



DEMOCRACY, BEYOND THE IDOLS

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“Politics that don’t include theology, even in a barely conscious manner, will end up by being no more than a business, however skilful it may be.”
M. Horkheimer, *Anhelo de Justicia*, p. 169.

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1. THE BLINDING GLARE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

It is commonly said we live in a secularized society, that is, a society where the general patterns of behaviour are no longer determined by the religious convictions of its members.

1.1. Secularized society

It would seem the adulthood dreamt of by the champions of the Enlightenment has been achieved, in which people are no longer driven by obscure ancestral fears or the authoritative imposition of tradition, but only by the light of reason. Unless, as some have pointed out, we have passed rapidly and imperceptibly into a “state of senility” in which we no longer know how to make good use of our reason.

Obviously there are still many people in our society who preserve deep religious convictions which serve as a guide and support in their behaviour, not only as individuals but also in society. In certain situations these people can even exercise considerable influence on the social climate in which they live. But even so, the objective observer has to recognize that, contrary to what might have happened in other ages, the motives that inspire collective behaviour –for example, in legislation, economics, consumption, culture– are no longer mainly determined by a system of religious beliefs.

1.2. The privatization of religion

The Enlightenment showed an irresistible tendency towards the privatization of religion. It was held that society should organize itself according to rational principles clear to the whole world, and not according to revelations or religious traditions unable to claim the evidence and universality conferred by the court of reason. The most that might be admitted was that “religion within the bounds of reason” which appealed so much to Kant and his contemporaries. What one might believe outside this natural and rational religion was something “irrational”, the object of a particular experience or private option that might well be respectable but couldn’t be imposed as the organizational principle of society in general.

There was a tacit agreement that the “public domain” should be governed according to the universal dictates of reason, themselves independent from the private religious choices of each. This attitude was strengthened especially by the divisions in religious unity in the Reformation and the weariness produced by the Wars of Religion¹.

When radical socialism began to get organized in programmes such as the famous Programme of Gotha (1875) or the Programme of Erfurt (1891), it was generally included that religion was a private matter, although this was interpreted with different shades and motives². Today, in the kaleidoscopic panorama of different world visions, ideologies and cultures characteristic of our age, it is generally accepted without question that religious choices belong to the private domain and should not be expressed, still less imposed, in the public sector.

1.3. The crisis of reason

Modernity is characterized by a boundless confidence in the power of reason which frees people from prejudice, fear and superstition, and opens the way to the solution of problems encountered on life’s journey. The Enlightenment dream was summed up with surprising

ingenuity in the following words of Condorcet (1734-1794): “*The moment will come when the sun will only shine on free men, those who only recognize reason as Lord and master, and for whom tyrants and slaves will only exist in history books and in the theatre*”. In the same way Kant declared in his *Introduction to a Metaphysics of Customs* that “*the human person is not subjected to other laws than those which he has given to himself.*”

From our perspective at the beginning of the 21st century, what remains of this boundless confidence in reason? We mustn't rush into declaring, as certain modern movements do, that confidence in reason has shown itself to be a huge dream refuted by reality. It must be acknowledged that reason has shown itself highly efficient in presenting a coherent interpretation of current phenomena: hence the enormous advances in scientific knowledge in all its branches and forms. Reason has also shown itself highly efficient in putting the different forces of nature at the service of mankind, organizing the handling and distribution of natural resources in very complex ways. In this respect modern man has a boundless confidence in reason to the same extent as the most naive of the eighteenth century defenders of the Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, from the Enlightenment up till today, circumstances have taught us that the supposed absolute supremacy of reason is problematic.

First we have had to understand that the very concept of “reason” is elusive and variable. It seems there doesn't exist that universal reason which should in theory illuminate everyone equally, leading them to a unanimity of opinions and ideas. We have learnt that human reason is always conditioned and needing to be placed in context, that it doesn't always function the same in one situation as in another. We have learnt there can scarcely be reason free from interests –conscious or, what is worse, unconscious– which are in some way pre-rational, if not simply irrational. We have learnt that reason has many functions and that sometimes, in these different functions, it seems to act in a contradictory manner.

And we have discovered there are many types of reason, each with its own logic; there is scientific reason which classifies experiences according to definite points of view or “interests”; there is technical or instrumental reason which directs means to ends; there is economic reason, today so dominant, which seeks the greatest expansion in production, in profits and in consumption; finally there is what we can simply call human reason which seeks the development of the human being as such, individually and socially, in freedom and happiness.

1.4. Reason and the building of society

In what concerns the building and organization of society, all progressive social movements of renewal from the time of the Enlightenment have claimed to establish a new social organization based on the demands of reason. From the overthrow of absolutism by the French Revolution and other nineteenth-century revolutions, passing through various types of socialism (Proudhon, Saint Simon, Marx-Engels, Lenin...) and different economic systems liberal or capitalist, to the totalitarian forms of fascism, we always meet with proposals to organize society in a supposedly more rational manner to achieve greater happiness for people. Yet evidence clearly shows that reason applied to social organization has not achieved the same degree of consensus or agreed results as reason applied to science or technology.

All social programmes promise greater freedom, greater respect for human dignity and greater happiness; but all end in a heavier servitude.

2. THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND IN THE SCHOOL OF FRANKFURT'S CRITIQUE OF SOCIETY

Since the first world war, sociologists from the so-called School of Frankfurt have maintained there was an urgent need to reconsider the use and value of reason as a guide to human action. Merely technical or instrumental reason, they claim, can only assess means and not ends. The extraordinary expansion of the instrumental and cognitive dimension of reason is the decisive factor to subordinate the living world –where the interpersonal encounter takes place, and values and meaning are shaped– to the death logic of systems of irrational interests³.

2.1. Critique of society and negative dialectics

This cutting off of the system (economic and public administration) with respect to the living world is what causes loss of freedom and meaning in modern societies, whether they are totalitarian and fascist, or the so-called dictatorships of the proletariat, or the various depersonalizing forms of liberal capitalism. Herbert Marcuse expressed it clearly, stating that the one-way use of reason, far from aiding human freedom, tends to reinforce totalitarian powers through the structures of production, consumption and distribution.

*“Because of the way it has organized its technological base, modern industrial society tends to be totalitarian. Because not only a political terrorist organization of society is totalitarian, but also a non-terrorist technical-economic one which operates through the manipulation of needs by created interests, thus preventing the emergence of an effective opposition to the system.”*⁴

One of the most worrying aspects of advanced society is *“the rational nature of its irrationality: its productivity and efficiency, its capacity to increase and spread luxuries, to convert the superfluous into needs, to destroy in construction...”*⁵ The Enlightenment pretended that, through the use of reason, man would free himself from the fear of nature and subjection to arbitrary tradition. But the use of reason has led to the organization of a society that ends by subjecting him to the slavery of his own organisation. People feel powerless before economic forces and weakened in spirit, corrupted and dazed by the flood of information and indigestible offers.

