

ANOTHER LOOK AT SOVEREIGNTY: Sourcing the Disaster of Neo-liberalism and the Catastrophe of Neo-fascism

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Article abstract

Cornel West, the distinguished public philosopher and Christian advocate for racial, social and political justice, has aptly referred to the 2020 presidential election in the United States as a contest between the disaster of neo-liberalism (Joseph R. Biden Jr., the Democratic Party candidate) and the catastrophe of neo-fascism (Donald J. Trump, the Republican Party incumbent). And Jacques Maritain, the eminent Catholic philosopher of the twentieth century, exposes the modern turn toward the individual, exemplified by the political preoccupation with sovereignty, as the source of this dilemma. Maritain, like postmodern activists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, would banish sovereignty from the political lexicon. However, unlike postmodernism, Maritain's adherence to the absolute engenders a philosophical anthropology and ontology capable of sustaining the rights and equality of each unique human person within the democratic process and community.

ANOTHER LOOK AT SOVEREIGNTY: Sourcing the Disaster of Neo-liberalism and the Catastrophe of Neo-fascism

WALTER SCHULTZ

Let us not be deceived: the great dramatic battle of the twenty-first century is the dismantling of empire and the deepening of democracy.

Cornel WEST, *Democracy Matters*¹

I. Introduction

Cornel West, the distinguished public philosopher and Christian advocate for racial, social and political justice, has aptly referred to the 2020 presidential election in the United States as a contest between the disaster of neo-liberalism (Joseph R. Biden Jr., the Democratic Party candidate) and the catastrophe of neo-fascism (Donald J. Trump, the Republican Party incumbent).² Even if we allow for greater complexity and variation in each camp, the designations, neo-liberal and neo-fascist, identified the essential core fueling both establishment parties in the United States on the eve of the 2020 presidential election. Indeed, the globalizing trend of international finance in step with an elitist bureaucracy, as well as the narrow concerns of nationalist, ethnic and racial exceptionalism, have harried democratic procedure for decades, and not only in the United States. In fact, West's observation is not concerned with any anomaly, but rather his concern is with a fundamental orientation plaguing Western and now global development. The contention in this paper is that the modern turn toward the individual is in fact the single prominent core or source, admittedly nestled within a plethora of intersecting secondary causes, responsible for the predicament so aptly defined by Professor West. It

1. Cornel WEST, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight against Imperialism*, New York NY, Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2004, p. 22.

2. See, for example, <https://theglobalherald.com/news/cornel-west-the-choice-is-between-disaster-and-catastrophe-the-bottom-line/>; https://buffalonews.com/news/local/before-buffalo-speech-cornel-west-says-election-was-choice-between-catastrophe-or-a-disaster/article_9dcf1860-205d-11eb-aad3-23d1fd23609d.html; and <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/mrcbg/programs/growthpolicy/choice-between-disaster-and-catastrophe-bottom-line-cornel-west>.

will be argued here that the source of a choice between neo-liberalism and neo-fascism lies in the cradle of modern Western theory and praxis, wherein a pervasive malady involving concepts of the individual and sovereignty plagued the quest for liberation and soiled the birth of modern democracy.³

It was Jacques Maritain, the distinguished Catholic philosopher whose work spans decades of the twentieth century from before the First World War through the turbulent 60's, who established the turn toward the individual in the West as the primary source of what might be called the pathology of the individualist-collectivist complex, whereby the full integrity of the unique human person is violated from either side of the same solipsistic coin. Maritain identified the modern turn toward the individual as arising from the European Renaissance, Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, along with subsequent early modern developments in philosophy and the European Enlightenment involving thinkers like René Descartes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁴

In the twenty-first century we now find ourselves besieged by a dual predatory and self serving plague comprising neo-liberalism and neo-fascism. The disaster of neo-liberalism accentuates the unbridled "savage capitalism" which Franz Hinkelammert identified, with its aggressive anti-stateism, exclusion of major portions of the global population from any meaningful participation in the economic process, and the maximization of profit over development.⁵ The catastrophe of neo-fascism fortifies the exclusivist tendency within individualism by enhancing the strength of individuals vicariously through identification with the collective egos of race, nation and ideology which deny the veracity of the other. The neo-liberal and the neo-fascist issue from the same historical mold.

For Maritain, the pursuit of individual freedoms without acknowledging certain absolutes which establish and nurture equality of rights is a recipe for disaster and catastrophe. As Bill Emmott, the former editor in chief of *The Economist* observes: "Openness has required a steadily advancing notion of equality in order to make its bracing winds work and be accepted by society at large over the long term. Otherwise, conflicts inevitably arise between free individuals, with no means available to temper or resolve them, as some come

3. This paper expands and updates material and arguments from a previous paper. See Walter J. SCHULTZ, "Empowerment Without Sovereignty: Maritain's Personalist Alternative to Hegemony," *Études maritainiennes-Maritain Studies*, 24 (2008), pp. 114-133.

4. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, translated by Joseph W. EVANS (Notre Dame IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1973, pp. 8-34; *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau*, New York NY, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970; and *The Dream of Descartes*, translated by Mabelle L. ANDERSON, New York NY, F. Hubner and Co., 1944.

5. See Daniel M. BELL Jr., *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (Radical Orthodoxy Series), edited by John MILBANK, Catherine PICKSTOCK, and Graham WARD, London and New York NY, Routledge, 2001, pp. 9-12.

to feel neglected, disadvantaged, powerless or left behind.”⁶ As Emmott asserts, we must be “... equal in our basic civil rights and in the political voice that this gives us. This equality of rights serves to flip the emphasis in society away from central, dictatorial direction and towards a more organic, bottom-up character.”⁷ And it is Maritain’s prescient observations throughout the course of the twentieth century which invite us to champion the equality of rights while abjuring the atomistic individualism of an erroneous liberalism which is but a prelude to the totalitarian state.

The eminent sociologist, Amitai Etzioni, draws attention to Maritain’s contention that the concept of sovereignty is “intrinsically faulty,” distinguishing Maritain’s very strong position from Stephen Krasner’s view of sovereignty as “organized hypocrisy,” and Bertrand de Jouvenel’s contention that moral constraints prevent sovereignty from ever becoming absolute.⁸ Maritain seeks to remove the concept of sovereignty from the political lexicon, simply refusing to admit the artifice of hegemony.

Maritain’s critique of sovereignty and hegemony opens a dialogue with postmodern activists, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who also seek to undermine sovereignty and hegemony. However, it will be argued here that since he is operating outside of the “ontological dislocation” prominent in postmodern Marxist trends,⁹ Maritain offers a more complete philosophical anthropology and ontological framework for democracy.¹⁰ In fact, it now appears to be the case that the postmodern departure from all absolutes on the left of the political spectrum has weakened the cultural fabric to such an extent that post-truth enhances the power of the political right in the Trump era.¹¹

The focus in this paper is on Maritain’s critique of individualism and collectivism in relation to his treatment of sovereignty as a way to source the disaster of neo-liberalism and the catastrophe of neo-fascism described by Cornel West in relation to the 2020 presidential election in the United States.

6. Bill EMMOTT, *The Fate of the West: The Battle to Save the World’s Most Successful Political Idea*, New York NY, Public Affairs, 2017, pp. 2-3.

7. Bill EMMOTT, *The Fate of the West*, p. 3.

8. See Amitai ETZIONI, “Defining Down Sovereignty: The Rights and Responsibilities of Nations,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, 30 (2016), p. 7.

9. See Thomas L. PANGLE, *The Ennobling of Democracy: The Challenge of the Postmodern Age*, Baltimore MD and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 25–26.

