

VISIONS OF THE EMPIRE RELIGION, ONTOLOGY AND THE 'INTERNATIONAL' IN EARLY MODERNITY

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Summary

This paper analyzes the relation between basic religious motifs of theoretical thought, general ontology and their specific use in 'international' political theory at the onset of the Modern Era. The analysis is based on Herman Dooyeweerd's reformational philosophy in identifying the basic assumptions on the origin of life, coherence and diversity of reality in several trends of thought. The Greek and Roman classical legacy, in combination with ancient Christian concepts, is emphasized, namely in terms of motifs such as Nature and Grace, guidelines of scholastic worldview, thus influencing its perspective of Christianity, of the Holy Roman Empire and of the Papacy. Reformed Protestantism adopted a more radically Biblical set of assumptions which culminated in an ontologically plural perspective of social authority and political community, as well as of the empire. Christian humanism, and some Protestant thinkers, was also heavily influenced by the motifs of Nature and Grace, but now with a strict separation between both 'logics'. The theorization of an 'internal logic' for each of these spheres gave origin to a reinterpretation of Nature in classical Humanism, according to a 'mechanistic' perspective of reality with its ideal of control. Another religious motif of this secularized form of humanism was the concept of Liberty and of personality. This geometrical theoretical mode influenced ideas on the social contract and its international analogy, leading theoreticians to fiery debates on the classification of the Empire.

Keywords:

Religion; Ontology; Modern Era; Political Theory Internationalist

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I. Introduction

"Hurry, use reason in your favor while you can, / before all of Europe, the Golden Land, disappears in smoke!" This poem, written by Andreas Scultetus during the Thirty Years' War, expresses the general disquiet of that time and the search for an end to the conflict (quoted by Osiander, 1994). This desire was eventually fulfilled through the negotiations of the Congress of Westphalia. Justifiably, historians resist the over-importance given to the effects of the Peace of Westphalia as founders of the basic structures of contemporary international politics (Freire, 2008a; 2008b). The relevance awarded to this event as a turning point is typical of the fields of International Relations and Law. However, even within those fields, the anachronistic, imprecise and 'journalistic' nature of such narratives has been questioned (Krasner, 1995/96; Osiander, 2001; Teschke, 2003; Franca Filho, 2007). As research on European world politics at the onset of the so-called Modern Era is now redirected, new issues are being raised. If, until recently, the theme drew attention for the wrong reasons, now, instead of completely closing the case from a negative perspective, recent scholarship has inaugurated new research avenues. One of the (re)emerging points, vaguely referred to in Scultetus' poem, is the "use of reason" in political theory on 'international' territory planning.

Political and historical processes involving the gradual transition from the Medieval to the modern world posed several challenges to 'thinkers' at the time, including how the Holy Roman Empire should be conceptualized (Boucher, 1998: 225; Wilson, 2006). During that fascinating period, the transition of ideas, institutions and practices concerning the Holy Roman Empire and European politics – incredibly adaptable and in constant alteration – coincided with significant cultural changes, including the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance and the recovery of Scholasticism by Roman Catholic lawyers. Each of these movements had a huge impact on the prevalent worldview and scholarship. The fact that both historical and ideational changes occurred rapidly and simultaneously enabled a wide range of theories to be used in the interpretation of natural and social phenomena, such as, for example, schemes to redefine political order in Europe. Unlike our current milieu of intellectual fragmentation (Rushdoony, 1961), thinkers at that time were relatively clear as to the basis of their theories, making it easier to identify the relationship between presuppositions and their application to specific phenomena. It is not by chance that those authors are now acknowledged as great philosophers of the past.

At the onset of Modernity, therefore, one can notice great interest in theorizing political order and conceptualizing the Holy Roman Empire, as well as a close link between political theory and ultimate principles of systematic thought. This leads us to consider the following question: Is there, more broadly, a direct relationship between the basic



and general presuppositions in a theory and their application to our understanding of order in world politics? If so, how could we identify different Early Modern trends of thought in terms of such relation between the assumptions and their implications in those different 'visions of the Empire'? My contention is that there is indeed a relation between the 'roots' and the 'branches' of 'internationalist' political thought in the transition to the Modern Era. However, the classification of those 'visions of the Empire' or, even broadly, views of general political order in relation to the differing types of basic assumptions depends on two things. First, we need to step back in a 'macroscopic' historical and comparative exercise. Then, we must concretely analyze tacit concepts guiding theoretical thought in each of those different trends. Combining a long-term narrative and an examination of those 'roots' of theoretical thought provides an account of the cultural heritage received at the onset of the Modern Era and how that legacy was framed and opposed by alternative sets of assumptions.

It is also my contention that the tacit dimension shaping theory is inherently religious and pre-theoretical. It is theoretically mediated by the formulation of ontological models enabling us to identify it in each case. In other words: the roots of each internationalist 'trend of thought' emerge from religious commitments directing, at a more 'superficial' level, theoretical concepts. This operates in the mediation of a general formulation on the basic nature of reality. Though the link between religion and core political principles has been studied by Carl Schmitt (2006: 35) and recently by some of his followers (e.g. Kubáľková 2000), the claims advanced here pursue an original perspective in line with a distinct and less well-known tradition. I situate my approach in the line of the 'Reformational' school of philosophy, or the 'Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea', first elaborated by Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977). Influenced by the Augustinian notion of religion guiding theoretical understanding, Dooyeweerd (1953-58 I; 1979) outlined the history of Western philosophy around 'ground-motives', i.e., the set of 'transcendental ideas' on the Origin of being, coherence and diversity of reality. Ground-motives shape both theorizing and its cultural context. The relation between tacit (and broad) assumptions and particular theorization in academic fields is a popular theme among remarkable historians and philosophers of science such as Collingwood (1945), Polanyi (1946), Burt (1954), and Kuhn (1996). The Reformational approach, in turn, has contributed to that debate in the field of history of natural science (Hooykaas, 1972; Pearcey and Thaxton, 1994) and specialized fields of study, like Physics and Mathematics (Stafleu, 1987; Strauss, 1996). The use of this notion in the interpretation of natural science (allegedly more 'neutral' and 'objective') has already obtained many positive results. It is potentially even more relevant if applied to discourses that would allow for more 'subjectivity', such as the cases in hand.

Yet, before putting the reformational argument into use in my study of the Early Modern 'visions' of the international and the Holy Roman Empire, let me briefly describe its framework connecting religion, ontology and theory. A core principle in the development of Reformational philosophy is the rejection of the humanistic portrayal of reason as autonomous and ultimately foundational to any theory. One of the arguments presented against the alleged neutrality of theoretical reasoning is the existence of several conflicting modern perspectives and philosophical schools, each enabling their own research programs in the special sciences, but all under the foundational claims to autonomous reasoning. Considering that these schools are mutually exclusive, I suspect pure reason cannot be the ultimate foundation of every single one of them! In



other words: these humanistic trends assume a *dogmatic* perspective on the foundations of theoretical thought (Dooyeweerd, 1948: 16-18). Seen from a negative angle, this means that there is a pre-theoretical dimension to the basis of theoretical reasoning, *refuting* the dogma of autonomous reason. From a positive point of view, the point *illustrates* the alternative perspective on the foundations of theoretical thought found in Reformational philosophy – the claim that theoretical thought finds its deeper roots in tacit assumptions (Dooyeweerd, 1947). In sum, the dogma of autonomous reason is not only self-destructive for not being demonstrable based on autonomous reason itself (which is made manifest by the existence of diverse philosophical schools sharing the same claim), it is yet *another* example of how certain pre-commitments shape theoretical arguments in philosophy or a specialized discipline.