In the fields of science, the family, education, politics and daily work, a common denominator can be detected: the decreasing freedom of the individual⁶. The Enlightenment has brought about the *Nichtigkeit des Individuums*, the annulment of the individual. This is why the Frankfurt sociologists argue for a “negative dialectic” which will show up the disharmony existing in an apparently rational society. This dialectic is viewed as an instrument of resistance and struggle to put into perspective the dominant ideologies with their absolutist pretensions and to save relative truths from the rubbish of falsely absolute values.

2.2. The negative dialectic and the desire for the positive

However, a negative dialectic, which uncovers the contradictions of a supposedly rational society, has to be based on something positive. What is deficient is seen as such by reference to a model, at least ideal, of what is perfect. Though the Frankfurt sociologists, chastened by the enslaving and destructive power of other-world nazi or stalinist models, claim they propose no ideal model of society, in fact they are motivated by a confidence in man and his possibility of organizing himself meaningfully and in freedom. M. Horkheimer admits this: *“The method of negation, the condemnation of all that hurts humanity and hinders its free*

development, is based on a confidence in man.”⁷ This pre-rational (that is not provable) confidence in man is the origin of the dialectic tension between the desired good and the experienced evil. It is here that Horkheimer finds justification for critical thought and revolutionary praxis in society. This is why the concept of “desire” (*Sehnsucht*) is so important in Horkheimer’s thought⁸.

The concept of “desire” takes us out of the sphere of the merely rational and places us in an area we could well call “theological”. The object of desire is not a proper theme for knowledge, but for faith: what has to be, what should be is not really known or experienced: it is “believed”; and it is from this condition of something “believed” or postulated that it exercises a real influence in the development of concrete experience. In this the Frankfurt philosophers remain faithful to the Jewish ancestry of almost all of them. The *Critique of Instrumental Reason* postulates fundamentally that reason has to remain open to the “Mysterious” which transcends it and which, in Horkheimer’s language, is expressed as “the desire for the *Totally Other*”. The critique of reason must therefore be seen not merely as reason’s overthrow, but as an attempt to carry reason to its own limits, before the threshold of faith, in an exercise which purifies reason of its pretensions to the absolute and, at the same time, purify faith of its temptation to interfere in the field belonging to reason.

2.3. The desire for the Totally Other

It is in this threshold between reason and faith that the Frankfurt sociologists place the room for manoeuvre for their critical theory of society. It is a case of not allowing the moral subject to be swallowed up by an effective ideology (totalitarianisms) or an effective technology (economicism). Confronted by the new idolatries of consumerism or exacerbated nationalism, the aim is to recover the Judaeo-Christian idea of the “people of God”, which implied justice for all people and all nations by divine will⁹. The need for a truly universal and unconditional justice leads Horkheimer to express a “desire” for the Totally Other:

*“It is of no use to pretend the preservation of an unconditional meaning without God. However independent, indifferent or necessary in itself a certain expression may be in the spheres of culture, art or religion, to renounce a theistic faith is to renounce at the same time the pretension of being any more than some practical agenda... The death of God is also the death of eternal truth”.*¹⁰

His disciple Habermas felt obliged to explain and qualify these words of the master¹¹, who, in his judgment, was still tied up in the metaphysical language of establishing an absolute. Nevertheless, Habermas himself was obliged to affirm the permanent need for religion, which is irreplaceable for certain functions. Philosophy, according to Habermas, must maintain itself in a “methodical atheism”; but religion retains its own consistency:

*“While in the medium which represents argumentative speech, (communicative reason) finds no better words to express what religion expresses, it must abstemiously (enthaltsam) co-exist with it, without supporting or attacking it.”*¹²

Resuming the critical positions of Frankfurt, J.M.Mardones concludes:

“In a historic situation characterized by the growing strength of instrumental reason, that is, by a loss of critical meaning with regard to social ends... in the eyes of Horkheimer and Adorno religion seems the place where, with the idea of God, a resistance can be maintained against the growing positivist invasion... remembering the situation, not final but contingent, of present structures, as well as the ideological character of their technical-

scientific justification."¹³

2.4. Desire and critical reserve

We meet here a strange position of the Frankfurt sociologists with regard to religion. Well aware of the limits of knowledge according to modern critical epistemology, they maintain they cannot say anything directly about God. But they believe they can say the hypothesis of God is useful and even necessary to establish what concerns truth and meaning in a rational and just human society. They manage to escape from any ontological considerations to position themselves in an historical critique of society, with a treatment of religion that seems merely functional and symbolic¹⁴. Answering an interviewer as to whether he considered himself an atheist, Horkheimer replied:

*"I don't consider myself an atheist because that would mean I would be making an affirmation about the Absolute that I am incapable of justifying. Part of my philosophy is the conviction that nothing can be affirmed about the Absolute, the non-relative. For this reason neither am I capable of affirming that I am an atheist."*¹⁵

We can say that Horkheimer stands always in a dialectic position: on the one hand, according to the postulates of critical theory, religion appears under the form of a false conscience; but, on the other hand, he acknowledges religion to be the basis for hope in full justice, which seems to be a necessary condition for a life with meaning. In some way he continues the position of Kant for whom the affirmation of God, which escapes theoretical reason, is a *postulate* of practical reason needed to give full meaning to life.

2.5. Can society be maintained with only positivist ethics?

We meet here the often-debated question of whether it is possible to establish an ethic prescinding from any religious statement. It is clear there are many people who follow a morality, sometimes very noble and demanding, without needing to motivate it religiously. (As there are also many people who present themselves as very religious but whose behaviour is very lacking in morality.) On this point, current ethical theories, complying with a critical position that blocks any attempt at a transcendental foundation for morality, find themselves obliged to be satisfied with various systems based on contract or consensus, interest ethics, clear utilitarianism, hedonism, etc., arguing that, with these principles, it is possible to obtain sufficient cohesion in a society. But the Frankfurt philosophers show themselves to be very radical before such forms of ethical positivism. They have suffered the terrible experiences of national socialism and have felt shame at seeing how the marxist utopia degenerated into the stalinist gulag. They have experienced in their own flesh to what extremes human perversity and its destructive capacity can arrive under pretext of supposedly rational ideals. For this reason, the ethical and political position of the Frankfurt school is wholly radical: they defend freedom and justice as truly unconditional values and so don't want to know anything about a freedom or justice conditioned by agreement, interest, utility or any other of the supposed bases of ethical positivism. J. Habermas expressed it as follows, referring to the position of his old master:

*"In his old age, in so far as we can follow him, Horkheimer didn't return to religious belief, but religion appears to him as the only instance, if it could be admitted, which can distinguish true from false, moral from immoral; only religion can give a meaning to life which transcends mere self-preservation..."*¹⁶

We can say that the Frankfurt philosophers move between, on the one hand, an imposition of critical thought that considers any transcendent statement illegitimate and, on the other hand, the absolute necessity to guarantee a freedom and justice capable of avoiding the aberrations of which they have been witnesses and victims.

For this reason they developed the idea of the “desire” for the wholly Other, which does not claim to be any form of affirmation of this Other but which, nevertheless, seems to postulate its existence.