10. See Walter SCHULTZ, “Liberation, Postmodernism and Jacques Maritain: Confronting Individualism and Collectivism in the Twenty-First Century,” *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 33 (2017), pp. 247-258; and “Toward a Grammar of Liberation: Exploring the Contours of Salvation in the Twenty-First Century,” *Études maritainiennes-Maritain Studies*, 32 (2016), pp. 99-115 and in *The Things That Matter: Essays Inspired by the Later Work of Jacques Maritain* (The American Maritain Association Book Series, Volume 28), edited by Heidi M. GIBBEL, Washington DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 2018, pp. 255-273.

11. For a discussion of the post-truth of the right as a development within the milieu of postmodernism, presenting a challenge to democratic liberalism in the era of Trump, see Stuart SIM, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, Cham, Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

First, it is essential to be clear concerning Maritain's distinction between individual and person within the context of his social and political philosophy. Mindful of Maritain's distinction between individual and person, and in dialogue with Hardt and Negri, this paper will then turn to Maritain's adamant rejection of the very concept of sovereignty, exploring how the notions of sovereignty and hegemony define absolutism, liberalism and totalitarianism. In discussing democratic liberalism, Maritain's insistence on representative government acknowledges the unique personhood of those who govern and those who are governed, while avoiding the dictatorship of one or the tyranny of the multitude. Finally, having established Maritain's promotion of the person, we will address the issue of empowering the human person without sovereignty from within Maritain's Christian vision for a personalist democracy.

II. Defining Individual and Person in Maritain's Thomistic Lexicon

Simply stated, the individual denotes the material pole of a human being, the biological organization housing our instinctual drives and spatiotemporal orientation; the human being is a person by virtue of a spiritual pole, the seat of intellect and will. Each human being is a unique composite of the two, and orientation toward one to the diminishment or exclusion of the other is perceived by Maritain as pathology: materialism and atomism when focusing on the individual; rationalism and what Maritain calls "angelism" when attempting to define *human* intellect and will in a way which denies the body with its location, attributes and operations.¹² The human composite (body and soul – instinct, intellect and will operative as a unique presence in the world), is a person by virtue of intellect and will issuing from a center capable of understanding, choosing and acting in the world:

As an individual, each of us is a fragment of a species, a part of the universe, a unique point in the immense web of cosmic, ethnical, historical forces and influences – and bound by their laws. Each of us is subject to the determinism of the physical world. Nonetheless, each of us is also a person and, as such, is not controlled by the stars. Our whole being subsists in virtue of the subsistence of the spiritual soul which is in us a principle of creative unity, independence and liberty.¹³

It is precisely the intellectual nature of the human composite which separates it and elevates it in the most formidable way: "In intellectual creatures alone, Aquinas teaches further, is found the image of God. In no other creature,

12. See Maritain's early treatment of "angelism" in relation to Descartes in *Three Reformers*, pp. 54-81.

13. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, Notre Dame IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1972, p. 38.

not even in the universe as a whole, is this found.”¹⁴As the establishment of our unique personhood constitutes an opportunity for choosing to struggle toward our temporal liberation and accept the gift of eternal salvation, the selfish aspirations of the truncated individual constitutes our sin as alienation from God, self and others, including the natural world in which we find ourselves; thereby, fostering the technical control and manipulation of nature – a travesty of the dominion proclaimed in Genesis.

For Maritain, what he perceives as the “angelism” and consequent rationalism engendered by the Cartesian reform in a multifaceted way throughout modernity, issues in voluntarism, pragmatism and allegiance to technique alone for the satisfaction of the individual alone:

An appropriate technique should permit us to rationalize human life, i.e., to satisfy our desires with the least possible inconvenience, without any interior reform of ourselves. What such a morality subjects to reason are material forces and agents exterior to man, instruments of human life; it is not man, nor human life as such. It does not free man, it weakens him, it disarms him, it renders him a slave to all the atoms of the universe, and especially to his own misery and egoism. What remains of man? A consumer crowned by science. This is the final gift, the twentieth century gift of the Cartesian reform.¹⁵

And for Maritain, the individual consumer eagerly anticipating the newest gadget or fashion is but a step behind the individual giving allegiance to the totalitarian state with its false promise of what is infinitely more. For Maritain, freedom is much more than the ability to choose while floundering in the jungle of consumerism, hounded by debt and/or the ubiquitous lure of more. Neither is freedom found in submission to some variant of the General Will à la Rousseau, which opens history to the totalitarian catastrophe.¹⁶As seen in the collective rights of the family, and rights of assembly and organization, our freedom and fulfillment as human beings necessarily involves our bonding with others as well as attaining the essentials of physical well being for ourselves.¹⁷

It is crucial to recognize that Maritain’s focus on uniqueness points the way toward a truly human community and society acknowledging the inalienable rights of all, wherein each is for all and all is for each. As Maritain would have it, “Man finds himself by subordinating himself to the group, and the group attains its goal only by serving man and by realizing that man has secrets which escape the group and a vocation which the group does not

14. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, pp. 18-19.

15. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Dream of Descartes*, pp. 182-183.

16. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Three Reformers*, pp. 93-164; *Scholasticism and Politics*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1954, pp. 74-75; and *Man and the State*, Chicago IL, The University of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 43-49.

17. See Jacques MARITAIN, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1944.

encompass.”¹⁸ The common good of human society, because it consists of persons, is what is good for both whole and parts:

The common good of the city is neither the mere collection of private goods, nor the proper good of a whole which, like the species with respect to its individuals or the hive with respect to its bees, relates the parts to itself alone and sacrifices them to itself. It is the good *human* life of the multitude, of a multitude of persons; it is their communion in good living. It is therefore common to both *the whole and the parts* into which it flows back and which, in turn, must benefit from it.¹⁹

III. Sovereignty and Absolutism

In *Man and the State*, the outgrowth of the Charles R. Walgreen Foundation Lectures which he delivered at the University of Chicago in 1949, Maritain banished sovereignty from the lexicon of political philosophy: “(...) philosophy must get rid of the word, as well as the concept, of Sovereignty (...) because, considered in its genuine meaning, and in the perspective of the proper scientific realm to which it belongs – political philosophy – this concept is intrinsically wrong and bound to mislead us if we keep on using it...”²⁰

Maritain defines sovereignty and explicates its role in terms of monarchy and the state. In two bold strokes, Maritain defines sovereignty succinctly as “First, a right to supreme independence and supreme power which is a *natural* and *inalienable* right. Second, a right to an independence and a power which in their proper sphere are supreme *absolutely* or *transcendently*, not *comparatively* or as a *topmost part* in the whole.”²¹

These “rights” establish Maritain’s definition of sovereignty as the essential rendition of the modern, autonomous individual agent, such agency engendering hegemony as a necessary consequence of its radical independence. Maritain reiterates: “Sovereignty is a property which is absolute and indivisible, which cannot be participated in and admits of no degrees, and which belongs to the Sovereign independently of the political whole, as a right of his own.”²² By right, the Sovereign exercises hegemony. This is the case whether sovereignty reside in king or state. Referring to the development of monarchy in the baroque age, Maritain writes: “Once the people had agreed upon the fundamental law of the kingdom, and given the king and his descendents power over them, they were deprived of any right to govern themselves, and

18. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Rights of Man*, p. 13.

19. Jacques MARITAIN, *Person and the Common Good*, pp. 50-51; emphasis in original.

20. Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, 29-30. In keeping with his advocacy of pluralism and a common practical front against all forms of tyranny, Maritain identifies his own position in regard to sovereignty with the earlier and independent work of Harold J. Laski and R. M. MacIver. See *Man and the State*, p. 29, footnote 8.

21. Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, 38.

22. *Ibid.*

the natural right to govern the body politic resided henceforth in full only in the person of the king.”²³

Concerning the Sovereign State, Maritain notes that external sovereignty places it above the community of nations with absolute independence with regard to this community, and internal sovereignty gives it absolute power over the body politic without appeal, thus enabling it to exercise its power without any external or internal accountability.²⁴ For Maritain sovereignty is applicable in theology, but this only accentuates the danger of its usage in political philosophy.²⁵ The contention here is that in seeking to banish sovereignty from the purview of political philosophy, Maritain intends a very practical and far reaching application, within the very structure and usage of language itself, of his critique of modern individualism and liberalism. Maritain criticizes individualism and aspects of liberalism for establishing a prelude to totalitarianism. His critique is apparent throughout much of his writing, with implications affecting every facet of social intercourse.

IV. Sovereignty and the Failure of the Liberal State

For Maritain, individualism and hegemonic power together comprise the correlative elements of the mechanism steering modernity toward repeated derailment, and sovereignty becomes the conceptualization of this destructive dynamism. As developed within a Euro-American context, and established as modernity from a Euro-American perspective, it becomes ever more apparent that this mechanism contributes in large measure to the failure of mutuality amongst emergent powers within a global context.²⁶ The recent analysis of modernity and globalization by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri is of interest here, in that these scholars offer a critique of sovereignty as a way of comprehending what is now a global dynamism toward totalitarianism. Certainly Maritain would welcome the following observation from Hardt and Negri:

The concept of sovereignty dominates the tradition of political philosophy and serves as the foundation of all that is political precisely because it requires that one must always rule and decide. Only the one can be sovereign, the tradition

23. Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, p. 37.

24. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, pp. 50-52.

25. Maritain states that God alone is fully sovereign, the pope is sovereign as the vicar of Christ in relation to the Church, and the wise man is sovereign in a merely moral sense. See *Man and the State*, pp. 49-50.

26. Bill Emmott, noting the collectivizing tendency of individualism, argues that the concern over the tyranny of the majority within Western democracies may be misplaced: “The rigidities and distortions that build up in democracies, through actions fair and square as well as unfair, are more frequently tyrannies by minorities, by groups that share an interest: by bankers and lawyers, by farmers and trade unionists, by doctors and pensioners, by oil companies, pharmaceutical companies, carmakers and many more.” (Bill EMMOTT, *The Fate of the West*, p. 28).

tells us, and there can be no politics without sovereignty. This is espoused by theories of dictatorship and Jacobinism as well as by all the versions of liberalism as a kind of blackmail that one cannot avoid. The choice is absolute: either sovereignty or anarchy! Liberalism, we should emphasize, for all its insistence on plurality and the division of powers, always concedes in the final instance to the necessities of sovereignty. Someone must rule, someone must decide. It is constantly presented to us as a truism, reinforced even in popular sayings. Too many cooks spoil the broth. To rule, to decide, to take responsibility and control, there must be one, otherwise disaster.²⁷

Here it will be argued that parallel with Maritain's critique, it is Maritain's positive development of the person, as distinguished from mere individuality, which avoids hegemony and allows for viable empowerment within the body politic as true democracy. It is this empowerment of the person which enables dialogue, and being with and for each other in place of the aggrandizement of hegemony. Likewise, Hardt and Negri seek to undermine totalitarian dynamism and enable democracy through the development of singularities within the multitude:

Political sovereignty and the rule of the one, which has always undermined any real notion of democracy, tends to appear not only unnecessary but absolutely impossible. Sovereignty, although it was based on the myth of the one, has always been a relationship grounded in the consent and obedience of the ruled. As the balance of this relationship has tipped to the side of the ruled, and as they have gained the capacity to produce social relations autonomously and emerge as a multitude, the unitary sovereign becomes ever more superfluous.²⁸

However compatible with Maritain's analysis of what went wrong in the development of Western culture, Hardt and Negri fail to attain the full appreciation of the unique human person evident in Maritain's work. Operating within the linguistic world of Michel Foucault, Félix Guattari and Giles Deleuze, their tendency is to emphasize the social construction of subjectivities in a way which allows them to promote subjectivities and singularities as collective formations. They allow for ethnic and cultural singularities in their discussion of colonialism.²⁹ Also, while acknowledging their own emphasis on the human alone, they appreciate the notion derived from Guattari, Deleuze and the conception of the cyborg in the work of Donna Haraway that "... machinic assemblages extend the elements of subjective compositions even further to include all beings or elements that reside on the plane of immanence."³⁰

27. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York NY, The Penguin Press, 2004, p. 329.

28. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude*, p. 340.

29. See Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Commonwealth*, Cambridge MA and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 111.

30. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Assembly*, New York NY, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 122.

Furthermore, they assert that "...this is based on the ontological claim that places humans, machines, and (now) other beings on the same ontological plane."³¹ Singularities are all the diverse expressions composing and creating the common when acting collectively as the multitude.

In *Man and the State*, Maritain announces that beginning with Jean Bodin, the notion of sovereignty, although not yet complete or absolute, conceptualizes the modern disavowal of hierarchy and proper authority, whereby the ruler governs as vicar of the people and through participation in the common right of the people to govern themselves. Maritain attributes such notions of vicariousness and participation to Aquinas, and the legacy of Aquinas as developed through Cajetan, Bellarmine, and Suarez. Sovereignty, on the other hand, implies the individual's detachment from any hierarchy, and the individual's absolute right to rule when in possession of that right as of any material possession. For Maritain, sovereignty eclipses what he refers to as the moral or spiritual quality of the human right to rule, a right given by God to the people as a whole, and through the people to a specific ruler who remains in relation to the whole as vicar of the people. It is to these mediaeval notions of vicariousness and participation that Maritain returns when discussing representative democracy in *Man and the State*.³²

Continuing his critique of sovereignty in *Man and the State*, Maritain presents Thomas Hobbes as a primary technician of modernity, for whom sovereignty is a basic construct in political philosophy. After introducing lengthy quotations from Jean Bodin, and after undertaking some sparse historical analysis of the transition from mediaeval notions of vicariousness and participation to the modern notion of sovereignty, Maritain focuses on the Hobbesian *Mortal God* as the paradigm of genuine sovereignty in our time.³³ What is significant here is that the Hobbesian anthropology, succinctly summarized in the famous/infamous notion of the war of all against all, conceptualizes the modern move toward the individual. Necessarily, this construction establishes the autonomous atom at the foundation of much Enlightenment and liberal thought.³⁴ Like the choice between Parmenides and Democritus,

31. Ibid.

32. See Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, pp. 30-36, and 132-139.

33. See Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, pp. 36-40. Indicative of the ambivalence in modern liberalism detected by Maritain, is the struggle within a thinker like Benjamin R. Barber, who offers a scathing critique of sovereignty as evident in the very modern failure of the Bush administration to appreciate the new global necessity for interdependence – even applauding a recent proposal for a new Declaration of Interdependence in counter-distinction to the at least nationally atomistic American Declaration of Independence, while seeking to work within the framework established by Hobbes, proposing the model of social contract and law for the removal of global hegemonic forces. See Benjamin R. BARBER, *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy*, New York NY and London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

34. As Jan Zielonka aptly remarks: "Liberals may well know how to defend individuals from bad laws, religious orthodoxy, or ethnic hatred, but they have little to say on how to create

we either have a single one or a plurality of ones. However, the Hobbesian atom no longer retains the ability to organize a body through natural compatibility with other atoms, as was the case with the atomic conceptualization of Democritus. If left alone, every individual would strive by nature for hegemony. Hobbes' anthropology requires the *Mortal God* to maintain order in the body politic. It is in large measure the Hobbesian legacy which allows Hardt and Negri to chastise modernity and liberalism for reducing our political choice to sovereignty or anarchy, whereby the establishment of order requires the hegemonic power of the single one. Maritain's condemnation of sovereignty intends the foundation of his critique of modern individualism and liberalism for establishing a prelude to totalitarianism.