Pointing out the inner tension in the modernist dogma of the autonomy of reason, Reformational philosophy introduces in its place the notion of dependency of theoretical thought on religious pre-theoretical assumptions. By 'religious' it is meant not an organized institution with rituals, traditions, explicit devotion and dogmatic formulation. It is true that several religions empirically exemplify such phenomena but this is not a generalizable statement. What defines the core of religion is the idea of a certain connection (*religare*) with an idea of Origin, whether personal or not (Clouser, 1991: 9-36). Several scholars admit the dependency that theory in a specific scientific discipline has in terms of a deeper philosophical basis (e.g. Bhaskar, 1978). Reformational philosophy, in turn, takes this logic of tracking the roots of theoretical thought a step further, stating that *even* such philosophical basis depends on a deeper layer of presuppositions. Therefore, the statement that all theory (whether general or specific) necessarily depends on a basic *religious* dimension replaces the modernist framework that assesses theoretical thought only in terms of its logical aspect.

Which generic formula would allow for the precise identification of those assumptions of Origin and what would be its wider content? As noted before, tracking the theoretical discursive layers to their philosophical basis does not resolve the issue of diversity within a specific academic field, considering the plethora of possibilities even at that level. The multiple theoretical 'isms' are not confined to specialized fields. They are also present in their philosophical basis. In general terms, all philosophical schools aim to deal with reality based on broad theoretical questions (e.g. 'what is real?') What happens, though, is that each of these schools theoretically *abstracts* from reality in a different way. Thus, mapping the manner in which abstraction occurs for each approach is key to understanding theoretical diversity. It is precisely here that the presuppositions of Origin should be seen as relevant in our analysis of theoretical thought. A core feature of abstraction is that it concerns both analysis and synthesis. Analysis consists in separation and conceptual classification; synthesis, on the other hand, proposes a formula for coherence. The process of abstraction, therefore, necessarily depends on accounting for both diversity and coherence of abstracted reality. Its starting point is always directed by presuppositions on the Origin of existence, diversity and the unity of things. These religious assumptions are, so to speak, "transcendental ideas", for they are inevitable in philosophy, constituting that which "sets the conditions for theoretical thought" in the process of abstraction (Zuidervaart 2004:70). To sum up, specialized theoretical thought (in an academic field) depends on general theoretical thought (philosophy), which is, in turn, guided by a set of transcendental ideas that enable the process of abstraction.



A way of identifying how these sets of transcendental pre-theoretical ideas of Origin (or religious ground-motives) influence theoretical thought is to assess how they are theoretically evidenced through ontology, i.e., a model of the basic components of reality. This would be a coherent attempt to grasp the ground-motive and its *cosmomic idea*.¹ Using this formula, my study analyzes the relevant ground-motives of western culture and thought in the historical formation of 'internationalist' political theory and the conceptual 'visions' of the Holy Roman Empire at the onset of the Modern Era. This task is merely an initial step towards more detailed research on the influence of basic religious motives in world politics. Though Dooyeweerd himself applied his philosophy to many specialized academic disciplines, James W. Skillen (1979; 1981) was the first and, up until now, possibly the only one to analyze a number of theories in International Relations in light of Reformational philosophy.

The next section will deal with the classical legacy inherited by Medieval thinkers. Since the ground-motives of Medieval and late scholasticism involve a fusion between Classical philosophy and Christianity, we should begin by expounding some basic tenets of scholastic thought. After a brief summary of Roman Catholic theories of political order, I turn to some of the Protestant alternatives. Surprisingly, a considerable fraction of Protestantism was greatly influenced by scholasticism while the reformed (Calvinist) line attempted to rescue the radically Biblical character of the Christian ground-motive. The Reformation was not the only differentiating factor of theoretical thought in terms of scholasticism Early Modernity. The emergence of humanism (initially Christian but, later, rather secularized) also provided a systematic alternative to the remaining 'visions' of international and imperial order.

II. The Classical Legacy: Form, Matter and Politics

The cosmomic idea orienting Classic Western culture and thought derives from the antithesis between Form and Matter, both motives claiming absolute roles. While both have equal relevance in understanding of Classical (ancient) 'internationalist' thought, notice that each of them acquired prominence in different historical contexts. The earlier period, in which Matter was the independent Origin "out of which emerge all beings of individual form" in a framework of "blind necessity" (Dooyeweerd, 1948: 62) of fate by means of a "a formless, cyclical stream of life" (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 16). A brief description of the worldview oriented by this ground-motive is in order:

It is from this shapeless stream of ever-flowing organic life that the generations of perishable beings originate periodically, whose existence, limited by a corporeal form, is subjected to the horrible fate of death [...]. This existence in a limiting form was considered an injustice since it is obliged to sustain itself at the cost of other beings so that the life of one is the death of another. Therefore all fixation of life in an individual figure is avenged by the merciless fate of death in the order of time. (Dooyeweerd, 1960: 39)

¹ As noted before, Reformational philosophy is also called Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea – this idea is the principle ruling and ordering the cosmos according to a given system of thought.



The general picture here is that of a constant “process of birth and decline of all that exists in a corporeal form”. This is the summarized cosmomic idea in the Matter motive.

Eventually, the opposite ‘pole’ of this ancient ground-motive emerged in reaction to the absolutization of Matter. As indicated by Nietzsche (1995) and others (see debate in Bos, 1986; Runia, 1989; Kok, 1998), the motive of Form arose in culture and in theoretical thought as a rival concept of the ultimate Origin of things (Dooyeweerd, 1948: 65-66). This alternative motive, illustrated in Greek religion as “form, measure and harmony” and in the literature that portrayed the gods of the Olympus as “personal form of a perfect and splendid beauty” (Dooyeweerd, 1960: 40) culminated in the “Platonic idea as the imperishable metaphysical form of true being”. The antithetical clash between Matter and Form raised the important issue of how to reconcile these two sides of the ancient transcendental idea. The uncomfortable antithesis between both concepts of Origin became a key feature of the Greek worldview, including its theoretical thought, as it “determined” the “conception of the nature (*physis*) of things” (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 21). As Collingwood (1945: 29-92) states, all Greek theoretical thought varied in accordance with the content attributed to the idea of nature, whether it was “a purely invisible form” (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 21) or “a flowing stream of life”, but, in general “a combination of both”.

