

## MARITAIN'S CRITIQUE OF LIBERALISM

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It would not be an exaggeration to say that liberalism dominates contemporary Western political thought. Certainly in the English-speaking philosophical world the most acclaimed books on political thought have been within the liberal tradition. This tradition originated in the seminal work of Hobbes and Locke and has continued into the present day in the work of such thinkers as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and Robert Nozick.<sup>(1)</sup> But what binds the thought of the seventeenth century philosophers to today's liberals is the position that the notion of natural right can be explicated independently of a person's relationships with others. In a number of books on political thought Jacques Maritain has criticized this "individualistic" conception of rights. His position is that the liberal doctrine of rights is inadequate because, in denying an essentially human common good, it fails to take into account the social character of rights. In this essay I shall examine Maritain's critique of liberal thought. I shall begin by considering what he views as the most important

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(1) John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), Ronald Dworkin, Taking Rights Seriously (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), A Matter of Principle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia (New York: Basic Book Inc., 1974).

consequence of liberalism's denial of the common good, its claim that politics is fundamentally a technique for arbitrating among competing interests. I shall then discuss the implications of this view of politics for liberalism's doctrine of natural rights. My argument is that the liberal can provide no justification for the ascription of rights to persons because his political theory, to use Maritain's locutions, focuses on the 'individual' rather than on the 'person'. The alternative to liberalism, I shall conclude, is a political philosophy that holds that the intrinsic value of personhood provides an objective basis for the ascription of rights to persons. This philosophy we find in Maritain's book Integral Humanism.

In Maritain's remarks on the rise of the liberal or "bourgeois man" there is the intimation that liberal political thought originated in the Machiavellian insistence on viewing politics not as a practical or moral science but rather as "art" or technique. Since Machiavelli held that politics is concerned principally with how power is to be exercised, the study of politics was effectively shifted from the realm of practical reason to that of technique. Maritain explains, contrasting the Machiavellian understanding of politics with his own Thomistic position:

For Machiavelli the end of politics is power's conquest and maintenance -- which is a work of art to be performed. On the contrary, according to the nature of things, the end of politics is the common good of a united people; which end is

essentially something concretely human, therefore something ethical...<sup>(2)</sup>

Thus Maritain suggests that the publication of the Prince initiated a theme that would eventually characterize modern political thought -- the rejection of a shared conception of the human good. For Maritain, the Thomist, the very practice of politics involves the pursuit of the common good. However, Machiavellianism severed the connection between the practice of politics and the common good, for if politics is basically the technique or "art" of ruling, the end of politics -- traditionally understood as the common good -- becomes, from a political standpoint, entirely negligible. Hence, with the Machiavellian detachment of politics from practical reason came the triumph of political technique over the pursuit of the common good. With the removal of politics from the realm of moral action to that of "art," the statesman was now able to ply his craft free of moral constraints, paying at most "lip service" to moral ideals.

It is not too difficult to see that Machiavellianism "set the stage," so to speak, for an absolutist theory of civil authority. With the technical rationalization of politics, power is placed exclusively in the hands of those who administer the techniques of social control. Thus the proper task of the ruler becomes the refinement of these techniques. To be sure, theorists of absolutism such as Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes recognized that this absolutist exercise of power

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(2) Jacques Maritain, The Range of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 142.

must be legitimized. Nevertheless, they continued the Machiavellian programme with their claim that this legitimation must consist in an arrangement whereby the interests of individual subjects are entrusted to the ruler, who, as a consequence, is empowered with absolute sovereignty over them because he alone is responsible for protecting their interests. It may seem paradoxical to claim that the legitimacy of the absolutist state is derived from the ruler's protection of his subjects' interests, but the appearance of paradox is dispelled when one recognizes that the defense of absolutism is premised on the position the sovereign's exercise of power is not circumscribed by concerns of the common good. Rather, the absolutist notion of sovereignty is exemplified by the "Mortal God" of the Leviathan, who binds the commonwealth together not on an acknowledgement of a shared conception of the human good, but rather on the "use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him that by terror thereof he is enabled to former the wills of them all, to peace at home and mutuall ayd against their enemies abroad."<sup>(3)</sup>