Horkheimer replied as follows to a question about God’s existence:

“I cannot reply by simply saying: God exists and is just and good, because both the words just and good, as well as the expression God, cannot in the last analysis... be expressed positively, but only negatively through what God is not. However, this negative contains the affirmation of an “Other” which can openly be described in this way.”¹⁷

2.6. It is not more “rational” to love than to hate

In his famous interview on “The desire for the Totally Other”, Horkheimer gives the following hint:

“From a positivist point of view, it is not possible to develop a political morality. Considered from a purely scientific perspective, hatred is no worse than love, in spite of all its different social functions. There is no logically conclusive argument that I should not hate, if this does not bring any social disadvantage.”

The interviewer insists: “Must positivism therefore say, following G. Orwell that war is as good and as bad as peace; freedom is as good and as bad as slavery and oppression?” Horkheimer replies:

“Most certainly. Because, how can one argue with exactitude that I should not hate, if that amuses me. Positivism can find no transcendental reason why men should distinguish between altruism and the desire for gain, between goodness and cruelty, between egoism and self-dedication... All attempts to base a morality on worldly prudence instead of referring to what is beyond... lead to similar illusions. Everything concerned with morality is, in the final analysis, based on theology; all morality, at least in the countries of the West, finds its roots in theology, even though we should take care to view the latter with extreme caution.”¹⁸

The case against ethical positivism could hardly be more emphatic: no consensus, no inspired calculation of self-interest can guarantee that a person might not emerge saying that hatred is preferable to love, war preferable to peace. Horkheimer is cautious talking about the “theology” which has to serve as a basis for morality. He explains clearly that it is not theology as “the science of God” in the classical sense.

“Theology here means –he says– the awareness that this world is a phenomenon, that it is not absolute truth, that it is not the ultimate. Theology is –he explained to me with great care– the hope that the injustice which pervades the world is not final, does not have the last word... the expression of a desire that the executioner does not triumph over the innocent victim.”¹⁹

It is worth noting here a couple of things in Horkheimer’s thought. First, an unconditional ethics can only be justified from the perspective that “this world is not final” (which implies the need to postulate something more final, transcendent, Other). The man who considers

himself or his world to be absolute or final, cannot be moral, social or political in the full sense of these words. Secondly, only a passion for true justice as an ultimate goal can serve as a foundation for a truly universal and unconditional morality. The Frankfurt critique certainly has no interest in defending religion: but its critical analysis of society leads it to recognize that only a certain form of “faith” –which clearly for them is not the acceptance of religious “dogmas”– offers secure guarantees for a solid socio-political morality.

2.7. “The socially necessary function of religion”

In another interview Horkheimer says:

“I have proposed that an awareness of injustice should be kept alive in man. And this awareness of injustice comes... in the final analysis from theology, from religion, because there it says ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’, there it sets up justice as a requirement. To man as such, independently of all this, justice is as natural to him as injustice. But to the degree that justice plays a role, this is achieved through the socially necessary function of religion.”²⁰

And a little further on in the same interview:

“There remains the desire; not the desire of heaven, but the desire this terrible world is not the true one, the desire for justice; not the dogma that a God exists who will bring it about. And I believe this desire, with all the cultural forces linked to it, is one of the elements to be preserved along with progress so that we don’t just adapt to the facts that determine the march of history...”²¹

So, according to Horkheimer, religion, that is, faith and hope in an absolute Good, would be necessary to keep alive a sense of injustice and rejection of the evil of this world. And only this can help us organise society and live a more human life in it.

2.8. The alternative to amorality

These are not merely theoretical arguments. If the affirmation of an Absolute already possessed leads to totalitarianism, the lack of reference to any absolute value, even if only desired, leads to social disintegration.

Today there are radio stations for the young (for example, Fun Radio in France) which broadcast the message “what you chose is entirely your business: nobody should judge what you do. You decide according to your taste or pleasure”. It is an ethics based on the absolutization of the individual or group, an absolutization proclaimed in fact not only by those against the system but by the majority of advertisements that bombard us and by the behaviour of all sorts of personalities idolised by the public. Such a morality becomes worrying when, for example, it produces youths who cruelly assassinate the poor or coloured immigrants because they enjoy doing so; or when they physically eliminate members of a rival gang just to show their power.

Le Nouvel Observateur (6. 07. 1996, p.72) published a report on replies in a school-leaving exam to the question: “Can everything be justified?” Many pupils replied yes and some explained that even Hitler’s genocide could be justified because “from his point of view, he fought an idealistic and just battle” for Germany’s greatness, though the pupil who replied in this way stated that he had a different point of view. The idea that was repeated was that “no one could put themselves in the place of another”²². This is one of the forms of relativism –in

other words, the absolutization of self– which inevitably end by destroying all relationships between citizens.

The most important contribution of a sense of the transcendent in building society is to exclude radically any attempt to absolutize the individual or any other earthly reality.

2.9. Habermas: the social function of religion again.

It is well known how J. Habermas sometimes criticises his masters Horkheimer and Adorno for not having freed themselves entirely from supposedly metaphysical prejudices. According to him, “Every attempt to find an ultimate basis for the survival of the intentions of early philosophy (*Ursprungsphilosophie*) has failed”²³, and society has to try and recognise only through “communicative action” the demands of freedom and justice needed to regulate human conduct. He seems to hope that this “communicative action” will be able to fulfil the functions previously discharged by religion²⁴. However, he recognises the great symbolic power of religion and the need of it to move people

*“Religious speech retains a power of meaning which is essential and has not yet been explored by philosophy and, what is more, has not yet been translated into the language of public reasoning, that is, reasons presumably convincing to all... In my opinion, neither the basic concepts of philosophical ethics developed up till now include, even from afar, those insights which had already received a thorough expression in biblical language and which for our part are only learnt through religious contact... I am thinking of the feeling of ‘solidarity’, in the bonding of a member of a community with his companions.”*²⁵

In the *Perfiles filosófico-políticos*²⁶ he writes:

“Among modern societies, only those which manage to introduce in the realms of the profane the essential content of their religious traditions –a tradition which always aims above the merely human– can also save the essence of what is human”

In another of his works he expresses this even more clearly:

*“I don’t believe, as Europeans, we can seriously understand concepts such as morality, ethical, personal and individual, freedom and emancipation... without taking on the essence of the historical concept of salvation from the jewish-christian tradition... Without the social mediation and philosophical transformation of some of the great universal religions, it could be that one day this semantic power could become inaccessible. It is a power that has to emerge in each generation so that this remnant of self-understanding, shared with others, and which makes possible human relationships between people, is not destroyed. All must be able to recognise themselves in every being with a human face.”*²⁷

*“As long as religious language preserves an inspiring semantic content which can never be lost, but withdraws from (for the time being ?) the capacity to be expressed in philosophical language, and which still resists translation into a foundational discourse, philosophy, even postmataphysical, can never substitute or eliminate religion.”*²⁸

According to these texts, it seems Habermas doesn’t recognise in religion a truly foundational function or a legitimization of social ethics, but merely a socializing function in transmitting human meaning.