Greek political thought was also influenced by that worldview. Shifts in emphasis within the form/matter ground-motive would change the implications of the concept of nature (*physis*), which, in turn, altered the notions of what was ‘natural’ and ‘arbitrary’. These two things were, according to Keene (2005: 32), fundamental in classical narratives on public life. An example is the older ‘materialistic’ idea of the Origin of customs and laws, attributed to chaotic relations of power, as is visible in Herodotus, Thucydides and Protagoras, in accordance with the view of nature as a ‘stream’ led by chance. In Plato, however, we come across an important change. The notion of immaterial ideal forms is contrasted with the apparently random diversity of political life, which is a sign of imperfection. But what is uniform in political life relates to the unblemished ideal forms (Keene, 2005: 33-35). From Plato onwards, there is considerable cultural and theoretical emphasis on the motive of Form, politically evidenced in the institution of city-state (*polis*). As Parkinson (1977: 9) states, it is not surprising that “political thought in classical Greece turned round the general idea of city-state”. Plato, facing the empirical reality of diversity of laws and governments which share the same organizing principle of city-state, nevertheless attempted to defend its coherence in terms of “the universal, changeless form of true political order that would serve as the paradigmatic norm for all particular and changing city-states” (Skillen, 1979: 13).

The distinction between natural and arbitrary based on the Form motive is especially noteworthy in the case of platonic ‘internationalist’ thought. The natural, because “unchanging and non-material, which can be known only by the intellect” (Keene, 2005: 36), is better learned by those who know how to place the non-rational aspects of life at the service of the theoretical contemplation. However, not everyone has that ability. There is, therefore, a distinction between those prone to theoretical thought and those who are not. Justice, being an unchanging Form, does not necessarily correspond to variable customs and laws. Anyone can create and abide by customs and laws but that does not necessarily lead to justice which, being ideal, can only be approached in a similar ideal community – the city-state. And the city-state should be under the



guidance of philosophers. After all, they are the kind of people more prone to contemplation and, thus, who possess more affinity with Forms in general and justice in particular. Plato's (1999) well-known argument, besides *internally* discriminating between groups of Greeks (the philosophers and the others), also serves as a basis for *external* differentiation. It is true that, despite the tension between those prone and those not prone to theory, Plato also emphasized the internal coherence of the Greek community in terms of their *natural* use of the institution of the city-state. This concept of coherence in a political community depended necessarily on the idealist cosmology derived from the Form motive. However, that very motive is also portrayed as the Origin of *diversity* in political communities, as it was not easy to find institutions similar to the *polis* outside Greece. This was considered one of the indicators of qualitative difference between 'inside' (the more 'rational' people) and 'outside' (the 'barbarians') – a distinction transcending mere linguistic identity. It was not because of their language but because of their institutions, antagonizing the city-state, that the 'barbarians' (or those 'outside') were called 'natural enemies' of the Greeks in the ancient world.

A similar tendency may be found in Aristotle. Like Plato, Aristotle places the oldest materialistic motive in opposition to an idea of nature as Form. This is clear in the link between nature and purpose (*telos*), which guides the development of all things in their intrinsic tendencies. Despite the similarity with Plato's approach, Aristotle has an alternative view on the means to be used to obtain knowledge on Forms.

Unlike Plato, who thought that knowledge of the Forms could not be achieved through the senses at all, Aristotle's mode of enquiry begins with empirical observation of the way things are in the world, from which the forms shared by certain species of things are to be deduced by examining their tendencies to develop into qualitatively different kinds of entity. (Keene 2005: 39)

Following this 'way of inquiry', Aristotelian philosophy becomes dependent on a hierarchical order between the whole and its parts. This, in turn, functions as another pillar for political theory, as Aristotle (1999: 3) evidences: "As in other departments of science, so *in politics* the compound should always be resolved into the simple elements or least parts of the whole". Besides this hierarchical ontology, the *teleological* assumption leading Aristotle's theoretical thought is "equally prominent in his ethics and politics", according to Lloyd (1970: 121-122), "for his ideas of the good life, and of the good state, are based on his conception of Man's proper ends or function". The Aristotelian thesis on diversity in coherence within societal associations provides a concrete indication:

Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think is good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good. (Aristotle, 1999: 3)



In Aristotle, this purpose of the State has two allies: reason (*nous*), which differentiates humans from other animals; and contemplation (*theoria*), which, apart from being the purpose of human life emerging from this differentiation, is also reference for political life within the city-state. Considering that only in the city-state (the most encompassing political community) life is directed towards 'the greatest of all goods', it is in this institution that the purpose of contemplation may be obtained.

The implications for 'internationalist' analysis of relations *between* diverse political communities are even more remarkable in Aristotle than in Plato. This is due, to a large extent, to the initial drive of the basic idea of Form in reaction to the principle of Matter, as well as to the presuppositions of a teleological ontology based on hierarchical arrangement of the whole and the parts. For Dooyeweerd (1979: 22), internally, the city-state was viewed as a "totalitarian" or integral arrangement: "man became truly whole only as an active, free citizen. All of life had to serve this citizenship, for it alone granted a divine and rational cultural form to human existence". Externally, that vision reinforced the long-held suspicion that those 'inside' the city-state were more 'human' than those 'outside' it:

The city-state was the bearer of the Greek culture religion and hence the Greek culture ideal. A Greek was truly human only as a free citizen of the polis. The polis gave form to human existence; outside of this formative influence human life remained mired in the savagery of the matter principle. All non-Greeks were barbarians. They were not fully human since they lacked the imprint of Greek cultural formation. (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 21-22)

Aristotle himself advances this binary prejudice, 'naturalizing' the tension between those 'inside' and those 'outside'. From natural enemies of the Greek, barbarians become, thus, natural *slaves*, since equality was impossible between those who attain the purpose of human life and those who reject the means to distinguish themselves from other animals (see Ossewaarde, 2008: 204-207).

The tension between Form and Matter, which was a basic element driving Classical Greek theoretical thought, also deeply affected the contrasting ideals of imperialism and cosmopolitanism in the period of Roman domination in the West. Even before that, during Alexander's Macedonian prominence over the Greek, the materialistic transcendental concept was very convenient to external political hierarchy. Dooyeweerd (1979: 23) states that "the fatalistic conception of the cycle of life meeting out death to everything that existed in individual form was eminently suited to a deification of the monarch as the lord over life and death" (see also Foucault, 1978: 135-136). Besides leading to the institutionalization of Emperor worship as deity, the Matter ground-motive also served the purpose of the ideal of imperialism. "Carried forward by a deified ruler, the *imperium* became surrounded with a kind of magical halo. Like fighting the inexorable fate of death, resisting the *imperium* was useless". The decline of Macedonia was not the decline of the political influence of materialism; therefore, Roman domination found fertile ground in the same principle, taken even further by the eclectic tolerance of rulers aware of its convenience. The paradox is that Roman domination represented an inversion of the Aristotelian formula where those 'inside'



dominate those 'outside'. Understandably, such irony was only possible due to the later prominence of the materialistic pole of the Classic transcendental ideas, opposed to Form, which Aristotle valued so much.