With the Hobbesian commonwealth one may discern the emerging profile of liberal society, for the principle of legitimacy in Hobbes's political thought is the contract or compact in which the interests of the subjects are entrusted to the sovereign. Political

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(3) Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc.), p. 143; quoted in Jacques Maritain Man and the State (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 39-40.

thinkers like C. B. MacPherson, accordingly, have considered Hobbes's political philosophy as a rationalization for the nascent marked economy of the seventeenth century.<sup>(4)</sup> But, for our purposes, the most original feature of Hobbes's contractualism is its suggestion that an individual is free to pursue his own self-interest provided he does not threaten the security of others. The Hobbesian position is that the self-interest of the individual -- specifically the desire to ensure his self-preservation -- leads him to enter into the social compact so that his self-interest may be more effectively pursued.

This egoistic understanding of the origins of the state became the prevailing theme of subsequent English political thought. Hence John Locke, whose view of the state of nature differed appreciably from Hobbes's in its depiction of social bonds that exist antecedently to entry into political society, insisted that the individual's desire to protect his private property prompts him to enter into the social contract. A prescient observer will thus note that Locke's liberalism shares with Hobbes's the Machiavellian position that politics is essentially a matter of technique, for Locke's contractualism, like Hobbes's, indicates that government is a complex of arrangements or techniques which the contracting parties have agreed upon in order to pursue their self-interest.

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(4) See C. B. MacPherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962).

In the liberalism of Hobbes and Locke, then, the bargaining techniques that underlie the social compact lend legitimacy to the state. But the liberal understanding of political legitimacy also indicates a revised theory of political justice. In contrast to the Thomistic position that the just state is achieved only in cooperation with others, the liberal contends that it is the outcome of bargaining about individual self-interest. In keeping with its Machiavellian inspiration, liberalism holds that politics is the "science of power" and as such deals exclusively with the pursuit of one's self-interest. The point is that politics cannot refer to an order of justice and goodness that exists independently of the self-interested bargaining of the contracting parties. To be sure, this involves a radical shift in political theorizing since liberalism proposes convention, *i.e.*, the social contract, as the foundation of a just political order, rather than the common good, as Thomism does. More significant, however, is liberalism's contention that the state is to be considered just only to the extent that it protects the claims advanced by the contracting parties. In Liberalism's revision of political theory, these claims are to be understood as 'natural rights'. The liberal thus proffers a doctrine of natural rights that is manifestly 'individualistic', in the sense that the exercise of a right can be explained exhaustively and comprehensively without referring to the rights of others.

Unquestionably, the central normative notion of liberalism is that of natural right. The liberal's justification of civil legitimacy, his account of political duty, and his defense of the citizen against the excesses of the state assume the critical importance of this concept. For evidence of this claim one need only note the role of the right to self-preservation in Hobbes's thought or that of property rights in Locke's. But the liberal's understanding of natural rights differs importantly from the *ius naturale* of the Thomistic natural law tradition. The liberal contends that rights can be explained exclusively in terms of a person's capacity to pursue his own interests. To understand how the liberal arrives at this position, let us consider briefly the historical background of liberalism.