Faithful to post-metaphysical thought, he tries to preserve the meaning of the unconditional without recourse to God.

Religion is not required to lay the foundations of a morality, but “*it is another thing to give a motivating reply to the question of why we have to follow our moral convictions. In this sense perhaps it can be said (with Horkheimer) that ‘to preserve an unconditional meaning without God is a vain endeavour’*”²⁹.

2.10. Limits to the critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School

Faithful to the critical epistemology of modernity, they aim to proceed with the ‘negative dialectic’ of resistance against anything that threatens the human being. They don’t proclaim so much a body of knowledge but rather a praxis inspired by hope and a critical solidarity to meet the threats hanging over humanity. Human dignity, a goal to be pursued, only becomes a universally recognised value through a negative and indirect mediation, that is, through resistance to anything inhuman. According to them, the human can be experienced dialectically, namely, in the experience that the human being is permanently threatened.

Before this *epoché* or refusal of any affirmation, not only about God but also about the human in itself, it seems possible to reply –though at the risk of being held as tied up again in the metaphysical– that this negative dialectic cannot be justified in itself, but rather that it operates in fact in a positive context of meaning, even though this cannot be formalised, or only done in a pluralistic and always inadequate manner. How can one fight against the inhuman without somehow recognising what is human? Although Critical Theory holds that no absolute value can be recognised, in fact it makes an absolute value out of ‘emancipating freedom’. And then, why is emancipating freedom the only value not exposed to the suspicion of ideology?

In fact, is it not certain that Critical Theory is not only based on a praxis of critical analysis of society, but that this praxis is also guided by an absolute ethical choice, the option in favour of emancipation and freedom? And so once again the question arises: Where does the absolute nature of this option come from? Is it enough to say it comes from a “desire” in itself unjustifiable?

3. THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY: NEO-PRAGMATISM

The Critical Theory of society, as presented by the Frankfurt sociologists, represents a deliberate effort to discover the evils which today beset the social body. Upholding, as we have already seen, a reserved position about the possibility of affirming transcendent principles, they nevertheless intuited that society cannot be solidly established other than in an unconditional and universal affirmation of liberty, justice and human dignity; and that such an affirmation referred back to at least a postulate or desire of an 'Other' really unconditional and universal.

3.1. From critical rationalism to neo-pragmatism

These theories were well assessed at the time they were made and continue being objects of interest, at least theoretical, for students as is witnessed by the continuing reeditions, translations and commentaries of the Frankfurt texts. However, perhaps because they maintain a high level of abstraction, they seem to have had little influence on the way society is formed and have not served to correct its enormous deficiencies. In the moment of interpreting what is happening in society and proposing specific remedies for its evils, other theories dominate. One of the more usual, that seems to express the *zeitgeist* of the moment, is that which some have baptized 'critical rationalism'.

To describe this line of thought, I take the liberty of quoting a shrewd Spanish sociologist who presented thus the so-called *Programme 2000* of the Spanish Socialist-Worker Party (PSOE). What he says goes further than mere socialist proposals and applies to most expressions of different political options. Critical Rationalism is

“a particular version of enlightened reason that we can characterize as: a) an unshakeable confidence in the emancipating power of reason; b) an awareness of the failures and errors of this reason in history...; and c) the conviction that it is only from this same reason that its course can be corrected. ... Critical Rationalism has no difficulty in recognising that enlightened reason, born to demystify all absolute and dogmatic pretensions, has itself fallen into irrationalism and mystification. But –and this is crucial– it notes that becoming aware of these abuses is a product of modern reason itself. It is reason that again demystifies its own mystification... The remission of auto-critical power to science itself means the exclusion of any archimedian principle outside society in so far as this is understood as scientific rationalism... There is no reason to fall back on regulating moral principles with pretensions to universality nor, of course, to dictates from tradition in order to relativize existing reality from there. This relativization of modern discourse is an agreement between those taking part who achieve a fragile and provisional balance. Only the process of conflicts and differences is permanent and absolute... A pretension to universality is confused with dogmatism... and a natural choice is made for pragmatism, tolerance-indifference, relativism, forgetting that what is at stake in the pretension to universality is a strong solidarity and not some apathy...”³⁰

3.2. Technical politics and political technology

Habermas had already explained that advanced society tries to resolve crises and the worsening of social conditions through state intervention in economic development (“the administered society”). Social problems tend to be reduced to technical economic ones through, for example, fiscal policy, labour legislation, incentives... Instead of being concerned for a freer and more just society, politics devotes itself almost exclusively to matters of

technical rationality, leaving individual motivations and attitudes to the private domain. It is the technical experts who determine objectives and aims, and so politics remains dominated by instrumental rationality...³¹ The positivist tendency proposes that politics should be fundamentally regulated by appraisals of social reality that are scientifically verifiable. Confidence should no longer be placed in ideological world visions that come from a non-scientific mentality. This is the position of representatives of various forms of ethical positivism such as Rawls, Rorty, Albert, etc. and among several of our political theorists of recent socialist groups, such as M.A.Quintanilla, R.Vargas Machuca or L.Paramio... These analysts argue that political ethics has to be rational, with arguments submitted to scientific laws of trial and error.

According to them, public ethics must be based on a so-called rational egoism or “utilitarian altruism”³² rooted in an attempt to affirm community values from the rational calculation of self-interest.

According to these authors, human behaviour is always motivated by self-interest. The imposition of a principle of solidarity would be something specific to totalitarian policies based on the defense of a supposed common good defined dictatorially. A system of incentives for selfish reward would be needed to motivate individuals to behave socially in a way that guaranteed adequate harmony. It is a sort of application to ethics of the classical economic liberalism, on the supposition that the common good results of particular interests without any further rational promotion.

Thus the politicians are more concerned with winning the votes of their electors rooted in a culture of immediate satisfaction (Galbraith), than with what might lead to a more just society. Their strategies are influenced more by the results of opinion polls than by deep convictions about what might improve social harmony.

Already there is almost no ideological tradition in the different political options, but a chameleonic adaptation to the desires of the masses. Critical rationalism or ethical-political positivism end up in neo-pragmatism; and this, in its turn, seems to lead to a dangerous social degeneration in which the chief preoccupation of those responsible for society is little more than giving sops to a public stupefied by the very perpetrators of the system.

It is no surprise therefore that one finally ends up with such alarming phenomena as the rise of a Le Pen or any other movement founded on insolidarity.

4. POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF BELIEVERS TO A SOCIAL REGENERATION

It is from this perspective of crisis in society that we can begin to consider what might be the contribution to social regeneration of someone who believes. I am not for a moment suggesting we should turn back the clock of history and return to a pre-enlightenment time of a society directed by religious beliefs. We should recognise fully that a society has to be governed by its own principles of ethical rationality and political efficiency, without submitting itself to dictates of a different order.