In *Moral Philosophy*, a later work of the 1960's, Maritain succinctly presents his contention that rather than acknowledging the common right of the people to govern themselves, modern individualism, emerging from the European Renaissance, coalesces in a two pronged fork of rationalism and empiricism.³⁵ Each prong directs us toward the individual alone, away from all that was held common and shared through participation. Maritain notes that modern reason "...assumed the task of organizing human life: a process of emancipation from the rationalist point of view; a process of disintegration from the point of view of the organic unity of culture."³⁶ And in his life-long critique of the Cartesian reform, Maritain explains how the organization and technology fostered by rationalism leaves us defenseless against the material side of our nature, so clearly separated by Cartesian dualism from the spirituality through which we become complete.³⁷ And it is the empiricism and materialism of Hobbes through which Maritain exemplifies the empiricist prong of modern individualism. Maritain states that for Hobbes "...human morality is completely and finally explicable in terms of man's desire for his self-preservation and his pleasure."³⁸ Furthermore, in agreement with what has already been stated by Maritain concerning Hobbes in *Man and the State*, Maritain contends that Hobbes offers us "...an Epicureanism controlled by Leviathan or the 'mortal God,' a political Epicureanism."³⁹ In the end, modernity directs the individual will to personal satisfaction through the acquisition and mastery of phenomena.

harmony, solidarity, and communal spirit, which are needed for any serious collective endeavours." (Jan ZIELONKA, *Counter Revolution: Liberal Europe in Retreat*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 31)

35. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Moral Philosophy: An Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1964.

36. Jacques MARITAIN, *Moral Philosophy*, pp. 92-93.

37. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Dream of Descartes*, pp. 182-183.

38. Jacques MARITAIN, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 93.

39. *Ibid.*

In his early work, *Three Reformers*, Maritain already summarized his conclusion regarding the condition of the modern individual. Criticizing modern rationalism through an attack on Descartes, Maritain observes:

The essence of rationalism consists in making the human reason and its ideological content the measure of what is: truly it is the extreme of madness, for the human reason has no content but what it has received from external objects. That inflation of reason is the sign and cause of a great weakness. Reason defenseless loses its hold on reality, and after a period of presumption it is reduced to abdication, falling then into the opposite evil, anti-intellectualism, voluntarism, pragmatism, etc.⁴⁰

Clearly, what Maritain actually disparages in the liberalism of modernity arising from the European Enlightenment, is its anthropology, already pre-figured in the Hobbesian war of all against all. It will become clear that the drive for personal rights and freedoms, within the context Maritain appreciates as truly human, is the very attempt to enact what he perceives as the authentic ideal of democracy for our time. This is why, in his *Integral Humanism*, Maritain distinguishes between anthropocentric and theocentric humanisms, striving to reach beyond the modern anthropocentric humanism toward the ideal encapsulated in his notion of theocentric humanism.⁴¹ Maritain is careful to disparage modern individualism, liberalism, and democracy only in what he designates bourgeois, thereby attacking self-interest, concern for image, material acquisition, and the pursuit of pleasure which he perceived as characteristic of contemporary Euro-American culture. As indicated in his analysis of Hobbes and Descartes, such egocentrism is the hallmark of modernity. It involves each of us in what might be called a pervasive hegemonic milieu, of which the notion of sovereignty is expressive within political philosophy.

Maritain's disdain is perhaps most pronounced, when in the wake of the devastation caused by World War II, he asserts that modern bourgeois individualism is more "irreligious" than either fascism or communism. In the *Person and the Common Good*, Maritain distinguished three then current forms of materialism: bourgeois individualism, communistic anti-individualism, and totalitarian or dictatorial anti-communism and anti-individualism.⁴² Maritain bluntly states:

Of the three, the most irreligious is bourgeois liberalism. Christian in appearance, it has been atheistic in fact. Too skeptical to persecute, except for a tangible profit, rather than defy religion, which it deemed an invention of the priesthood and gradually dispossessed by reason, it used it as a police force to watch over property,

40. Jacques MARITAIN, *Three Reformers*, p. 85.

41. Jacques MARITAIN, *Integral Humanism*.

42. See Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, p. 91.

or as a bank where anyone could be insured while making money here below, against the undiscovered risks of the hereafter – after all, one never knows!⁴³

For Maritain, the philosophical perception of the individual in modern society and culture becomes the ideological, and necessarily the ontological foundation of the liberal state. Separating the material and spiritual components of the human composite, the Cartesian obsession with reifying the idea established one aspect of our human nature as the material foundation of all our phenomenal activity, degrading the intellect and inevitably the will to a subservient role. Étienne Gilson, Maritain's friend and colleague, detects the awkward position of reason in the Cartesian bifurcation:

A universe consisting of extension and thought can only be expressed through a specific philosophy, to which corresponds an equally specific science. In the first case we get a pure spiritualism; in the second a pure mechanism. For science, nothing, at first sight, could be more satisfying, and it is all too natural that it should so regard things, since having inspired the method, it is bound to recognize itself in the results. But it is altogether different for philosophy which, having abdicated a right to a method of its own, has to try and gather philosophical results from a method which does not belong to it.⁴⁴

And as already noted in his treatment of Descartes, Maritain acknowledges the abdication of reason, of what Gilson calls “pure spiritualism” and what Maritain himself derides as “angelism,”⁴⁵ in favor of sheer willfulness directed toward phenomena. For Maritain the final gift, the twentieth century gift of the Cartesian reform is to render us consumers crowned by science.⁴⁶

According to Maritain, rationalism and empiricism are related to each other in the cultural experience of modernity. In a significant address, “The Cultural Impact of Empiricism,” given at Harvard University and Hollins College, Virginia in 1951, Maritain states: “French Rationalism and British Empiricism were to merge in the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment, and Nineteenth Century Positivism.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, empiricism tends to be distinguished for its adaptability to the world of commerce. It is “... a philosophy particularly appropriate to the rise of a commercially dominated regime of social life ...;”⁴⁸ it renders God “...a celestial guarantor (...) of man's domination over nature, of a good state of affairs for the commonwealth, and of the moral order necessary to the prosperity of commerce and industry.”⁴⁹

43. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, p. 97.

44. Étienne GILSON, *Methodical Realism*, Front Royal VI, Christendom Press, 1990, p. 87.

45. See Jacques MARITAIN, *The Dream of Descartes*.

46. See Jacques MARITAIN, *The Dream of Descartes*, p. 183.

47. Jacques MARITAIN, “The Cultural Impact of Empiricism,” unpublished papers in collection at The Jacques Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame IN, 3.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Jacques MARITAIN, “The Cultural Impact of Empiricism,” p. 5. Marginal notation indicates that Maritain originally planned to say “commerce and industry” for the “common-

Already emergent in the materialism and empiricism of Hobbes, modern empiricism has the odor peculiar to Anglo-American industrialism, although it is indeed present elsewhere. For example, in *Moral Philosophy*, Maritain notes Auguste Comte's remarks concerning a new chivalry of industrial chiefs and bankers to insure our true happiness, which for Comte is domestic satisfaction.⁵⁰ And as corollary to his treatment of rationalism, Maritain asserts that empiricism is materialistic to the point of contradiction:

...the paradox with which we are confronted is that Empiricism in actual fact, uses reason while denying the power of reason, on the basis of a theory that reduces reason's knowledge and life, which are characteristic of man, to sense knowledge and life, which are characteristic of animals.⁵¹

And so, with rationalism and empiricism, the harbingers of Euro-American modernity, we are left with the individual's will and animal satisfaction.