In his book Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development, Richard Tuck examines the late Medieval origins of the liberal doctrine of rights, pointing out how this new theory of rights differs from the Thomistic *ius naturale*. In the Thomistic view, the *ius naturale* is neutral with respect to private property and personal liberty. As Tuck states, for St. Thomas "there is no prima facie right to either servitude or liberty, either private property or common possession."<sup>(5)</sup> The most significant feature of the Thomistic position is that it denies dominium over temporal goods. In Roman Law the

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(5) Richard Tuck, Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 20.

usufructory possession of goods (possessio) is distinguished from entitlement to goods (dominium). Only the latter yields property rights claimable against others.<sup>(6)</sup> For example, if the possession of temporal goods is usufructory, as St. Thomas maintains, then the needy have a moral claim on whatever excess goods a person owns. But if, on the other hand, a person has a prima facie natural right to temporal goods, that is, if one is entitled to these goods, his entitlement overrides any moral claim that may be advanced by others, including the needy. This position was defended in the anti-Franciscan polemics of John XXII, who argued, contrary to St. Thomas, that the *ius naturale* required that men have dominium over temporal goods.<sup>(7)</sup>

But the most important consequences of John XXII's defense of property rights were not revealed until the early fifteenth century when Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, asserted that natural right is power: "Ius is a facultas or power appropriate to someone and in accordance with the dictates of right reason."<sup>(8)</sup> Hence to say that a person has a natural right to property or to liberty is to say that, given this entitlement, he has the power to dispose of them as he wishes. In the case of liberty, the implications of this conception of rights were far-reaching. If a person is free to dispose of his

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(6) Ibid., p. 18

(7) Ibid., p. 22.

(8) Quoted in ibid., p. 26.

liberty as he sees fit, he could decide to sell himself into slavery. Indeed, as Tuck mentions, pro-slavery advocates of the period adopted this doctrine of natural rights, arguing that if an individual could renounce liberty then entire peoples could do so similarly.<sup>(9)</sup> But this unfortunate consequence notwithstanding, the new understanding of natural rights proffered by the late Medieval political theorists provided the basis for a liberal political philosophy that exalted the material and spiritual energies of the individual at the expense of the social bonds which tied men to their respective communities.

Very clearly, the import of this liberal 'entitlement' view of natural rights is that a person's relations with others have no bearing on whether he possesses rights. To use the terminology of a contemporary moral philosopher, David Lyons, these rights are 'active rights', for they "seem to say in part that the behaviour in question is at least *prima facie* permissible or unobjectionable."<sup>(10)</sup> Because active rights can be explained independently of duties others may owe one, they are to be distinguished from 'passive rights', which entail or are entailed by duties. Lyons's position is that the existence of a duty, say, the duty to refrain from interfering with someone, is not

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(9) Ibid., p. 49.

(10) David Lyons, "The Correlativity of Rights and Duties" Nous, 4(1970), p. 50.

exhaustive of the notion of an active right.<sup>(11)</sup> The freedom of action entailed by an active right depends not on the duties owed to a person but rather on his capacity to perform certain actions. Gerson's assimilation of ius to facultas, then, yields a theory of active rights. This theory of rights became the basis of liberalism, for the liberal's argument that self-interest is the basis of; he social compact yields the claim that the rights advanced by the contractors derive from the capacity of each individual contractor to pursue his own self-interest. In view of this, Maritain asserts quite appositely that those whom he refers to as advocates of a liberal-individualistic type of society "see the mark of human dignity first and foremost in the power of each person to appropriate individually the goods of nature in order to do freely whatever he wants."<sup>(12)</sup> Thus the liberal holds that a person has a right to property because he has the capacity or facultas to hold property. But he argues further that a right cannot be exercised properly unless a person also has the capacity to bargain.

The individuals who enter into the social compact are distinguished by their capacity to pursue their own self-interests through bargaining. Because the contractors are somewhat equal in capacity, the most affective way for them to accomplish this is by bargaining among themselves. However, what about those

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(11) Ibid.