Nevertheless, the principle of Max Weber is surely not unreasonable when he said that to understand any human activity it is necessary to understand the overall concept of existence in which the person lives; and religious dogmas are an integral part of these visions of the world. This is why Max Weber undertook to show how certain religious ideas determined certain economic and political ways of behaving. In fact, people continue asking questions about the ultimate meaning of their existence; and the reply, which often takes the form of a religious idea, serves as motivation, enlightenment and support for many individual and group decisions.

Here I will only suggest a few ideas of how the concept of a human existence open to communion with a transcendent Reality –what we call “God”– could affect the concept and organisation of society, helping to escape the impasses which result from the positivist political theories³³.

4.1. Faith which relativizes all that is not absolute – against any form of totalitarianism

It may seem paradoxical, but the affirmation of an ultimate Absolute relativizes everything else. On the other hand, the denial of a supreme Absolute leads to absolutizing what is only contingent.

In the Jewish-Christian tradition, an important role is played by the comparison between a present always contingent and an eschatology that is definitive. No temporal or worldly achievement is either absolute or definitive. Everything is capable of improvement and subject the future of history. Yet everything has a value in relation to the eternal and definitive. Thus one can assign value dialectically both to temporal tasks and their relativization and to the concrete historical forms connected with the socio-political order.

The option of a believer can contribute in a special way to avoid the danger of idolizing the State. Clearly some form of legitimate State is necessary to attend the general needs of society; but it can be dangerous and against people’s freedom and dignity if the State takes control of all the means, neutralizing the energies of what has recently come to be called “civil society”. The State should play a subsidiary role in those areas where private initiative cannot cope... The same should be said about idolatry of the economy, of technical progress, of immediate and selfish pleasure and of other similar idols which threaten to enslave us.

4.2. Faith which guarantees an unconditional social responsibility

One of the problems met in positivist social theories of neo-contractual or consensualist bent is that of justifying the unconditional character that, in some way or other, social ethics has to possess. One can pretend an individual’s obligations to society arise from some form of

contract or agreement; but this does not answer the question why such an agreement should be accepted unconditionally or why occasional or permanent disagreement should be rejected. This is the weak point in neo-contractual theories such as that of J.Rawls or the partial consensualism of R.Rorty, etc.

The unconditional nature of ethics, from which follows its universality, can only be upheld by postulating a truly unconditioned principle. Since it is unconditional, we cannot know or properly possess such a principle, but can only postulate it as a condition to attain universality. And we should not think such considerations only have a theoretical value: if it is impossible to reach an absolute basis for ethics, one cannot see in practice how one can argue against those who declare themselves against the system, or how one can condemn “cultural peculiarities” such as female circumcision, stoning to death for sexual transgressions of the law, or the death sentence against the Philipino woman Sara Balabagan for refusing to have sexual relations with her boss. This could be one of the reasons why a believer might consider reasonable and necessary the option of faith³⁴.

It is argued that justice should be the fruit of a truly universal dialogue between people who are free, equal and guided by reason. But the condition of universality in this dialogue is previous to the dialogue itself, unquestionable and unprovable. It is a “religious” postulate which can be symbolized in the language religion uses, but it is not a proper object for scientific knowledge.

4.3. Universality in solidarity

The greatest contribution a believer can and should offer democracy is to demand a universal solidarity. One of the most urgent questions today is precisely, as R.Diaz-Salazar puts it, “*to consider if an economic democracy can be built which goes beyond European and North American frontiers...*”³⁵. We say we are in the era of globalization and, in fact, there has never been up till now such a great circulation of capital, ideas and technologies. And yet our democracies are terribly provincial. They defend justice and equality within their frontiers but disassociate themselves from the injustice or evil that might exist beyond them, when they are not actually profiting from inequalities while treating with those from outside.

Faith can fulfil an important critical role in overcoming the suspicion against the “dream of a cruel inhumanity” (Sobrino) and the irrationality which lull our apparently so democratic and rational societies. It is a shameful scandal that, while in the northern “democratic” hemisphere 1,700 million live in plenty squandering resources, an almost similar number in the south are below the poverty line and 800 million live in permanent hunger. Faith in a God who is Father of all must denounce the “pyramids of sacrifice” (P. Berger) which maintain the apparently rational culture of the west.

Religion can question the unconcerned attitude of modern democracies, which look more to the wellbeing of potential voters than a fair redistribution of wealth or the application of justice at a world level. The most scandalous example would be that of the most powerful and self-satisfied democracy, of the great empire which systematically refuses to endorse plans for restructuring the markets of agricultural products, for preserving the environment, or to bring into being a resource for international justice.

The great danger of democracies is that, while they are very jealous of equality within, without they easily behave like tyrannical and exploiting monsters. The result is an uncontrollable avalanche of desperate migrants arriving every day. To try and contain this avalanche solely by police control is a dream. The hungry of the third world who die on our

beaches prevent all chances of feeling satisfied with our achievements. While the ideologists of capitalism claim that we have arrived at “the end of history” (Fukuyama), more than two thirds of humanity simply have no prospects of history.

4.4. The “Samaritan culture” (Diaz-Salazar)

The genuine christian, the christian of the Magnificat or of the parable of the Good Samaritan, has a powerful ethical incentive to struggle against high-handed exclusivity.

“The satisfied majority seek above all civil security and, on more than one occasion, the criminalization of the socially excluded... The question of immigration is not seen as something ideally desired by the wealthy countries at this point in time... The poor countries are being abandoned to their fate, except for those which are useful to the north for geopolitical or economic reasons. They are the new victims left by the side of the road, before whom the wealthy countries pass by on the other side, as in the old gospel parable.”³⁶

Even a political theorist so little suspect of clerical leanings as F. Fernandez-Buey declares the pressing need to return to gospel values:

“Solidarity has to do with piety, compassion, love of neighbour of one’s own species. But one’s neighbour in a world economy is increasingly less a person nearby and ever more a neighbour far away about whom we know little more than their suffering and misfortune... Not a few people have begun to ask the question about how one can love a distant neighbour. This attitude renews and adapts to the new situation of globalization the old concept of charity... Charity is more basic and more radical than solidarity. Solidarity in today’s world is, on the one hand, a critical awareness of the insufficiency of a charity reduced to almsgiving and paternalism; and on the other, the proposal to raise individual charity to a social, institutional and political level...”³⁷

The mere affirmation of democracy as co-responsability on the level of equality can hide dangerous mistakes. It is all very well to begin by declaring that people are equal in rights and obligations. But the reality is that people do not find themselves in situations of equality: in every society there are the weak, the incompetent, the defenceless, the exploited and impoverished... Here it is not enough to proclaim a universal solidarity based on egalitarian principles: it is necessary to proclaim, as the gospel does, a biased solidarity, of gratuitous benevolence for the most needy. Merely political considerations are unlikely to lead to this slanted solidarity. Political considerations can rather lead, as has happened, to radical eugenic practices. The question that must inevitably be asked of positivist ethics is: why maintain the weak and unproductive? The defence of the weak has to come from a conviction that every person has an inalienable value that makes them worthy not only of respect, but also of love.