Gradually, a new way of thinking emerged on the relation between 'inside' and 'outside'. In fact, that distinction was rather blurred due to the influence of stoic cosmopolitanism in the Roman period. Led by the ancient irreconcilable dialectics between Form and Matter and its influence in providing an understanding of nature, stoic thought aimed at 'unity' with that natural order. The diversity of political communities, including the diversity of city-states, was seen as an inadequate instrument in this pursuit of fundamental 'unity' with nature, having failed to sufficiently promote even a truly virtuous political life. As an alternative, the stoics expressed their preference for a world city (*cosmopolis*), theoretically explaining the political coherence revolving around its Origin in 'the law of nature' (or natural law), common to any human being (Keene, 2005: 52-56). The stoic formulation on world order and its coherence despite the diversity in customs and cultures was so influential that it became part of the official Roman ideology. However, in that partially failed attempt of accommodating both imperialist and cosmopolitan ideals to the institutional context of the 'law of the peoples', the Romans preserved a concept of 'outside', thus contradicting the stoic intention (Korff, 1924: 252-255). The 'law of peoples' was partly based on the 'law of nature' but they did not fully overlap. Rome located in natural law a transcendental idea of Origin of the right of the peoples. Yet, the concept of imperial *citizenship*, with all its rights of exclusiveness, perpetuated the differentiation between 'inside' and 'outside' in classical 'internationalist' thought (Keene, 2005: 59-61).

III. Nature and Grace: The Scholastic Theory of Christendom

Hybridization of Roman imperialistic mentality was not restricted to the stoicism of Cicero and others. Eventually, the predominant culture, already in decline, introduced elements of Christianity, which had been able to resist initial persecution and then expanded until it literally reached "Caesar's household" (see Philippians, IV.22). The first centuries of the Christian Church were remarkable in terms of the increasing doctrinal standardization and the condemnation of any mixture with the surrounding culture, which was deemed harmful (Clark, 1988: 1-22; 1989: 13-19). However, the rise of Christianity as a political force after the initial persecution led to great coexistence between Christians and non-Christians. Some have even argued that, from an intellectual point of view, this tolerance was crucial for the cultural survival of Christianity (e.g. Jaeger, 1963). After some time, the strict intellectual asceticism was replaced by an impulse towards hybridization until Christianity became the official religion of the late Roman Empire. There are negative and positive opinions on this shift in attitude in terms of the opposition between 'Jerusalem' and 'Athens', but the distinction remains the synthetic transcendental ideas in later Christianity (which pervaded institutions and political views in pre-modern Western Christendom) and the original way, rooted in the basic Biblical religious motif (Hebden Taylor, 1966: 142-151).

In terms of the religious pillar of Christian culture shaped by transcendental ideas within the Biblical ground-motive, we may speak of original Christianity as led by a radical understanding of the framework creation/fall/redemption. God, and He alone,



should be seen as the Origin of cosmic order. Therefore, there is a distinction between the Absolute Creator and relative creation, including its laws of 'nature', since they were established as part of the creation-order (Vollenhoven, 1933: 22). Within creation, a difference is made in terms of human beings, created in God's image, and described as 'stewards' or 'managers' of the rest of creation so as to place it at the service of the Creator and one's neighbor. This concept of a clear boundary between creatures and Creator is stressed even further by the fall of human beings in their sin and transgression (Stoker, 1935). The sin committed by creation's 'stewards' changed creation from its initial obedient and harmonious relation with the Creator and drove the human heart into deep resistance to God's lordship over all things. Though his common providence allows, even to non-Christians, the unfolding of creation's potentials to serve them with some tolerable quality of life, it is in the redemption offered in Jesus Christ that its full restoration begins, starting with the return to personal and collective repentance and new inclination to serve the Creator (Bavinck, 1894: 43ff). As theoretical thought is included in the process, the Biblical motive acknowledges a radical *antithesis* in theory and other cultural manifestations. On the one hand, there is the Christian view, (re)directed to God-as-transcendental-Origin of existence, coherence and diversity. On the other hand, we find a system of apostasy against that Origin and that embraces rival notions of Origin. The Biblical transcendental ideas on creation/fall/redemption forbid any competing principle as the deep religious basis of theoretical thought. It is in those terms that we may understand its radical opposition to early attempts of pagan synthesis (Dooyeweerd, 1953-58: I, 506-67). That does not necessarily imply the rejection of all possible dialogue with other cultures, but simply the refusal to approve their hybridization with Christianity in terms of basic religious ideas, or ground-motives.

The possibilities of a Biblical philosophy and, by implication, of specialized theory in other areas (including 'international' politics) were soon stifled by the emergence of synthetic inclinations in those operating within the Christian ground-motive (Skillen, 1981: 58ff). St. Augustine's work already evidences that synthesis between the ancient transcendental ideas on form/matter and the Biblical framework of creation/fall/redemption. Augustine is relevant here because both his detailed 'internationalist' thought and its synthetic basis were inherited by scholastic theories of the Holy Roman Empire and of the institutionalized Church. He is generally referred to as one of the Christian pioneers in 'internationalist' thought but his theory is partly derived from a dual neo-platonic ontology which, in turn, emerged in an attempt to harmonize the pagan philosophy he admired with Biblical transcendental ideas (Dooyeweerd, 1997: 10-12). It is true that, otherwise, in his theological works and personal life, Augustine tried in every way to defend orthodoxy against synthetic moves. An example of this is his refutation of the Pelagian heresy, including his doctrine of 'election' as a theoretical reflection of the motive of redemption in Jesus Christ in its most radical form (Augustine, 1953). However, it is also undeniable that Augustinian philosophy and its derivation to 'international' politics were led not only by the Christian ground-motive, but also by those Classic transcendental ideas. Perhaps this element of Augustinian thought is not so surprising as it seems due to the predominant intellectual perspective of the 'Church Fathers' of his time, already influenced by pagan "cultural production" to a great extent (Hebden Taylor, 1966: 149). In that context, the radical antithesis between Christian and non-Christian



intellectuality had given way to openness. In the case of political thought, as Van Reenen shows (1995: 660-661), such openness was even more pronounced.

The only antithesis between Christianity and other worldviews visible in Augustine's (2003) political thought is based on Roman-stoic and platonic concepts. The antithesis to which I refer is the opposition between the 'City of God' and the 'City of Men'. The basis for this tension and its implications for political life are both portrayed in an obvious dependency on a hybrid set of transcendental ideas. Consider, for instance, the delimitation of the 'City of God' as something outside the present world based on its relation with the soul of the Christian, which, together with the dualistic assumption of an anthropological distinction between body and soul, is evidence of a neo-platonic view of Form as Origin. Another example, perhaps the most important one for later 'internationalist' thought, is the way Augustine urges fellow Christians to coexist, for the time being, with the other inhabitants of the 'City of Men' based on the Roman concept of natural law. The Carlyle brothers (1962; quoted in Keene, 2005: 76) ensure that the argument in favor of Christian obedience to earthly authority is "practically Cicero's [stoic] definition". Kenny (2004-07: II, 4) sums up the attempted synthesis by that Christian philosopher, by noting that the "*the City of God* sets Jesus, the crucified King of the Jews, at the apex of the idealized city-state of pagan philosophy." It is clear that in Augustine there is a development in the notion of natural law as a link between the pagan transcendental idea of Form and the Christian ground-motive.