In *Freedom in the Modern World*, which appeared a few years prior to *Integral Humanism* in 1932, Maritain condemns the bourgeois notion of autonomy, within the framework of his understanding of the modern individual. In the bourgeois conception of freedom, he argues: "...culture and society have for their essential office the preservation of something given: the freewill of Man; in such a way that all possible acts of free choice may be available and that men may appear like so many little gods, with no other restriction on their freedom save that they are not to hinder similar freedom on the part of their neighbour."⁵²

The proviso guarding against absolute hegemonic power is contained in the curious final clause of the above quotation: "...with no other restriction on their freedom save that they are not to hinder similar freedom on the part of their neighbour." But how is such restriction possible, when the ontology of the liberal state issues from a truncated conception of human nature, ultimately subservient to the material dimension of the human composite? Should we not be in agreement here with Hardt and Negri's reduction of liberalism to a choice between anarchy and a sovereign power, since the hegemony of a sovereign power is always necessary to maintain order? Although we shall come to see how Maritain himself attempts to overcome this dilemma by appealing to a more complete philosophical anthropology and ontological framework for democracy, it is precisely for this reason, and for Maritain as much as for Hardt and Negri, that bourgeois democracy collapses into its totalitarian twin.

wealth," and "the ruling classes" for "commerce and industry," perhaps indicative of his leftist temperament seeking balance.

50. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Moral Philosophy*, pp. 342-343.

51. Jacques MARITAIN, "The Cultural Impact of Empiricism," p. 2.

52. Jacques MARITAIN, *Freedom in the Modern World*, New York NY, Gordian Press, Inc., 1971, p. 40.

V. Sovereignty and the Totalitarian State

Since the atomism of modernity, already expressed in the writings of Hobbes and Descartes, either engenders anarchy or hegemonic sovereignty, any possibility of authentic representative government or the shared right to rule the people through hierarchy and responsible order, is jettisoned. In *Man and the State*, Maritain argues that just as the power of the absolute monarch exists apart from the true interests of those governed, so the power of the people, as conceived by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, exists in the State itself apart from the actual interests of the people:

...Rousseau transferred to the people the Sovereignty of the absolute monarch conceived in the most absolute manner; in other terms he made a mythical people – the people as the monadic subject of the indivisible General Will – into a sovereign Person separated from the real people (the multitude) and ruling them from above. As a result, since a figment of the imagination cannot really rule, it is to the State – to the State which, in genuine democratic philosophy, should be supervised and controlled by the people – that, as a matter of fact, Sovereignty, indivisible and irresponsible Sovereignty, was to be transferred.⁵³

What is significant here is the light Maritain's interpretation of Rousseau sheds on what he perceives to be the practical consequences of bourgeois individualism, liberalism, and democracy. Rousseau wants freedom for the particular human being, and paves the way for the absolute hegemonic power of totalitarian dictatorship. But if Maritain uses Rousseau as the paradigmatic explication of the transition from the egoism of the liberal state to the absolute hegemony of the totalitarian state, he cautiously maintains that the Christian leaven is still present in the work of Rousseau and throughout the various strains of liberalism.⁵⁴ Maritain further argues that the Christian leaven is present within Marxism and totalitarian communism, absent only in the various forms of right wing authoritarianism and fascist totalitarianism which stem from the root of the problem within bourgeois liberalism itself. Fascism, for Maritain, offers us an unparalleled glimpse into the abyss which would claim modernity.

Rejecting the erroneous individualism of bourgeois democracy, Marxism seeks to create a more culturally pervasive democratic ideal. This ideal has an atheistic base, and Maritain thinks that for that reason it leads to enslavement rather than to liberation. Without a spiritual orientation, in recognition of the entire human composite, it is material individuality which is served, whether

53. Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, pp. 129-130.

54. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Scholasticism and Politics*, p. 69. As with Hobbes and Descartes, Maritain maintained a fairly consistent barrage of criticism against Rousseau throughout much of his lengthy career. For his early criticism of Rousseau, see "Jean Jacques Rousseau et la pensée moderne," *Annales de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de Louvain*, V (1921), and "Deux idées modernes," *La Revue Universelle*, 13 (May 1, 1923).

the body of an individual capitalist or the collective body of the proletariat. Disparaging a spiritual orientation, the Marxist, although perhaps motivated by an authentic thirst for communion, abolishes true personality and succumbs to the tyranny of economic necessity. Marxism offers salvation without God, and Maritain argues in *Integral Humanism* that

There is here a thirst for communion, but communion is sought in economic activity, in pure productivity, which, considered as the *locus proprius* and homeland of human activity, is only a world of a beheaded reason, no longer made for truth, engulfed in a demiurgic task of fabrication and domination over things. The human person is sacrificed to industry's titanism, which is the god of the industrial community.⁵⁵

With his criticism of Marx and communism, Maritain does not hesitate to assert that Marxism revived that portion of the evangelical leaven acknowledging community which was sorely neglected in the world of bourgeois individualism.⁵⁶ This is evident in the pessimistic and prophetic stance of Marxism. Maritain interprets the rebellion of Marx as an action comparable to the rebellion of Kierkegaard against bourgeois smugness.⁵⁷ Insofar as he rebels against bourgeois individualism, Marx qualifies as a prophet like Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud: "... little by little, will spring up the man conformable to the pattern of bourgeois pharisaism, this respectable conventional Man in whom the nineteenth century so long believed, and in whose unmasking Marx, Nietzsche and Freud will glory."⁵⁸

Well into the twenty-first century, Jan Zielonka, in *Counter-Revolution: Liberal Europe in Retreat*, offers a similar critique of the neo-liberalism which has blossomed from the liberal preoccupation with the individual:

With the fall of communism some of its more universal ideals came under fire: collectivism, redistribution, social protection, and state intervention in the economy. This paved the way for neo-liberal economics to assume a dominant position throughout the entire continent, not just in Great Britain. Deregulation, marketization, and privatization became the order of the day even in states run by socialist parties.⁵⁹

55. Jacques MARITAIN, *Scholasticism and Politics*, p. 142. Cf. *Integral Humanism*, pp. 46-47; 52-53; and 184-187.

56. And the neglect continues, as Zielonka notes: "With the fall of communism some of its more universal ideals came under fire: collectivism, redistribution, social protection, and state intervention in the economy. This paved the way for neo-liberal economics to assume a dominant position throughout the entire continent, not just in Great Britain. Deregulation, marketization, and privatization became the order of the day even in states run by socialist parties." (Jan ZIELONKA, *Counter Revolution: Liberal Europe in Retreat*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 4.)

57. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 214.