4.5. A “humanitarian superstition”? (J. Muguerza)

The honest agnostic J. Muguerza has sometimes spoken of the need for “*humanitarian superstition*” in these times of religious decline. It is like a recognition that, if we wish to be truly human, we must leave aside a little our western rationality because it is incapable of providing a sufficiently solid basis for the humanitarianism our broken world needs. Without some religious or believing element, which the agnostic can call “superstition”, it doesn’t seem possible to establish an ethic of truly radical social commitment.

One of the greatest efforts among us to elaborate an ethical system solely from the human subject without any recourse to the transcendent, is that of J.A. Marina in his *Ética para náufragos (Ethics for the shipwrecked)*. Arguing with J.I. González Faus on the validity of his attempt, J.A. Marina speaks of human dignity as an ethical basis³⁸. Well and good. But what is the basis for human dignity? Human dignity cannot be scientifically proved, it can only be “believed”, object of the type of “superstition” spoken of by Muguerza. The believer will affirm that the ultimate basis for human dignity is God, who created man in his image and made him object of an unconditional love. And the agnostic will tend to believe in human dignity with a faith that will not be a rational conclusion but will have something of “religious” faith (or “superstition?”).

4.6. The primacy of the last, criterion for a more human policy

Politicians tend to look for public approval as a visible sign of the success of their achievements. But this could lead them to look more for the ostentatious or for voting returns than for the promotion of the truly humanitarian among the most needy. The believer, faithful to the gospel, will demand that policies be judged by the criterion of the primacy of the last, that is, the criterion of whether or not the fate of the excluded and oppressed has been favoured, whether the voice of the voiceless has been listened to. Policies which, however brilliant they might be, leave by the wayside hidden pockets of marginalization and poverty are policies which always deserve the severe critical judgement of the believer.

But also, from the other side, the gospel principle of the primacy of the last must serve as a criterion for the authenticity and strength of the believer’s faith. When the latter lives a religion in which there is no sense of protest against policies of marginalization, in which there is no urgency to become “salt of the earth and light of the world”, to call for true justice and equality, then that religion is distorted and has little or nothing in common with the gospel.

4.7. Beyond legalism

Societies are normally constituted within a legal framework which aims to guarantee equality of opportunity, rights and obligations. Hence the first need for members of a society is to respect its legality. But the principle of legality is inevitably subject to those limitations perfectly described by St Paul when he speaks of the contradiction between law and sin. The law, which should serve to protect the rights of all, can easily become merely the weapon with which I protect and affirm myself against all others. The law is necessary; but a society whose members only observe what the law commands or prohibits will soon become unfeasible. A genuine ethical motivation that goes beyond the mere observance of legality is required. As Ricoeur says, it is necessary to “save” society from mere legalism³⁹ and educate it in creativity, personal responsibility, and generosity... And this is achieved especially –I don’t say exclusively– from recognising the deep roots of human solidarity which come from a religious view of the world.

4.8. Even against self interest

Society needs to rethink its ethical rationality from a perspective of the “samaritan culture”. Only in this way will certain policies be accepted which, as a well-known economist says, require “a logic different from the rational and egoistic behaviour of self-interest”⁴⁰. Peter Glotz, in his famous *Manifesto for a new European Left*, has written:

*The left should set up a coalition which appeals for solidarity between the greatest number of strong ones with the weak, even against their own self-interests. For strict materialists, who consider the effectiveness of interest greater than that of ideals, this might seem a paradoxical mission, but it is the mission that is needed at the present time.*⁴¹

Today it seems that nobody dares speak of renouncing self-interest for the good of another. It looks like an asceticism from the obscure ages of monarchies. However there are some who are beginning to rediscover that, to be healthy, a society needs members with a marked capacity for renunciation in favour of the community. Ideas that are in some way religious are, without doubt, best suited to produce this feeling of co-responsibility ready even for sacrifice. (Without denying, of course, that certain non specifically religious ideologies, such as marxism, for example, or ethnic or nationalist movements, can contribute something of this *pathos* and, for that reason, often appear as forms of a “lay religion”).

A co-responsibility in solidarity, committed to the end, is difficult to nurture from a positivist neo-pragmatism. The decline of ideologies and suspicion of the “great legends” of our age only favour conflict and a lack of solidarity. For when the “great legend”, of common origin and shared by all, and the supreme value of each and everyone is abandoned, it is immediately substituted by the stingy account of the need for self-affirmation at the expense of the other.

4.9. Beyond “enlightened egoism”

While pragmatic positivism seems unable to free man from an “enlightened egoism” (Habermas), the attitude of a believer is one that obliges man to continually go out of himself. Man is not a closed-in being, accidentally open to society by a selfish calculation of interests. Man is a being by nature open to a you –that of God and of other human beings– in such a way that he cannot exist unless it is to the extent he exists with and for the other. It is certainly not by chance it has been in areas of belief where the line of thought has been cultivated, the exact opposite to egoism, which recognises a sharing relationship as constitutive of the human person.

Both the dialogue anthropology of M. Buber and the personalism of E. Mounier –to quote two outstanding names in this tradition– develop a type of anthropology in which the person takes precedence over nature, and this involves a radical rejection of all types of ideological exploitation of the human being as well as specific needs in moral behaviour and politics of solidarity.

Beyond any nuances or forms these philosophies might have taken, the recognition we can only realise ourselves as humans to the extent we accept our nature of sharing and radically reject using others as instruments for our own interests, prevents us from being trapped in a sterile and antisocial individualism⁴².

4.10. The faith as a utopian and prophetic catalyst

Society needs a utopian and prophetic catalyst. There must be a space where questions can arise that will give a positive impulse to greater justice. There must be somebody who has the courage and hope to risk themselves in defending the vulnerable, and who provokes actions, movements and defiant signs which show a greater solidarity, different from the insensibility of the general scene⁴³ (volunteers, abolition of foreign debt, demand for 0.7% in aid, defense of nature...). There is no doubt that christian faith, when deeply rooted in gospel values, has a

vital and important strength for transforming society. From the example of Jesus, whom the christian professes to wish to follow, there emerge principles of

“The primacy of the last, a passion for their liberation, a critique of wealth, closeness to victims of exploitation, the desire to build fraternity from justice; and, in addition to this, the choice of a lifestyle based on frugality and the sharing of possessions, a union between the inner change of a person and the transformation of history, etc.”⁴⁴

Some time ago Ignacio Sotelo wrote that “it will be necessary to recruit the last socialists among certain christian groups, while the new liberal conservatives will come from the ranks of the agnostics. Among certain believers there is a utopian persistence not found in other militants”⁴⁵.