Natural law is a good indicator of the synthetic character of scholasticism after Augustine in terms of 'internationalist' thought. "The idea of natural law", says Keene (2005: 82), "played an important role in medieval Christian thought, but it was always to a certain extent an imported concept, grafted on to Christian moral and spiritual beliefs". What crystallized the introduction of natural law into scholastic theoretical thought was the final development of a dualistic ontology of transcendental ideas of Origin based on the new hybrid ground-motive of nature/grace.

Roman Catholicism conceived of nature in the Greek sense; nature was a cosmos composed of formless, changing matter and of a form that determined the immutable essence of things. Human nature also was viewed as a composition of form and matter; man's "matter" was the mortal, material body (subject to the stream of becoming and decay), and his "form" was the imperishable, immortal, rational soul, which was characterized by the activity of thought. For Roman Catholicism a supranatural sphere of grace, which was centred in the institutional church, stood above this sphere of nature. Nature formed the independent basis and prelude to grace (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 144).

The absorption of a Classical concept of 'nature' (in terms of Form and Matter) was widely influenced by the writings of Aristotle, rediscovered in the Middle Ages. A step ahead of Augustine towards a positive approach to pagan philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas mitigated Augustine's radical rejection of the Pelagian view of the implications of the human fall into sin (Thompson, 1994: 59). In his belief that, in spite of sin, we are all naturally able to reach God through better use of reason, Aquinas found in this mitigated version of the doctrine of the fall an entrance door for the pagan notion of



natural law. Since God is perfect reason and His law is eternal, and considering that the fall had only a limited effect on reason, it is possible for humans to infer something from that eternal law by contemplating natural law (Knutsen, 1997: 31-32). In his own words: "natural law is simply rational creatures' sharing in the eternal law" (Aquinas, 2002: 18). This realm of Nature, including universal human reason, was relatively independent within the dualistic ground-motive of scholasticism. Christians and non-Christians, in this vein, could share similar understandings of natural law. However, in a typically scholastic fashion, it was also established that, ultimately, the Church had a privileged position as interpreter of natural law. The Bible reveals eternal law and the Church is the most appropriate interpreter of the sacred text (Coulton 1940:167-180). In Aquinas, then, Grace surpasses Nature.

The centrality of natural law in scholastic thought dictated a whole era of 'internationalist' theoretical thought set forth in 'legal or jurisprudential' vocabulary (Keene, 2005: 99). In fact, the link between the synthetic ideas on nature/grace in scholasticism and the theorization of the Holy Empire and its limitations in terms of the Church's jurisdiction (a link drawn via natural-law 'cosmopolitanism') is rather salient. An additional ontological element influencing scholastic 'internationalist' thought was the Aristotelian teleological concept of the primacy of the whole over its parts (Thompson, 1994: 60). Medieval political thought postulated as starting point "two Orders of organized life, the spiritual and the temporal" (Gierke, 1958: 10), corresponding, respectively, to Grace and Nature. On the latter realm, medieval thought reflected the Aristotelian metaphor of a political body, a portrayal supposedly applicable to all associations. Considering that both the Empire and the Church claimed absolute (or 'cosmopolitan') authority, the solution to this conflict was to link the representative of the religious body, the Pope, to the universal jurisdiction on spiritual affairs (Grace), and the political body represented by the Emperor to the universal jurisdiction on temporal affairs (Nature). Gierke (1958: 10-11) explains how this defined the search for 'purpose' by each of these bodies:

In century after century an unchangeable decree of Divine Law seems to have commanded that, corresponding to the doubleness of man's nature and destiny, there must be two separate Orders, one of which should fulfil man's temporal and worldly destiny, while the other should make preparation here on earth for the eternal hereafter. And each of these Orders necessarily appears as an externally separated Realm, dominated by its own particular Law (...) and governed by a single Government.

Scholastic ontology or metaphysics, when applied to political issues, displays its synthetic basis, divided between Classic transcendental ideas and a modified Christian concept of cosmic redemption via submission to the Church's jurisdiction.

Based on the ontology defined by the synthetic and potentially 'cosmopolitan' features in its ground-motive, the medieval image of the Holy Roman Empire 'overemphasized' its political coherence and unity, considerably ignoring the existence of many practices, corporations and authorities based on feudal customs and not on legal concepts inherited from the Classical world (Ruggie, 1998: 145-151; 178-192). The precedence



of the whole over the parts, derived from that cosmological delineation, allowed one to portray those intertwined associations and authorities as mere fractions subsumed to the 'whole' of the great political community. In time, however, it was necessary to conceptually link that 'whole' to the idea of 'Christendom', inclusive of both the Holy Roman Empire and the Church. This was pursued in terms of a greater unity, "universal society to the extent that it possessed a common religion, law, and culture, and, amongst the educated classes, a common language" (Armstrong, 1993: 22). Besides providing, in terms of the nature/grace motive, a solution for the conceptual issue of coherence in the political community, the notion of Christendom also dealt with stoic cosmopolitanism whilst keeping, in a scholastic fashion, the hierarchy between Grace and Nature:

At the heart of the notion of Christendom was the idea—with roots in Roman natural law theories as well as in Christianity—that mankind was inherently unified since all men were ultimately under the same divine ruler. In so far as man could achieve unity, therefore, he was working towards the earthly goal which he had been set by God. As the Pope was God's representative on earth, he could claim universal dominion over lesser, temporal rulers (Armstrong, 1993: 21)².

A final facet of convenience in the concept of Christendom worth mentioning is its ability to serve as a reference point, despite the behavior of emerging modern States, which tried their hand at policies displaying an independent character from the Empire (Perkins, 2004: 21).

The unifying potential of scholastic ontology on issues of political community was also instrumentally shaped by the difference between what was 'inside' and 'outside' of Christendom. The notion of coherence in world order from the point of view of external differences, clearly visible in the case of the Crusades and later in the conquest of the New World, also problematized this concept of unity. In the latter case, the greatest challenge was, perhaps, trying to justify the expansion of Christendom via conquest. This had to be pursued in a double strategy of legitimating conquest whilst avoiding the context of the post-Reformation wars of religion to jeopardize the claims. After all, a justification for deposing native political order in the New World based on religious principles would sound dangerously similar to the Protestant theories of resistance against 'tyrannical' Catholic rulers (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: 47ff). Fortunately for the Church schoolmen, the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, the most powerful State involved in the conquest of the New World converged under the authority of Charles V. This contingency reduced the institutional obstacle to conceptual unity (Keene, 2005: 120-121). Early Modern Roman Catholic legal theorists addressed with scholastic rigor the issue of whether it was legitimate to rule over natives in the New World. Those in favor of enslaving them made their case emphasizing a more purely 'Aristotelian' point of view, while Jesuits such as Vitoria and Las Casas defended a mitigated view of the difference between Christendom and those 'outsiders'. Here, unity with reference to 'outside' was reinforced in terms of 'human community' linked by the law of nature

² In particular, the authority of the Pope in theory and practice was always linked to Grace, though some formulations favoured a more political role for the Papacy.