58. Jacques MARITAIN, *Integral Humanism*, p. 141.

59. Jan ZIELONKA, *Counter Revolution*, p. 4.

Neo-liberalism, like its liberal progenitor, remains preoccupied with the individual: "Liberals may well know how to defend individuals from bad laws, religious orthodoxy, or ethnic hatred, but they have little to say on how to create harmony, solidarity, and communal spirit, which are needed for any serious collective endeavours."⁶⁰

On the other hand, in all the varied forms of right wing authoritarianism which come under the sometimes strained rubric of fascism, Maritain sees the triumph of the will and modernity, the unmasking of the egocentrism prevalent throughout bourgeois culture. In the fascist totalitarian state we encounter the philosophical connotations and practical implications of sovereignty, given to the pursuit of absolute hegemonic power through the race, the state, the cult of personality and the solitary dictator. Although Maritain detects certain virtues in fascism not present in the smug, coveting of comfort so characteristic of the modern liberal state,⁶¹ he clearly denounces every mode of right wing authoritarianism. Maritain rejected Franco's Catholic Spain as a perverse attempt to rekindle the coals of a dead Holy Empire, now surpassed by the pursuit of authentic democratic plurality and freedoms.⁶² He even condemned the dictatorship of Salazar in Portugal, although he readily acknowledged that Salazar's government was the least offensive of the rightist regimes, never actually becoming a totalitarian state.⁶³

For Maritain, every manifestation of right wing authoritarianism, of which Nazi racism is the most poignant example,⁶⁴ must be seen as eclipsing the Christian heaven present in our time. As we shall see, for Maritain it is this Christian heaven which establishes a teleology based on the ideal of personal freedom and the pursuit of true democracy. Consequently, the authoritarian right, becoming especially virulent in fascist totalitarianism, abandons every form of democracy. Immediately following the disaster of World War II, in *The Person and the Common Good*, Maritain states quite simply that

The national totalitarian states, whose ideology lives after them, heirs of the ancient antagonism of the pagan Empire against the Gospel, represented an external force arrayed against Christianity to enslave or to annihilate it in the

60. Jan ZIELONKA, *Counter Revolution*, p. 31.

61. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Integral Humanism*, pp. 278-279.

62. See Maritain's introduction to Alfred MENDIZABAL, *The Martyrdom of Spain: Origins of a Civil War*, London, Geoffrey Bles; The Centenary Press, 1938, pp. 1-48; and *Integral Humanism*, p. 277.

63. Maritain asserts that even under the dictatorship of Salazar, Portugal never became a totalitarian state. Furthermore, on a number of occasions Maritain praised the relationship between Church and State brought about by the Concordat between Salazar's Portugal and the Vatican, although he strictly maintained that Salazar's government ought not to be imitated. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Scholasticism and Politics*, pp. 47-48; *Integral Humanism*, p. 277, note 11; *Man and the State*, p. 163, note 21; and *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, p. 19.

64. See Jacques MARITAIN, "The Crisis of Civilization," in *Pour la justice, articles et dis-cours (1940-1945)*, New York NY, Editions de la Maison Française, 1945, p. 144.

name of the divinized political Power. In the temporal order, they opposed an irrational philosophy of enslavement to both the genuine principle and the parasitical illusions of democracy.⁶⁵

In the twentieth century, the inherently pagan totalitarian states of the right often aligned themselves with Christian voices and institutions, even in Nazi Germany;⁶⁶ and in the twenty-first century, we see a resurgence of Christian voices and institutions aligned with neo-fascist entities, as evidenced in the United States in the era of Trump.⁶⁷ For Maritain, the totalitarianism of the right is at the furthest remove from his Christian vision for a personalist democracy.

VI. Empowerment without Sovereignty

Maritain's insistence on the person, as distinguished from the essentially material individual of bourgeois culture, enables him to establish spirituality as the hallmark of everything truly human. Human spirituality entails a transcendent orientation, whereby intellect connects with reality in a manner which transcends animal passion and will directed primarily toward the acquisition and manipulation of phenomena for pleasure and comfort. Inevitably, for Maritain the perennial Thomist, such spirituality attains fulfillment only in eternal friendship with God. And in temporal, practical affairs, such spirituality seeks a theocentric humanism to replace the anthropocentric humanism of modernity. And this humanism beyond modernity in its negative guise aligns the Christian, and, as Maritain would have it, all people of good will with the concrete historical ideal of our time. In his *Integral Humanism*, which promotes theocentric humanism, Maritain acclaims as the concrete historical ideal of our time, "...the idea of the *holy freedom* of the creature whom grace unites to God."⁶⁸

For Maritain, precisely because our temporal goal must remain subordinate to what he perceives as our eternal goal of friendship with God through grace, we are endowed with a "holy freedom," which, although perfected in beatitude through the confluence of our will and nature as intended by God, nonetheless remains our freedom to acknowledge and achieve in cooperation with the grace of God. The proclamation of our rights and freedoms, to exist and decide, is the consequence of a very natural human development inspired

65. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, p. 98.

66. For a discussion of major Christian Theologians affiliated with the regime in Nazi Germany see Susannah HESCHEL, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2008.

67. For a treatment of the marriage of the Christian right and the political right in the United States, so blatantly obvious in the Trump era, see Kevin M. KRUSE, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, New York NY, Basic Books, 2016.

68. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Integral Humanism*, p. 163.

by the foundational experience of Christianity. In his *Christianity and Democracy*, the first French edition of which appeared in 1943, Maritain unabashedly proclaimed that "... the democratic impulse has arisen in human history as a temporal manifestation of the inspiration of the Gospel."⁶⁹ Broader in connotation than the acknowledged achievement of the ancient Greeks, Maritain informs us that

...the word democracy, as used by modern peoples, has a wider meaning than in the classical treatises on the science of government. It designates first and foremost a general philosophy of human and political life, and a state of mind. This philosophy and this state of mind do not exclude *a priori* any of the 'regimes' or 'forms of government' which were recognized as legitimate by classical tradition, that is, recognized as compatible with human dignity. Thus a monarchic regime can be democratic, if it is consistent with the state of mind and with the principles of this philosophy. However, from the moment that historical circumstances lend themselves, the dynamism of democratic thought leads, as though to its most natural form of realization, to the system of government of the same name, which consists, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, in 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.'⁷⁰

A democratic government of the people, by the people, and for the people encompasses much more than the negative freedoms of the classical or bourgeois liberal state, championed in our time by liberal thinkers like Robert Nozick. Maritain consistently detests the *laissez faire* theory and policy which is the harbinger of the disaster of neo-liberalism disdained by Cornel West. Instead, he desires government in which are entrenched positive rights securing the opportunity for development of every human person.⁷¹ In this respect, although arguing from his own Thomistic and theocentric standpoint, Maritain might agree with some of the practical goals of what some now perceive to be a defunct Rawlsian liberalism. In *Christianity and Democracy*, Maritain notes that democracy is

...a task of civilization and culture; it tends above all to provide the common good of the multitude in such a way that the concrete person, not only within the category of the privileged, but in the whole mass, truly accedes to the measure of independence which is compatible with civilized life and which is assured alike by the economic guarantees of labor and property, political rights, civic virtues and the cultivation of the mind.⁷²

69. Jacques MARITAIN, *Christianity and Democracy*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1945, p. 25.

70. Jacques MARITAIN, *Christianity and Democracy*, p. 22; ID., *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, pp. 29-30; and 46-47.

71. Maritain clearly favors redistribution and positive rights, maintaining a virtual crusade against *laissez faire*, which protects the atomistic individual and enables the strong to oppress the disadvantaged. See *The Person and the Common Good*, pp. 49-51.

72. Jacques MARITAIN, *Christianity and Democracy*, p. 45.

For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, as it is for Maritain, the space between us where dialogue occurs becomes the common, the linguistic playing field which no one owns and to which all are invited.⁷³ And within the current expansion of global communication industries, language entangles daily life and productivity as never before.⁷⁴ Dialogue in the market place builds subjectivities as well as community, and channels the power of productive forces. Here the deliberative democracy of liberal thinkers like Amy Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson joins the communitarian concerns of a conservative like Michael J. Sandel.⁷⁵ And the recent contention between individualists and communitarians is circumvented. For Maritain, difference in dialogue secures subjectivities, self and others, and thereby establishes “the economic guarantees of labor and property” and “political rights,” while the commonality of dialogue, which defines our humanity, establishes “civic virtues and the cultivation of the mind.” Sharing in the common for the common good is the ontological base of true democracy.