4.11. How to give a “soul” to politics?

There is a general feeling politics has become technocratic and grey, that it is no longer moved by ideals of a better society but only the concern to administer what exists and avoid conflict. Some say that politics today has lost its “soul”. Jacques Delors, a politician famed to be a technocrat, created the movement *Donner une âme à l’Europe* and stated:

“A lot still needs to be done to ensure the primacy of the spirit and the indispensable contribution of culture in our Europe and in our lifeless democracies. This Europe in the process of unification needs a memory and a soul. Only in this way will the spirit of Europe be able to prosper.”⁴⁶

And also elsewhere:

“The crisis of democracy is also a moral crisis and, in consequence, spirituality must revitalize society... The moral crisis of democracy is due, in part, to a weakening of spirituality.”⁴⁷

Victoria Camps, a well-known student of the foundations of ethics, after having assessed all that enlightened positivism can offer in this field, finally confesses:

“Ethics requires certain resources, in search of which it is neither absurd nor illegitimate to have recourse to religion... The left seems to confront phenomena for which it appears to have no words. One of these is religion. To discredit it or abandon it to the most conservative elements is not a progressive attitude but rather one of inhibition when one acknowledges to have run out of strategies.”⁴⁸

4.12. Between realism and utopia

The believer receives from faith the motivation, the knowledge and the correctives for political action. But he knows that by faith he is called to follow a path whose finishing point is always a utopia. The Sermon on the Mount cannot be converted into a political programme. So the believer has to guard against an excess of expectations or perfectionism that could lead to a rejection of the inevitably imperfect measures one has to work with in society.

The believer has to be convinced that his political commitment is subject to the rules of natural reason, the calculation of the relation between ends and means, and the concrete conditions of each situation and moment. And although the ultimate aims must always be those of the greatest humanization of society, it will have to be admitted that the means and

conditions available will not always be the best and that sometimes, without renouncing the utopian ideal, it will be necessary to adapt to specific situations. In the same way the believer, persuaded it is not possible to obtain full objectivity and certitude in diagnosing or solving situations, must respect a pluralism of political options and not pretend to impose certain solutions by force. The gospel offers light to inspire goals, but it does not impose concrete policies nor, still less, technical solutions⁴⁹.

4.13. Liberation, not alienation, through faith

When we speak of faith or religion, we can be talking about very ambiguous concepts. Clearly there are forms of religion that are “opium of the people”, opium of bourgeois and even opium of the exploiter who believes to be justified before God and society once he has fulfilled the socially recognised religious rituals.

The authentic faith is that which affirms God to be the true liberator of all. And we can only recognise “God” as God if we see him as He who urges man to be man. The gods that men use to cover up their injustices or destroy one another cannot be authentic gods. God is the god of all, the guarantor of the justice and dignity of all, or else he is not god. The liberation theologians rediscovered an old phrase of St Ireneus (2nd century): “The glory of God is the life of men”. The criterion for the validity of faith will come from the witness it gives to its capacity to free. A God that does not free, but enslaves, is an idol.

We have to walk with care since nothing can corrupt itself so easily as the idea of God when we put it at the service of our own interests. Unfortunately in the christian tradition we have many examples of the corruption of the idea of God put at the service, for example, of the theocratic papal imperialism of the Middle Ages, of the extermination of jews, muslims, heretics or witches, of the ideological justification of absolute monarchy... and a thousand other aberrations that have occurred in our religious history.

Nevertheless the same history shows that the faith possesses in the jewish-christian tradition elements which always rise up again with force and lead to an ideological unmasking and the setting up of a more just and free society. It is the strength that comes from a tradition founded on a radically anti-idolatrous and liberating impetus, incompatible with any absolutization of the powers of this world, and on the clear manifestation of God’s favour towards the poor and dispossessed.

Fortunately the repeated rereading of Exodus or the Sermon on the Mount prevent one from remaining content with a faith that is complacent towards injustice. In the same christian faith we find elements that lead us to a permanent suspicion of ideologizing our conduct. For example, the classic doctrine of ‘original sin’ (leaving aside the subtleties of theological explanations) tells us that the human being is not an ethically or politically neutral person but one that has tendencies contradicting its deepest nature: made for freedom and justice in society, it experiences the tendency to egoistic self-affirmation and denial of the other. This is a fact of existence that social theorists usually don’t take into account: they think it sufficient to propose the good for men to follow it, and don’t bargain for the twisted complexity deep in the human heart which, in St Paul’s expression, leads us “*not to do the good that we wish, but the evil we don’t wish*”⁵⁰.

Faith has a much deeper and more realistic understanding of man than the majority of political theories, and for this reason can offer a much deeper promise of liberation: that of the saving grace which is not alienating, but demanding and challenging.

5. BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

J.B. Metz has said that the enlightened mentality brings with it a congenital evil which is to operate with a split spirit, because it has only owned half of the tradition which nourishes it⁵¹. It is said that reason comes from Greece and faith from Israel; and the Enlightenment thought reason alone was enough to give meaning to human life and that faith had a private place in the realm of feelings.

5.1. The twofold root: greek reason and hebrew faith

Obviously, with Greek reason one can try to order human life, for individuals and in society, with a view to human happiness: this is what democracy hopes to achieve. But the facts force us to admit that a purely rational ordering will only be truly effective if freedom is submitted to demands that are not merely rational, but come from faith; and this would be the specific contribution of the Jewish tradition. It is that principle of Israel's faith which calls for adoring God above all things, which can be translated into a recognition that man's true good is not what he decides (whether individually or socially), but that which is called for and demanded by the very individual and social reality itself; in the final analysis, that which in classical times the natural law or the eternal law tried to express. In other words, democracy has to realise that it is not merely the consent of the majority that forms the basis of good, but that, in the final instance, the good is previous to what men choose and is precisely that which constitutes men as men. There is no guarantee that a democratic majority could not become obsessed and freely chose its own destruction, as K. Jaspers⁵² already noted with the accession of Hitler to power.

Certainly there is neither any guarantee that someone offering themselves as the expression of good willed by God, will in effect be it. Given what people are like, one must always be open to the suspicion of fraud. Democratic consensus alone cannot by itself achieve being the principle and ultimate source of good, and the affirmation of God and of a truly absolute and universal good he represents can be the key to a lucid critique of democracy itself, although, even this, with rigorous precautions against those who try to impose their own interests in the name of God... As J.M. Mardones puts it in his profound study of religion in J. Habermas,

“not any way of living religion is suitable for reviving the living world. Only those religious traditions gifted with a universal concept of justice and brotherhood which, in addition, is taken up and lived critically and self-critically, will be able to provide social relevance...”⁵³