(12) Jacques Maritain, Man and the State, p. 107.

who lack this capacity? Are they to be excluded from the social compact? The liberal's response would be that their entry is by proxy. That is, their interests are represented if some among the more powerful decide to undertake their representation in the bargaining that shapes the social compact. The suggestion is that an individual may be excluded from the social compact if he lacks the capacity to bargain on his own or if no one wishes to act as his proxy. From the point of view of civil society, then, he is to be denied legal protections. For indisputably the liberal's position that all legal rights originate in the social compact entails that if entry to the social compact is denied to an individual, he is not to be afforded the various protections that are granted to those who have entered on their own behalf or by proxy. As George Grant claims in his critical study of liberalism, English-Speaking Justice, the majority acquires equality in the distribution of social benefits as a result of entry into the social contract; nevertheless, this equality "will exclude liberal justice from those who are too weak to enforce contracts -- the imprisoned, the mentally unstable, the unborn, the aged, the defeated and sometimes even the morally unconfoming."<sup>(13)</sup>

But surely one could argue that the treatment meted out to these "outcastes" manifests a failure on the part of the liberal to acknowledge that because they are

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(13) George Grant, English-Speaking Justice (Toronto, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1985), pp. 83-84.

persons they too have inviolable moral rights. The liberal's rejoinder would be that they are not persons -- at least not in the same sense as those who have entered the social compact. However, this reply reveals a central tenet of liberal political thought, to wit, person is one who is able to pursue his interests as a social contractor. But as Grant asks:

Is the decision saying that what makes an individual a person, and therefore the possessor of rights, is the ability to calculate and assent to contracts? Why are beings so valuable as to require rights, just because they are capable of this calculation? What has happened to the stern demands of equal justice when it sacrifices the right to existence of the inarticulate to the convenience of the articulate? But thought cannot rest in these particular questionings about justice. Through them we are given the fundamental questions. What is it, if anything, about human beings that makes the rights of equal justice their due? What is it about human beings that makes it good that they should have such rights? What is it about any of us that makes our just due fuller than that of stones or flies or chickens or bears?<sup>(14)</sup>

A cursory look at the writings of Hobbes and Locke discloses that the social contractors lack any distinctive human characteristics. That is to say, they have no history, no friendships, and the range of their passions is extremely restricted. They are anthropological fictions, mere shadows of real men and women. Thus, despite liberalism's talk of rights, its

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(14) *Ibid.*, p. 72.

jejune understanding of what it means to be a person empties the concept of personhood of any substantive moral content, eliminating any justification for ascribing moral rights to persons.

The conceptual difficulties presented by the liberal's theory of personhood persist even in the revised liberalism of John Rawls. The contemporary liberalism of Rawls differs from its predecessors in its recognition that persons are free and equal rational beings -- a recognition that arises in part from the distinctively Kantian inspiration. Thus, Ronald Dworkin has argued -- correctly in my view -- that the central intuition of Rawls's political thought is that all persons have a moral right to equal respect and concern.<sup>(15)</sup> Nevertheless, Grant has pointed out that Rawls's liberalism resembles Locke's in two important respects: "(1) For both Rawls and Locke the primary political act from which justice is derived is an act of individualist calculation of self-interest. (2) What men primarily calculate about are those good things which lead to comfortable self-preservation."<sup>(16)</sup>

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(15) Thus John Rawls writes concerning the 'rationality' of the contracting parties: "I have assumed throughout that the persons in the original position are rational. In choosing between principles each tries as best he can to advance his interest." *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 142.

(16) "We may therefore say that justice as fairness (Rawls's view of justice) rests on the assumption  
Renvoi (suite)

Ovsiouly any moral theory that purports to be Kantian in outlook, as Rawls's does, will encounter problems in accommodating a morality based on the calculation of self-interest. But, leaving the question of Rawls's fidelity to Kantian ethical doctrine aside, let us consider his suggestion that persons are free and equal rational beings. The immediate question that comes to mind is: In what sense are the Rawlsian self-interested contractors -- those who decide what the principles of justice will be -- free and equal rational beings? Rawls's answer would be that they are 'rational' beings only to the extent that they can make self-interested, calculated choices among the principles of justice.<sup>(17)</sup> But the problem raised by this reply is that if a 'person' is simply one who is able to pursue his self-interest calculatedly, then what is so valuable about persons that they should be accorded equal respect and concern? To respond to this question adequately, the Rawlsian liberal must maintain that persons qua person are to be accorded equal respect and concern, a position he will have considerable difficulty adopting, given the individualistic methodology of his moral theory.