(Wight, 1991: 69-73). The scholastic response to the thesis of the Aristotelian party once again placed Grace over Nature, reiterating the Church's ultimate duty: the natives were not like irrational animals, as the Aristotelians thought. On the contrary, the unity of all human beings mediated by natural law was reinforced, but the difference in relation to those 'outside' was attributed to the need they had to mature in the use of that right. For instance, they practiced cannibalism, contrary to the role of humans in the hierarchy of the natural world (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: 58-65). The Christian duty towards them, through missionary activity involved in the conquest, would be to 'teach' or 'catechize' the natives in the New World, making Grace lead Nature once more, in order to perfect their life under the law of nature.

IV. The Protestant Phase: Continuity and Rupture Towards Plurality

The union, under Charles V, between Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, eventually came to an end in the division of the imperial dynasty into a Spanish and an Austrian branch. This strengthened European States, increasing the uneasiness in the theoretical search for unity in Christendom formerly represented by the Empire (McCulloch, 2004: 277). In this and many other academic issues of the time, the synthesis of the nature/grace ground-motive was severely weakened, and upheld more by the institutional authority of the Church than intellectual reasoning. Within the Church itself, nominalists had already proposed a breach in that synthesis, as they considered the Aristotelian element a blemish for the Christian dogma and its applications (Quigley, 1979: 344-348; Kenny, 2004-07 II: 201-213)³. However, it was the Reformation and the Renaissance that more vehemently questioned the institutional factor responsible for keeping the flame of scholastic synthesis. Besides this external questioning, the reorientation of the thought-community in its ground-motive (in either Protestant or humanistic directions) also broke away from scholastic synthesis. Nevertheless, the elements of that ground-motive became (separately) references for Early Modern Christian humanism, including Protestant theoretical thought directly connected to Luther and the initial stage of the Reformation.

During this first stage, the academic community emphasized the reformulation of dogma and the church-polity, amongst other pressing issues. Despite great activism in the dissemination of Protestant political and religious pamphlets, those early notions were still based on Nature and Grace as a transcendental idea, though it considered them opposites rather than synthesized under the authority of the Roman Church (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 139-141). The result was the emergence of a new way of politically applying this ground-motive, but now its two core elements were separated as they were in late medieval nominalism. In other words, early Protestant political thought surprisingly emulated certain facets of Roman-Catholic thought, even to its religious root, despite their theological differences. Dealing with each of these basic elements (Nature and Grace) separately, the theoretical manifestation of Protestantism in politics deepened the tension between 'world' and 'the Church' without necessarily attempting to equal the Christian institutionalized community to the latter. A similar strategy was adopted in the Christian humanism of Melancthon, Agricola and Erasmus, yet the motive of 'Nature' was heavily influenced by the Renaissance ideal of

³ See the next section for more on nominalism.



returning to history, literature and Classical philosophy. The religious sphere, on the other hand, was viewed more introspectively (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 142-143).

Luther's political opinions are an example of how Nature and Grace were still references for early Protestant theoretical thought, with significant increase in the tension between the two poles, treated as antithetical (Dooyeweerd, 1997: 132-133). In his writings to condemn the peasant rebellions which broke out in the Holy Roman Empire (rebellions started supposedly in the name of the Reformation), Luther develops, as a basis for his argument, an opposition between two realms corresponding to Nature and Grace – respectively, Law and Gospel (Luther, 2002: 206-207). Following Augustinian thought, the Law applies to the fallen world, corrupted by original sin, and serves as condemnation to sinners. Divine saving grace transfers the Christian from the kingdom of the Law to the kingdom of the Gospel, freeing one from the Law. From this point, one starts to live according to the 'new commandment' of loving God and neighbor. The Law exists because of sin. In the world of grace, sin is a thing of the past. The Law, however, continues to serve as reference but restricted to the fallen world. By implication, civil magistrates and political order belong to this world, have their own internal logic and serve the purpose of limiting human sin and protecting the Christian community from the effects of sin. This is not to say that Christians do not sin, but they are no longer under condemnation and the 'internal logic' of the realm of the Law (Luther, 2002: 208-209). Thus, politics is not a Christian prerogative by necessity and Christians should obey the authorities. Moreover, the possibility of a markedly Christian political theory is denied because it belongs to the realm of the Law. The only possible thing in this regard is a Christian ethics of the 'new commandment' of love (see Brunner, 2003).

Early Protestant theoretical thought, similar in many respects to Luther's formulation, displays considerable continuity with the transcendental ideas of Nature and Grace. Some commentators even allude to a 'Protestant scholasticism'. Sudduth (2009: part I), for example, emphasizes the surprising Protestant emulation in academic arguments in defense of the Christian faith, showing how several authors initially depended on the Thomist-Aristotelian legacy and employed 'natural theology' as basis for their apologetics. In the area of politics, Grabill (2006) indicates a trace of synthesis in the Protestant use of Classical notions of natural law. Luther himself declared he was a "member of the Ockham school" (a late medieval Roman Catholic nominalist) and on occasion we are reminded of the fact (Kropatscheck, 1900; Dooyeweerd, 1997: 132). It is not surprising, then, that Lutheran thinkers, especially later in the 17th century (e.g. Thomasius), reacted to the horrors of European religious conflicts (including the Thirty Years' War) and made their case for the *synthetic* reunification of the Church and the Holy Roman Empire. Of course, these normative claims were advanced in a way that was rather critical of the Papacy, emphasized practical purposes and aimed at the pursuit of a 'general peace' – all that assuming some autonomy for the sphere of the Law. A humanistic perspective on 'Nature' influenced those thinkers, but the fact is that, in political thought, the ground-motive of early Protestantism maintained its duality of Nature and Grace. It is therefore difficult to find evidence of a return to the old Christian radical ground-motive of creation/fall/redemption in Protestant political thought, despite parallel theological efforts to move in that direction due to the Protestant emphasis on the Biblical text instead of intellectual tradition as the key basis for dogmatic theology.



It was Calvin, together with other authors from the 'Reformed' wing of Protestants, who began to recover those radical Biblical transcendental ideas as the guideline for a new worldview. This would imply a new ontology meant to direct several areas of theoretical research. In the Reformed worldview and theoretical thought, the Christian dualism of scholasticism and earlier Protestantism are replaced by ontological *pluralism*. In Calvin's *Institutes*, sparks of a plural view of reality arise from his theoretical and dogmatic recovery of the radical aspect of the Biblical ground-motive. In this well-known treatise, 'creation' is portrayed in terms of God's independence from anything outside Himself (Calvino, 1999 I: 17-18), though He actively preserves the order of creation (Calvino 1999 I:47), having established a diversity of laws that constrain and enable creation, but not himself. The 'fall' represents the deep shift of direction of the human heart, away from any search for the glory of God. Like Augustine, Calvin sees the powerful depth of the effects of sin, which can only be reverted by God's power. Salvation can only come through faith, but human corruption is such that faith must be granted as a manifestation of His special grace to the elect. Due to their original sin, human beings cannot naturally believe. Their rebellion is only overcome by God Himself, who decides who will be saved. Calvin further develops the theme of 'redemption' when he explains that, following the radical shift experienced by Christians through faith, each aspect of life should also be placed at the service of God (Calvino, 1999 II: 183-188). Politics, thus, is an integral part of Christian life and should be understood, as everything else, according to God's biblical revelation, bearing in mind how the structures of creation are connected. Despite laying the foundations for later Reformed social thought, Calvin dedicated little space to politics in his work. The passage that deals with it, however, is quite intense. It affirms a plurality of social spheres and theorizes the rights and duties of citizens and magistrates, including the right to orderly resistance in case of abuse of power (Calvino, 1999 II: 186; 1167-1194).