It is significant that Hardt and Negri, as well as Maritain, point to the biblical injunction to love as expressive of the common which establishes our humanity beyond the egocentric perspective of modernity. For Maritain, love and its fruition through intimacy in the family, and its extension into the broader community through civic friendship, secures the self and others within the multitude. Such love is indicative of the ontological shift away from the egocentrism of bourgeois liberalism toward the more complete Thomistic anthropology inclusive of spirituality, whereby the person exists precisely through engagement, interaction, and dialogue with others.⁷⁶

In *Declaration*, their response to Occupy Wall Street, Hardt and Negri offer a profound appreciation of indebtedness and bondage, as it is and as it should be: “The refusal of debt aims to destroy the power of money and the bonds it

73. See Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York NY, The Penguin Press, 2004, pp. 196-202, wherein it becomes evident that, although not in ways exclusively linguistic, “Singularities interact and communicate socially on the basis of the common, and their social communication in turn produces the common. The multitude is the subjectivity that emerges from this dynamic of singularity and commonality.” (p. 198)

74. See Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Empire*, Cambridge MA - London, Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 364-367.

75. See Amy GUTMANN and Dennis F. THOMPSON, *Democracy and Disagreement*, Cambridge MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, and *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2004. See also Michael J. SANDEL, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*, Cambridge MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, and *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge, UK; New York NY, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

76. For a treatment of Maritain's view of love in relation to ontology, philosophical anthropology and politics, see Walter J. SCHULTZ, “Freedom for Friendship: Maritain's Christian Personalist Perspective on Global Democracy and the New World Order,” *Études maritainiennes – Maritain Studies*, 21 (2005), pp. 3-31.

creates and simultaneously to construct new bonds and new forms of debt. We become increasingly indebted to one another, linked not by financial bonds but by social bonds.”⁷⁷ What makes this observation especially noteworthy here is their insistence on social bondage as the bondage of love, a pervasive political love: “Love has become strictly a private affair. We need a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love. We need to recuperate the public and political conception of love common to premodern traditions. Christianity and Judaism for example, both conceive love as a political act that constructs the multitude.”⁷⁸

However, for Hardt and Negri, love does not involve one’s decision of commitment to the other as other. For Hardt and Negri, love means the collective enjoyment of collective movement within the multitude: “Love means precisely that our expansive encounters and continuous collaborations bring us joy. There is really nothing necessarily metaphysical about the Christian and Judaic love of God: both God’s love of humanity and humanity’s love of God are incarnated in the common political project of the multitude.”⁷⁹ Hardt and Negri tell us that “The multitude designates an active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common. The multitude is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common.”⁸⁰

Hardt and Negri’s accurate analysis of indebtedness and their appreciation of the centrality of love are undermined by their postmodern allegiance. They acknowledge that “There is no political realism without organization – moreover, organization toward a definite goal.”⁸¹ However, “Political realism must reject every transcendent, ideological, theological proposition of a telos, every goal imposed from the outside, and instead embrace a telos constructed from below, from within the desires of the multitude: an immanent teleology.”⁸² In the final analysis, Hardt and Negri fail to acknowledge the true value of the person, collapsing all personal initiatives within the material and monistic hold of the multitude, the “multiple social subject.”

Sovereignty is a concept available to all within the linguistic playing field which is the common. As a concept in the lexicon of political philosophy, sovereignty contributes to the perpetuation of the Euro-American egocentrism which has come to characterize modernity. Ultimately, sovereignty implies the absolute hegemony of totalitarian dictatorship; and, as Maritain explicates,

77. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Declaration*, New York NY, Argo Navis Author Services, 2012, p. 34.

78. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude*, p. 351.

79. *Ibid.*

80. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude*, pp. 99-100.

81. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude*, p. 233.

82. *Ibid.*

the concept of sovereignty is part and parcel of the intellectual endowment bequeathed to modernity through the rationalism of Descartes and the empiricism of Hobbes.

In overt and subtle ways, in ways conscious and unconscious, the use of a concept like sovereignty in the common contributes to the extinction of the common. This much can be gleaned from the writings of Hardt and Negri, but it is Maritain who explains how our use of sovereignty subverts human nature and eclipses our theocentric orientation.

Maritain informs us that empowerment without sovereignty involves a reciprocal duality in perspective, looking toward the multitude or whole community while acknowledging each unique *person* – and here the “singularity” employed by Hardt and Negri evokes the “individual” so clearly disparaged in Maritain’s social and political philosophy. For Maritain, recognition of the political dimension of love augments and then weaves difference or otherness into the collective and common power of the multitude or natural human community devoid of hegemonic control. Maritain asserts that it is through the family, not in spite of it, that friendship and personal expansion occur, as he states in *The Person and the Common Good*: “From the family group (which is more fundamental than the State since it touches the generic differences between human beings) man passes to civil society (which affects specific differences between them) and in the midst of civil society he feels the need of clubs and fellowships that will interest his intellectual and moral life.”⁸³

If there is to be a global community, and not a resurgence of empire and hegemony in one form or another, then one task of the philosopher would be to speak out within the linguistic common, thereby joining in the struggle to secure authentic dialogue free from the tyranny of the one. Hardt and Negri explain how a multi-national empire, which the United States still seeks to control, is already emergent and based on global capitalism and the egocentric, hegemonic orientation of the prior Euro-American modernity.⁸⁴ Perhaps the initiative to clear a road through the common away from the destructive tendencies of this modernity remains primarily within the Euro-American ball park. If any credibility can be given to Martin Heidegger’s notion that language is the house of being, the humble attempt of the philosopher to remove any vestige of domination in our time by excluding sovereignty from the political lexicon is certainly justified. Here the Socratic questioning of American hegemony by public intellectuals like Cornel West and Benjamin R. Barber, along with the frequent public excursions of Hardt, Negri, and of Maritain himself into the global agora, must be acknowledged and commended by the academy.

83. Jacques MARITAIN, *The Person and the Common Good*, p. 80.

84. See Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Empire and Multitude*.

For Maritain, like sovereignty, democracy is a concept carrying connotations of which we are not always fully conscious; and modern democracy, decidedly Euro-American, owes its inspiration to the Judeo-Christian heritage. True democracy, for Maritain, has no affiliation with the egocentrism promoting itself in a variety of ways through the Euro-Americanism of modernity. True democracy is universal, because it is a legitimate expression of human nature. It is not Maritain's intention to establish what some would call a metanarrative through the subtle introduction of hegemonic conceptualization into the common. The common is common, and keeping it alive invites pluralism, a pluralism progressively diminishing the sway of hegemony.

For Hardt and Negri, the struggle for control of the common by the multitude seems to require the coming together of subjectivities pursuing their own agendas through a common political project, thereby establishing the collective power of the multitude through what they share together within the common. They suggest that modern representative government is an abstraction which alienates the representative from the multitude, thereby engendering sovereignty which distains true democracy and conspires against it.⁸⁵ Certainly hierarchy and representation can and all too often has been abused, but need it be inimical to true democracy as Hardt and Negri suggest? From his Thomistic base, Maritain acknowledges hierarchy and authority, when promoted as the sharing of the right to rule of the multitude. According to Maritain, it is Rousseau who promotes the sovereign hegemonic power of totalitarianism and destroys true democracy, and precisely by denying hierarchy and responsible authority!⁸⁶

Late in his career, George Grant, a famous/infamous Canadian critic of Euro-American modernity and liberal culture, well known in at least some Canadian circles, unabashedly stated in a televised interview that in the final analysis he is quite willing to accept even American liberalism over the two alternatives: communism and fascism.⁸⁷ It appears that Grant, a vehement critic of modernity, fully appreciates the value of free speech for every citizen. As Hardt and Negri promote the adhesion of diverse singularities or subjectivities empowering each other through the collective power of the multitude within the democratic polity, Maritain promotes the need for what he calls

85. See Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude*, pp. 237-247. Like Hardt and Negri, Cornel West acknowledges this tendency as a fear of democracy already evident in the writings of the founding fathers of the American Republic of the United States. On the other hand, which places him more directly in line with the thinking of Maritain, he applauds the wisdom of the founding fathers evident in a procedure for constitutional revision and the Bill of Rights, which ensures a Socratic dimension within government itself. See Cornel WEST, *Democracy Matters*, pp. 210-211.

86. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, pp. 47-48.

87. George Grant was interviewed by the prominent Canadian journalist, Robert Fulford, on the *Realities* programme with TVOntario in 1983.

“prophetic shock minorities” within the democratic body politic, awakening collective concern for the marginalized in order to secure equal rights for all through education and even acts of civil disobedience as required.⁸⁸ Always, the goal is to preserve the common.

Thinkers like Hardt and Negri are searching for true democracy, disavowing allegiance to any hegemonic power, be it of the left or the right. In *Multitude*, they tell us that the “traditionalist idea of sovereign legitimacy” is rampant throughout socialist practice as it is throughout bourgeois liberal culture and politics. They tell us that maintaining this “...traditionalist idea of sovereign legitimacy... is how all fundamentalisms are born,” and that “...contemporary forms of right-wing populism and fascism are deformed offsprings [sic] of socialism – and such populist derivatives of socialism are another reason for which we have to search for a postsocialist political alternative today, breaking with the worn-out socialist tradition.”⁸⁹

It is precisely Maritain’s understanding of what he perceives to be the historical implications of the Judeo-Christian heritage of Euro-American civilization, the inspiration behind democracy and liberalism itself, which enables him to see clearly, as he informs us in *Man and the State*, that diverse persons can converge in the multitude

...not by virtue of any identity of doctrine, but by virtue of an analogical similitude in practical principles, toward the same practical conclusions, and can share in the same practical secular faith, provided that they similarly revere, perhaps for quite diverse reasons, truth and intelligence, human dignity, freedom, brotherly love, and the absolute value of moral good.⁹⁰

The cohesion is maintained here by a common nature responsive to the absolute value of moral good, engaged in rational discourse seeking truth, dignity and freedom within the context of binding love sustaining mutual recognition in pursuit of human flourishing. What at first sight might appear as a concession to the postmodern disavowal of transcendence and the absolute remains a humble commitment to Athens and Jerusalem: a commitment to Being, Truth, the Good and Love, while acknowledging human limitations.⁹¹

88. See Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, pp. 139-146.

89. Michael HARDT and Antonio NEGRI, *Multitude*, pp. 254-255. For the full context see pp. 249-255.

90. Jacques MARITAIN, *Man and the State*, p. 111.

91. Maritain has been criticized for his notion of a shared “practical secular faith.” For a brief description of the context of the concern see Michael MORELAND, “Jacques Maritain, Thomism and the Liberal-Communitarian Debate,” in Brenden SWEETMAN (ed.), *The Failure of Modernism: The Cartesian Legacy and Contemporary Pluralism*, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1999, pp. 141-154. In this paper it is maintained that Maritain’s notion of a shared “practical secular faith” is consistent with his understanding of human nature, acknowledging the centrality of the unique human person in relationship with the other through community and rational society, without neglecting the supernatural influx of grace.

Maritain would agree with thinkers like Hardt and Negri, that in so far as our words remain free within the common, there is communication and empowerment without hegemony, opportunities abound, and there is hope for our time. Along with the very denial of this hope contained in the conceptual seed of sovereignty, this hope too is part of the legacy of Euro-American modernity bequeathed to the global community. Herein we find the explanation for the love-hate relationship with modernity and liberalism which many, along with Grant, exhibit.

VII. Conclusion

The social and political philosophy of Maritain revolves around a critique and appreciation of Western modernity. From within a decidedly theocentric perspective, Maritain appreciates the modern concern with human rights and democratic procedure while abjuring the modern anthropocentric derailment of Christian inspiration. And the American historian, Joseph A. Amato, in *Mounier and Maritain*, notes how Maritain detected a reinforcing “destructive dialectic” while situating the source of our pathological individualist-collectivist complex within the cradle of modern Western theory and praxis:

Maritain argued that the relationship between individualism and collectivism constituted the destructive dialectic which had formed the last five centuries of Western history. That is, the individualism which was spiritually created by Luther, Descartes, and Rousseau, destroyed man’s natural and spiritual ties with other men, and left him defenceless before the new collectivism of state, society, economics, and ideology which appeared *en masse* with the French Revolution.⁹²

Maritain exposes the source behind what Cornel West identified as a choice between the disaster of neo-liberalism and the catastrophe of neo-fascism in the 2020 presidential election in the United States. Here individualism run amok meets its totalitarian progeny. And the postmodernism of the left, with its vibrant if misguided thirst for liberation, appears to have devolved into the post-truth of the right. When simple facts like the size of the crowd attending the presidential inauguration of Donald J. Trump in 2016 and the ballot count in the presidential election in 2020 can claim equal status beside what Kellyanne Conway, former Councilor to President Trump, famously/infamously referred to as “alternative facts,”⁹³ the better angels of the liberal enterprise have left the premises and speaking truth to power gives way to the naked will to power.

92. Joseph AMATO, *Mounier and Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World* (Studies in the Humanities No. 6 Philosophy), Tuscaloosa AL, The University of Alabama Press, 1975, p. 71.

93. See, for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2017/jan/22/kellyanne-conway-trump-press-secretary-alternative-facts-video>; and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3bue7b3ps8>.

SUMMARY

Cornel West, the distinguished public philosopher and Christian advocate for racial, social and political justice, has aptly referred to the 2020 presidential election in the United States as a contest between the disaster of neo-liberalism (Joseph R. Biden Jr., the Democratic Party candidate) and the catastrophe of neo-fascism (Donald J. Trump, the Republican Party incumbent). And Jacques Maritain, the eminent Catholic philosopher of the twentieth century, exposes the modern turn toward the individual, exemplified by the political preoccupation with sovereignty, as the source of this dilemma. Maritain, like postmodern activists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, would banish sovereignty from the political lexicon. However, unlike postmodernism, Maritain's adherence to the absolute engenders a philosophical anthropology and ontology capable of sustaining the rights and equality of each unique human person within the democratic process and community.

SOMMAIRE

Cornel West, l'éminent philosophe et promoteur chrétien de la justice raciale, sociale et politique, a à juste titre qualifié l'élection présidentielle de 2020 aux États-Unis de lutte entre le désastre du néolibéralisme (Joseph R. Biden Jr., le candidat démocrate) et la catastrophe du néo-fascisme (Donald J. Trump, le président républicain sortant). Et Jacques Maritain, éminent philosophe catholique du XX^e siècle, identifie la centration moderne sur l'individu, illustrée par la préoccupation politique de souveraineté, comme source de ce dilemme. Maritain, comme les militants postmodernes Michael Hardt et Antonio Negri, bannirait la souveraineté du lexique politique. Cependant, contrairement au postmodernisme, l'adhésion de Maritain à l'absolu engendre une anthropologie et une ontologie philosophiques capables de soutenir les droits et l'égalité de chaque personne humaine et son caractère unique au sein du processus démocratique et de la communauté.