Notes

1. It is well known, for example, how Hugo Grotius argued for the establishment of a natural ethical system which had to be observed *et si Deus non daretur*.
2. R. Díaz-Salazar, *La Izquierda y el cristianismo*, Madrid, Taurus, 1998, 96foll. Madrid, Taurus, 1998, 96foll. Among us, M. Escudero, coordinator of the *Programme 2000* of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party declared: "I am in favour of religion being an opinion in private life, and never in public life... I do not wish to underestimate the value christianity could have in strengthening the personal progressive convictions of many people... But socialism in its strategic planning will not succeed in Spain through the option of considering catholicism or a religious outlook as an added value to strengthen the progressiveness of a particular person..." *Iglesia Viva*, nº 140-141, 283foll.
3. J. Habermas, *Teoría de la acción comunicativa*, Madrid, Taurus, 1987, I, 445foll. J.M. Mardones, *Análisis de la sociedad y fe cristiana*, Madrid, PPC, 112foll.
4. *El Hombre unidimensional*, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1985, 33.
5. *Ibid.* 39.
6. Cf. T.W. Adorno y M. Horkheimer, *Dialéctica de la Ilustración*, Madrid, Trotta, 1998. M. Horkheimer, *Sobre el concepto de hombre*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Sur, 1970, 185-205. J.M. Mardones, *Dialéctica y sociedad irracional, la Teoría Crítica de la sociedad de M. Horkheimer*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 1979, 60foll; 102foll.
7. M. Horkheimer, *Crítica de la Razón instrumental*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Sur, 1973, 194.
8. Cf. J.M. Mardones, *Dialéctica y sociedad irracional*, cit. 95-96.
9. Cf. J.M. Mardones, *ibidem* 103.
10. M. Horkheimer, *Anhelo de justicia*, Madrid, Trotta, 2000, 85. Cf. also: *Sobre el concepto del Hombre*, Bs. Aires, Sur, 1970, 63-64.
11. Cf. J. Habermas, *Israel o Atenas*, Madrid, Trotta, 2001, 121foll. Also, id., *Textos y contextos*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1996, 133foll.
12. Cf. J. Habermas, *Pensamiento postmetafísico*, Madrid, Taurus, 1990, 186.
13. J.M. Mardones, *Teología e ideología*, 157.
14. Cf. J.M. Mardones, *Teología e ideología*, Bilbao, Mensajero. 1979, 167.
15. M. Horkheimer, *Anhelo de justicia*, Madrid, Trotta, 153.
16. J. Habermas, *Textos y contextos*, Barcelona, Ariel 1996, 128.
17. Cf. *Anhelo de justicia*, cit. 163.
18. *Ibid.* 168. It is a theme on which Horkheimer constantly insists: cf. *ibid.* 93; 187; 193; 217.
19. *Ibid.* 169. This idea is also repeated by Horkheimer in various forms. Cf., for example, *ibid.* 242. "The desire for a totally Other is a desire which unites men in such a way that the atrocious deeds and injustices of past history do not become the final and definitive destiny of the victims..."
20. *Anhelo de justicia*, cit. 217.
21. *Ibid.* 219.
22. Cf. P. Valadier, *La anarquía de los valores*, PPC, 1999, 160. H. Habermas, *Israel o Atenas*, Trotta, 2001, 201.
23. J. Habermas, *Theorie des communicativen Handlung*, Frankfurt, 1981, 16. Cf. J.M. Mardones, *El discurso religioso de la Modernidad. Habermas y la religión*, Barcelona, Anthropos, 1998.
24. This he says expressly in his *Theorie des kommunikativen Handlung* II, Frankfurt, 1981, 118-119: "The social-interpretative and expressive functions previously carried out in ritual practice, now pass to communicative action. The authority of the sacred is substituted by the authority of a consensus which considers itself established once in for all. This means that communicative action is freed from the normative settings claimed

by the sacred... The aura of charm and fear which the sacred exudes and its captivating strength are sublimated and at the same time made routine in the binding force of assumptions whose validity can be questioned." (underlined by Habermas). Cf. an excellent exposition and critique of this attitude in A.W.J. Houtepen, *Dio, una domanda aperta*, Brescia, Queriniana, 2001, 158 foll.

25. H. Habermas, *Israel o Atenas*, Trotta, 2001, p.201.

26. Madrid, Taurus, 1984, p. 344.

27. J. Habermas, *Pensamiento postmetafísico*, Madrid, Taurus, 1990, p.25.

28. *ibid.* p. 60.

29. *id.* *Texte und Contexte*, Frankfurt, Surkamp, 1992, p. 125.

30. Reyes Mate, *Religión y Socialismo, más allá de la política*, en *Iglesia Viva*, n° 140-141 (1989), p. 291-292.

31. Cf. J.Habermas, *Ciencia y técnica como ideología*, 85. J.M. Mardones, *La filosofía política del primer Habermas*, en: AA.VV., *Teorías de la Democracia*, Anthropos, 1988, 73.

32. Cf. L. Paramio, *Tras el diluvio*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1989; F. Savater, *Ética como amor propio*, Madrid, Mondadori, 1988. Cf. R. Díaz Salazar, *La Izquierda y el Cristianismo*, 165ss.

33. Clearly I am thinking mainly of christianity. But what is said could apply in large part to other forms of religious theism.

34. Cf. P. Valadier, *La anarquía de los valores*, PPC, 1999, p. 170.

35. *La Izquierda y el cristianismo*, cit. p. 64.

36. Cf. R. Díaz Salazar, *La Izquierda y el Cristianismo*, cit. 393foll.

37. F. Fernández-Buey, *Grandes corrientes de solidaridad en el mundo de hoy*, in: *Éxodo*, n° 34, 1986, p. 7-8.

38. Cf. *Iglesia Viva*, n° 211 (2002), 110foll.

39. P. Ricoeur, *Amor y Justicia*, Madrid, Caparrós, 2000, 82 foll. R. Díaz-Salazar said the same: "I am convinced that when politics is not enriched by pre-political and meta-political influences, it inevitably falls into a mechanical trap which petrifies it and makes it inconsequential." *La Izquierda y el Cristianismo*, Madrid, 1998, 298.

40. J. Sevilla, *Balance y perspectiva de las relaciones Norte-Sur*, Valencia, Publicacions de la Generalitat, 1993, p. 178.

41. O.c. Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1987, p. 21

42. See C. Díaz, *Introducción al personalismo*, Madrid, Gredos, 1975.

43. Cf. J. Habermas, *La reconstrucción del materialismo histórico*, Madrid, Taurus, 1981, p. 312.

44. R. Díaz Salazar, *La izquierda y el cristianismo*, cit., p. 399.

45. *El socialismo, diez años después*, *Iglesia Viva*, n°122 (1986), 123.

46. In I. Bertin, *¿Un alma para Europa?*, Cuadernos de Trabajo social, n° 9, 1996, p. 57.

47. J. Delors, *De cuerpo entero*, Madrid, 1996, p. 257.

48. V. Camps, *El malestar de la vida pública*, Barcelona, 1996, p. 74

49. The legitimacy and even the necessity for a political pluralism among christians is mentioned in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* n. 74-75. Cf. Mardones, *Fe y Política*, cit. 71foll.

50. Rom 7, 15. Cf. V. Camps, *Religión y liberalismo*, en: AA.VV. *Ciudad de los hombres, ciudad de Dios*, Madrid, Comillas, 1999, 219. "The left has taken up the idea that democracy is enough –its institutions and procedures– for people also to change and become more honest and supportive. Facts show that this is not so..."

51. Cf. J.B. Metz, *Die anamnetische Vernunft*, in: AA.VV. *Zwischenbetrachtungen, Festschrift J. Habermas zum 60. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt 1989, 733ss. Quoted by R. Mate, *La razón de los vencidos*, Barcelona, Anthropos, 1991, 74.

52. Origen y meta de la Historia, Madrid, 1985, 164.

53. El discurso religioso de la Modernidad, Rubí, Anthropos, 1998, 207.