Many Reformed thinkers pursued, since early days, a political theory derived from the new ontological basis of what Witte (2007) considers to be the true "Reformation of rights". Such effort had sundry implications for Western society. However, it was the profoundly innovative work of Johannes Althusius that took this Early Modern development to its culmination point. He employed the new principles in his interpretation of the Holy Roman Empire and its place in society. In his main work, *Politica*, the pluralist ontology influenced by the Biblical transcendental ideas of creation/fall/redemption is translated into a remarkable, insightful and carefully orchestrated system of political thought (Carney, 1995: xiv). The author uses the Biblical ground-motive as leverage for his argument. The vision of the Holy Roman Empire in *Politica* emerges as a consequence of the general formulation, an illustration of key items such as the 'universal community' and its historical and legal foundation. The Empire plays a secondary role in Althusius' thought, but we should note the relevance of the wider argument for the discussion of that political institution, and for issues like the limits to governmental power and the right to resist tyranny. The following key themes of *Politica* reflect the Christian pluralist ontology presupposed by the author: the definition of politics as 'symbiosis', the divine origin of plurality within society and, finally, the denial that there is an absolute authority on earth⁴.

⁴ This last item involves Althusius' opposition to the theory of sovereignty advocated by Jean Bodin and his contemporaries.



The first theme discussed by Althusius (1995: 17) is the definition of politics. In his definition, the idea of plurality of association and the normative-redemptive character of political practice are obvious. Both concepts are influential in Althusius' thought and are included in his initial words: "Politics is the art of associating (*consosciandi*) men for the purpose of establishing, cultivating and conserving social life among them". The nature of this bond between people is explained using the metaphor of 'symbiosis'. At a primary level, political association concerns survival, given that it is impossible to live in complete. At a more complex level, the practice of political association is also linked with redeeming features of social life, such as cooperation and love for one's neighbor (Althusius, 1995: 23). Either way, symbiosis leads to different associations with the purpose of "communicating necessary and useful things (...) to the general good and welfare". From a normative perspective, it is clear that Althusius does not define politics as something that simply happens. It is true that politics most exist for survival but, viewed as an "art", it goes beyond mere survival and has the potential to provide a certain quality in social life. Politics is not just any type of interaction. It is not the same thing as merely living as a group. It requires a specific arrangement of society so that things, services and rights necessary to an integral life are properly "communicated" (Althusius, 1995: 19-24). In this concept of symbiosis, it becomes evident that associations therefore have a crucial importance in political life. Politics, as such, is a normative-redemptive concept because it requires a disposition to "communicate" these factors adequately.

The heart of the matter, then, is to obtain a social arrangement that allows for politics following these conditions for symbiosis. In this second important theme, Althusius explains how the notion of a divine Origin of societal plurality is connected to symbiosis. There are many types of needs in life, a fact that results from the way God created human beings under a plurality of laws in nature. Besides living together in groups because of those necessities, people create different *types* of association. The latter, in turn, meet the different types of necessity in life by 'communicating' those things, services and rights necessary to the development of an integral life. In general, people join associations by means of consent. Each of these groups has an inner set of rules, authority and roles to function (Althusius, 1995: 20-22). This argument is made evident and applied in different types of associations (family, guilds, churches and public associations like cities). Althusius (1995: 143) distinguishes three main types of associations: natural (e.g. family), civil (e.g. professional associations) and public (e.g. provinces). These groups are different in terms of role and internal structure. Each association has a "calling" given by God, a potential that should be actively unfolded. To summarize: God created human beings who need to live in community. Different associations must meet different types of needs, derived from the order of divine creation. When the associations meet such needs effectively, the resulting social framework may be called 'symbiotic' and the relations, 'political'. This means that the development of the art of politics requires us to acknowledge the structure of God's creation and that society be arranged with reference to those structures so as to fulfill the 'redemptive' calling of societal plurality.

The third relevant theme concerns the limits of political authority. Just as the structures of divine creation and the need to live socially in a certain way (adjusting it to these structures in order to obtain 'symbiosis') are elements influenced by the Biblical motif of creation/fall/redemption, Althusius makes his religious assumptions also very salient



here. A plural structure of creation, always relative to the Creator and always limited in itself, is intertwined in all its aspects. Each association used to unfold these aspects in human life has, within the limits of its inner 'logic', a structure of authority that is *only* responsible for the area of 'specialization' of that association. Ideally, an association's authority will never go beyond its sphere. In that case, we would see a multiple exercise of authorities in social life, each instance restricted to its own 'calling' and perhaps actualized in some sort of 'covenant'. In his analysis of public associations (electoral colleges, courts, town halls, etc.) Althusius (1995: 39-40) makes it clear that each is restricted to providing public justice through the power of the sword. Within this public side of social life, many associations gradually emerge layer by layer in a 'bottom-up' fashion. Cities, then, are part of provinces, which, if covenanted, will form the "universal public association" (Althusius, 1995: 66). On the other hand, this universal community is not the 'whole' formed by families, guilds and churches. Unlike scholasticism and Aristotelianism, Althusius' societal pluralism only establishes a whole-part relation when the inner 'logic' of associations on both sides is the same (Ossewaarde, 2007: 113ff). In this example, public authority (the universal public association) differs from religious (churches) or professional authority (guilds). They are wholes in themselves. However, a city may be called a part of a province, for sharing its public character but differing in scope. There is, by implication, no ultimate authority over things except God Himself. All other sorts of 'authority' are relative to 'sphere' and 'level'.

Besides providing a theoretical narrative explaining the emergence of States through the intertwining of public associations, Althusius furthers his theory of universal public association and the limitations of its authority structures, using the case of the Holy Roman Empire to illustrate the concept. He attributes sovereignty to that association, because in its territory there is no other public authority equal or higher than the Empire (Althusius, 1995: 69). Considering the inner arrangement of each layer of public associations, the image arising from the intertwining of all associations is rather different from the humanistic concept of 'social contract'. The latter presupposes a complete separation between individuals and the State. The universal association, in turn, is created considering inferior structures of public authority and without negatively affecting the other *types* of association. Sovereignty belongs to the "people", *i.e.*, "not (...) to individual members but to all members joined together" (1995: 70). Althusius is sometimes regarded as a Rousseau-like defender of popular sovereignty, but he is very clear when he says the 'people' or 'members' for him are "not (...) individual men, families or collegia, as in a private or a particular public association. Instead, members are many cities, provinces, and regions agreeing among themselves, on a single body constituted by mutual union and communication" (Althusius, 1995: 67). The concept of 'people', therefore, corresponds to those public associations that unite to form the State. Two limits are imposed on state authority, then: the restriction of providing public justice alone, and the sovereignty of the 'people', represented in the body of magistrates immediately under the level of the universal association.