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Renvoi (suite)

of a natural right of all men and women to equality of concern and respect, a right they possess not by virtue of birth or characteristic or merit or excellence but simply as human beings with the capacity to make plans and give justice." Ronald Dworkin, Taking Rights Seriously, p. 182.

(17) George Grant, English-Speaking Justice, pp. 20-21.

Maritain's political thought is quite attentive to the deficiencies of the liberal theory of the person. In his view, the contractors of liberal political thought can be considered persons only in a very attenuated way; for as self-interested bourgeois men, they lack any spiritual dimension, and therefore are subject to the exigencies of natural laws. Hence, they remain exclusively within the domain of what Maritain calls 'material individuality'.<sup>(18)</sup> He notes that "In so far as men are individuals, each of us is a fragment of a species, a part of this universe, a single dot in the immense network of forces and influences, cosmic, ethnic, historic, whose laws we obey."<sup>(19)</sup> And pertaining to the materialist philosophies that underlie liberalism, he remarks: "Recognizing only that which belongs to the world of matter, blind to the realities of spirit, they perceive in man only the shadow of real personality -- the material individuality."<sup>(20)</sup> Maritain, of course, acknowledges that each of us is, to some extent, a material individual. His position is that, for the liberal, man is only a material individual. But if this is so, that is, if we human beings are merely highly, complex arrangements of matter, then Maritain, at least implicitly, poses a question that resembles those asked

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(18) Jacques Maritain, Scholasticism and Politics (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1960), p. 66.

(19) Ibid.

(20) Ibid., p. 80.

by Grant: What justifies the ascription of inviolable moral rights to us rather than to creatures that fall exclusively within the realm of material individuality?

In liberal political thought, therefore, we note an inconsistency between a theory of the person that explains personhood only in terms of 'material individuality' and a normative theory which holds that persons are the subjects of moral rights. The success of the liberal's programme depends upon the extent to which he is able to reconcile these seemingly incompatible viewpoints. That he cannot do so becomes clear from the following dilemma: On the one hand, he can refrain from providing a more developed theory of personhood, that is, a theory of personhood which holds the distinctive characteristics of persons indicate that personhood is something desirable for its own sake, i.e., a bonum bonestum; but if he adopts this alternative he will have no justification for claiming that persons have moral rights. On the other hand, if the liberal does furnish such a theory, he must reject the individualistic premises of his political theory. Why he must do so is made evident in Maritain's discussion of 'personality'.

Maritain distinguishes personality from individuality, arguing that the former is to be explained in reference to the more technical concept of 'subsistence' (suppositum).<sup>(21)</sup>

A subsistent entity or 'person' exercises the act of existing and as such acts as a free agent.

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(21) Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 62-63.

That is why the Western metaphysical defines the person by independence: the person is a reality, which, subsisting spiritually, constitutes a universe by itself and an independent whole (relatively independent), in the great whole of the universe and facing the transcendent Whole, which is God.<sup>(22)</sup>

The suggestion of these remarks is that as a free agent the person has a special relationship to God. As St. Thomas, Maritain's intellectual and spiritual mentor, writes:

Since, as Damascene states (De Fide Orthod. ii 12), man is said to be made to God's image, in so far as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement...<sup>(23)</sup>

For Maritain the point of resemblance between the person and God is the exercise of free will. Thus personhood is desirable for its own sake, for we "find that the deepest layer of the human person's dignity consists in its property of resembling God -- not in a general way after

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(22) Jacques Maritain, Scholasticism and Politics, p. 67.

