirrings of a social ethos make people susceptible to ideas of the spirit of the American people, can these ideas then, in turn, shape the social ethos. These ideas may enforce the social ethos that gives direction to people's thought and action to transform socio-economic structures and to inaugurate a new phase of civilization. The idea of a social ethos clarifies why Maritain argues that socio-economic structures have been transformed

⁴⁴ Amitai Etzioni, *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), pp. 175-79.

from within. However, since Maritain does not discuss the origin of a common ethos, his theory of the spirit of the people capable of transforming socio-economic structures remains too idealistic.

Moreover, I think that Maritain underestimates the resistance that socio-economic structures and their patterns of thought, behavior and moral values will offer to that transformation. Since neo-liberal capitalism is characteristic of American and other Western societies, economic interests and commercial forms of social organization are dominant in these societies. The material life conditions in such societies produce consumer-oriented, individualistic and competitive thought—behavior and ideas that generate a social ethos that maintains and legitimizes these liberal-capitalist material factors. Since this social ethos is dominant in Western societies, they influence not only the economic sectors of society, but also other sectors (school education, health care, social welfare, etc.). These dominant non-material factors endanger the nature of society as a pluralist civil society.

Maritain is certainly right that spiritual forces can cause changes in those structures and patterns of thought. But not straightaway! We should be aware that the social ethos is a mediating factor. If this common ethos contains advantageous elements for the spirit of the American people, a new phase of civilization can be achieved by virtue of this renewed social ethos. However, if this social ethos does not contain those elements, and offers an enduring resistance to the spirit of the people, the possibility of some kind of barbarism cannot be excluded.

In an analogous way, I can answer the other question posed before: what is the precise link between theoretical justifications of the practical charter, on the one hand, and the public morality that characterizes the new phase of civilization, on the other? This link is what Maritain calls a common ethos: the inner energy of both secular democratic faith and the public morality that underlies the active participation of citizens in political life. However, he introduces this common ethos as an idealist object, because he does not explain how this ethos arises. It may be clarified by the process of interaction between the differentiated civil society and its patterns of thought,

behavior, and moral values. This interaction produces the stirrings of a social ethos, which in turn may be enforced by the spirit of the people. This common ethos contains the inner energy of the morality that characterizes the new phase of civilization. This morality includes the idea of social cohesion. Maritain argues, almost romanticizes, the new phase of the American society characterized by material and moral equipment fit to free human beings and capable of captivating the "hearts of men." He seems to refer to Tocqueville's idea of "habits of the heart," but, like Tocqueville, he means more than this: captivating the hearts of human beings brings about various opinions and ideas that shape mental habits that are susceptible to a new phase of civilization.

In a democratic and dynamic society, both socio-economic structures and social ethos tend to change continuously, and religious and philosophical worldviews contribute to this process. The crucial and challenging question is what direction this change will take. I argued already that some kind of barbarism cannot be excluded. In this connection, I acknowledge the relevance of Maritain's attempt to promote a new Christendom. However, Christian moral values can only influence actions to change socio-economic structures if a changing social ethos makes people susceptible to them. Christian moral values have the potential to strengthen the social ethos, which in turn will strengthen public morality and social cohesion.

Maritain acknowledges that the common ethos is not the same as social cohesion, but social ethos is essential to social cohesion and contributes to it. Social ethos does not and cannot determine the social cohesion of a democratic civil society in the sense of a homogeneous society. A democratic civil society is characterized by a social and worldview pluralism, but its ultimate goal is the common good. The common ethos is directed precisely at promoting this goal and in this sense it tends to promote social cohesion.