(23) Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur intellectuale et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum; postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem (cf. 1 q. 2 introd.), restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem. (S.T.. Prologue to Prima Secundae).

the manner of all creatures, but in a proper way. It is the image of God." (24)

But the insistence that the person is a free agent does not undercut the contention that sociality is constitutive of personhood. As Maritain asserts in his analysis of subsistence, the act of existing exercised by the person always occurs in concert with others, for "even before the exercise of free choice, and in order to make free choice possible, the most deeply rooted need of the person is to communicate with the other by the union of the intelligence, and with others by the affective union." (25) He thus notes: "Because of the very fact that I am a person and that I express myself, I seek to communicate with that which is other and with others, in the order of knowledge and love." (26) However, this communication presupposes that I recognize that the other, like myself, is a free, spiritual being and thus is to be loved and desired for his own sake. Hence, because personality, in contradistinction to individuality, has this normative dimension, the person qua person may be said to have moral rights -- rights, though, which are qualified by a person's participation with others in the order of knowledge and love."

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(24) Jacques Maritain, Person and the Common Good (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 42.

(25) Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent, p. 82.

(26) Jacques Maritain, Scholasticism and Politics, p. 68.

The implication of Maritain's understanding of personhood for the theory of rights is quite clear: Any satisfactory theory must recognize the social character of rights. On this count, the theory of active rights, that is, the liberal theory of rights which purports to assimilate rights to the pursuit of self-interest, is inadequate because its individualistic understanding of personhood denies what is essential to person relationships with others like oneself. Consequently it cannot yield a justification for asserting that persons are the subjects of rights. To obtain an adequate theory of rights, then, we must turn to the Thomistic tradition which Maritain has so ably defended. St. Thomas's introduction of the ius naturale indicates that the right a person has to something, e.g., property, must be explained in respect to the recognition of the good of other persons and thus to the recognition of the rights which they may have to the same thing. A person, for example, may be entitled to an inheritance; but if he is living in a land ravaged by famine, the rights of others to nourishment override his right of entitlement, given that the good engendered by relief from famine is more significant than the pleasures he may obtain from enjoying his inheritance. The suggestion is that the moral claims arising from the ius naturale must be examined in the context of the wider good of the entire community, viz., the common good.

The theory of rights Maritain proposes in place of the liberal theory argues that the natural law and the common good to which the natural law is directed provide the justification for the ascription of moral rights:

Just as every law, -- notably the natural law, on which they are grounded, -- aims at the common good, so human rights have an intrinsic relation to the common good.<sup>(27)</sup>

But Maritain's interpretation of the critically important Thomistic notion of the common good argued, that it is not to be understood merely as a collection of private goods, nor as a social arrangement instituted for the benefit of the participants. Rather, the common good is a state of society which permits the essential goods of personhood to flourish.<sup>(28)</sup> These include, among others, the bonds of friendship, the desire for knowledge, and the enjoyment of the necessities of life. In Maritain's view, the great tragedy of the liberal's theory of rights and, in particular, of the anthropocentric humanism that underlies it, is that liberalism asserts the primacy of the 'individual' over the 'person', with the consequence that the liberal fails to acknowledge the human orientation towards these goods. One of the themes of Integral Humanism is that the orientation toward them and toward the Summum Bonum to which they are subordinated constitutes the human personality. The philosophy that recognizes this is Christian humanism.

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(27) Jacques Maritain, Man and the State, p. 101.

(28) Jacques Maritain, Person and the Common Good, pp. 50-51.

The great tension in Maritain's Integral Humanism is that between the two rival humanism anthropocentric humanism and Christian humanism. The former has Protean quality, assuming a wide range of forms from its origin in the Renaissance and the Reformation, to its triumph in the liberalism of the modern era, and finally to its denouement in the totalitarian ideologies that arose in reaction to liberalism. Maritain even mentions that this humanism assumed a Christian form in the theologies which argued that man as 'pure nature' could simultaneously pursue two different but ultimate ends -- a purely natural end and a supernatural end, which, of course, is beatitude in heaven.<sup>(29)</sup> The point is that man could live a fully human life quite independently of divine grace. Thus, we came to the focus of anthropocentric humanism, Christian and non-Christian alike: the individual's pursuit of goodness has no reference outside himself. In the final analysis, it becomes the pursuit of his own self-satisfaction, whether in a purely hedonistic sense, or in the sense of an individualistic religiosity, as say, that found in Jansenism. Contrast this with the position Maritain defends, to wit, the human personality is distinguished by the pursuit of objective and transcendent values the attainment of which enables one to realize his nature as a human person.

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(29) Jacques Maritain, Integral Humanism (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973) p. 21-22.

Implicit in Maritain's distinction between the two humanisms is the view that each involves a different "direction," if you will. In anthropocentric humanism the direction is toward man as the creator of his own values. Maritain points out very perceptively that with the triumph of a "philosophy of freedom which makes of each abstract individual and of his own opinions the source of every right and every truth, spiritual unity has come to an end."<sup>(30)</sup> Liberalism thus contributed to the programme of anthropocentric humanism and ultimately to the rise of totalitarianism, for in the absence of an objective order of justice and goodness, man is free to undertake the re-making of himself. But a concomitant of this freedom is the unconstrained exercise of power by the ruler who wishes to fashion the "New Man" from the raw human material of his subjects. As Maritain intimates, this is the distinguishing feature of all varieties of totalitarianism.<sup>(31)</sup> It is also the culmination of viewing politics as technique. The upshot is that the "freedom" the anthropocentric humanism offers man becomes a means to his enslavement and degradation.

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(30) Ibid., p. 158.

(31) Ibid., p. 135 note 5: We may call "totalitarian" every conception in which the political community – whether it be the State in the strict sense of the word or the organized collectivity – claims for itself the entire man, either in order to form him (my emphasis) or in order to be the end of all his activities or in order to constitute the essence of his personality and of his dignity.

The direction of Christian humanism counters that of anthropocentric humanism in its claim that man is oriented towards the goods of personality. Because these goods are desirable for their own sake, their status as values remains independent of whatever choices men might make. Accordingly, an important difference between the anthropocentric humanist and the Christian humanist is that for the former man chooses his own values, while for the latter the values man chooses exist prior to his choice. Nevertheless, from a more specifically political standpoint, the most important difference between the two humanisms concerns their respective conceptions of the individual citizen. In the eyes of the anthropocentric humanist, the citizen as such has no value in himself. Quite the contrary, whatever value he has derives from his usefulness to the anthropocentric humanist's programme of re-making man, whether socially, culturally or even biologically. Thus the citizen is no longer a free agent but instead something to be controlled and worked upon according to the specifications of the techniques of power.

Christian humanism presents an alternative view. It argues that because politics is a moral science, its proper concern is moral action within the setting of the political community. But if politics is considered in this light, the citizen becomes in effect a moral agent with the responsibility of making the values of personality efficacious for himself as well as for others. According to Maritain, the social acknowledgement of this occurs when the rulers of polity recognize that (to use St. Thomas's words) "all should

take some share in government." (32) This emphasis on civic participation originates in an awareness that each citizen is a person who, as a subsistent being is free to act and to choose, not as one independent of all moral standards, but rather as one who follows these standards so that he will be better able to act as a human person. Thus wherever a polity ensures this participation, the common good is attained, for the rulers of the polity rule on the assumption that their citizens, as persons, are the subjects of rights. With the re-incorporation of politics into the realm of practical reason, then, the political theorist has grounds for claiming that individual citizens have rights. The singular contribution of Jacques Maritain to contemporary political philosophy is his retrieval of this Thomistic understanding of politics, given the serious inadequacies of the now prevailing liberalism.

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(32) Quorum unum est ut omnes aliquam partem habeant in principatu: per hoc enim conservatur pax populi, et omnes talem ordinationem amant et custodiunt, ut dicitur in II Polit. (S.T. I-II q. 105 a. 1 corp.).