The 'vision' that Althusius has of the Empire as a universal public association is, thus, very similar to the situation in the United Provinces. In his professional experience as a lower magistrate in the city of Emden (between Germany and the Netherlands), Althusius had to vindicate his city, more than once, against the excesses of provincial authorities. The third edition of his work (1614) is dedicated to the leaders of his own



province's resistance during the long period of the Dutch Revolt against Spanish domination, which officially ended in the same year when the Treaties of Westphalia were signed (Carney, 1995: xi-xii). Public resistance was a familiar situation for the author. It is clear that his concept of universal public association has a 'redemptive' character, just like his definition of politics. Human institutions must conform to divine calling and the structure of creation. Keeping sovereignty with the body of magistrates is a means to ensure that, in case of abuse of authority, there will be pre-established possibilities of resistance through the public power of the lower magistrates (Althusius, 1995: 196-197). Althusius' argument, as explained by Grabill (2006: 122-123), was deemed potentially dangerous, both by those defending a concentration of imperial power and those advocating absolutism at the local level. The theory of resistance that legitimized the Dutch Revolt could possibly be applied to the Empire or even its smaller provinces. Due to these implications, after Althusius' death his theory was for centuries completely ostracized.

V. Humanism: Science, Personality and Politics

As we have seen previously, there are many similarities between early humanism (mainly in its more religious strand) and the late medieval anti-scholastic movement. In fact, Hardt and Negri (2000: 72) notice a sharp separation between Nature and Grace in nominalism, which broke once for all the scholastic synthesis in its dualistic religious ground-motive: the production of knowledge, as a result, "shifted from the transcendent plane to the immanent". The realm of Grace was not completely eliminated from life as a whole, at least in early humanism, but 'privatized'. From late medieval anti-scholasticism and Christian humanism an introspective idea of religiosity emerges. The temporal realm, in turn, is conceptually separated from the religious, acquiring a certain 'logic' of its own, based on the Renaissance ideal of free personality (Boucher, 1998: 118). Both factors have clear influence in nominalistic political theory and its 'vision of the Empire'.

In Dante Alighieri, for example, for humanity as a whole (Christians and non-Christians alike) there should be one universal government providing freedom to citizens and their intellectual fulfillment, the greatest of all goods within the temporal political scope (Dante, 1863; Ullmann, 1975: 278). Marsilius of Padua goes further and denies the Church the right to be involved in secular life and issues of government. Thus he avoided a transcendental feature in his view of the Origin of government by placing it under the consent of governed citizens (Ullmann, 1975: 283; Marsilius, 2005). According to Nederman (2003: 130), this forerunner of humanism already recognizes the "temporal advantage as a fundamental and entirely legitimate goal of human conduct", presenting "the purpose of all living creatures", also in politics, in terms of "self-preservation". The whole theoretical framework is then applied to the case of the Holy Roman Empire, portrayed as the result of the consent and will of the group of citizens (Marsiglio, 1993). In late Christian humanism, both introspective religiosity and the treatment of Nature are definitely seen in light of the ideal of free personality through emphasis on education. We see this clearly operating in the 'internationalist' thought of Erasmus of Rotterdam and other famous 'irenists', such as John Amos Comenius. These examples suggest that Christian humanism, with its focus on a



temporal internal logic, sought for the ultimate principles of politics (including its 'vision of the Empire') within the immanent realm of Nature.

With time, the religious ground-motive of humanistic thought crystallized around Nature (now autonomous) and human Freedom "absolutely independent of every 'supernatural power'" (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 152). The autonomous person would, sooner or later, "take his fate into his own hands". Hardt and Negri (2000: 70-71) describe the comprehensive nature of that "affirmation of the powers of *this* world" as a "revolution":

humans declared themselves masters of their own lives, producers of cities and history, and inventors of heavens. They inherited a dualistic consciousness, a hierarchical vision of society, and a metaphysical idea of science; but they handed down to future generations an experimental idea of science, a constituent conception of history and cities, and they posed being as an immanent terrain of knowledge and action.

The main consequence of this "secularizing process that denied divine and transcendent authority over worldly affairs", according to them, is that "human knowledge became a doing, a practice of transforming nature" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 72), i.e., the ideal of free human personality served as an impulse to the ideal of control over nature, both being key elements of the Freedom motive.

This is the Freedom pole in the transcendental ideas of humanism. The Nature motive, in turn, is completely different from the view presupposed in previous theoretical strands. After the break from scholastic synthesis, it was also altered by the 'mechanistic' worldview and the great advances in physics and calculus at the onset of the Modern Era (Shapin, 1996: 12-64). The mathematical approach to nature led to a metatheoretical normative criterion for the production of knowledge in specialized disciplines. In order to serve the ideal of control fostered by the Freedom motive, the human mind should make an effort to discover all the mechanisms or 'laws' of reality (Hooykaas, 1972: 13-19). The use of this guideline in politics took some time. During the earlier development of the Nature/Freedom motive we can find a 'historicist' focus in early classical humanists like Francesco Guicciardini or Niccolò Machiavelli as far as social life is concerned (Tuck, 1993: 171). Despite this, Femia (2003: 150) comments Machiavelli's work stating that

"There is [...] no trace of Aristotelian or Christian theology, nor reference to any ideal order [...], to any culminating fulfilment towards which creation moves. There is no discernible assumption of the existence of divine law; the only natural laws Machiavelli mentions are laws of physical necessity".

While initially the contingent character of society was emphasized in the favoring of historical knowledge, the secularization of thought and the mechanistic view of nature



ensured, starting with the first humanists, an openness that would later apply a 'mathematical' view to politics.

Just like all its dualistic predecessors, classical humanism also displays a deep tension between its two core poles. Freedom, investigated under the guidance of the new scientific ideal of control, resorts to the mechanistic view of Nature. The more control we have over the world, the freer we are (Shapin, 1996: 119-135)⁵. However, the inflation of this ideal of control so as to understand society in terms of modern mathematical criteria ultimately means the explanation of all mechanisms of reality, thus denying any autonomy – a denial of the Freedom motive! (Kalsbeek, 1975: 137-141). This tension between theoretical determinism based on a 'mechanistic' view of Nature and the Freedom motive moved soon to the center of the history of humanistic thought. René Descartes, for example, denied the ultimate subjection of the 'ego' to the mechanical world, linking rationality and morality to that 'ego' in an indissoluble duality of Origin. The whole Cartesian system, including the separation between subject and object, derives from that double transcendental idea. Thomas Hobbes, on the other hand, aimed to abide by the theoretical implications of his own 'mechanistic' ontology, reducing all cosmic diversity to his postulated Origin – the physical laws of the universe (see Dooyeweerd, 1979: 153-154). Hobbesian 'internationalist' thought is based on the same principle, theorizing the State a 'body' clashing with other political 'bodies' and subject to the mechanical laws of motion (see Skillen, 2003: 322-324).

Humanistic political theory based on the Nature/Freedom antithesis took into account the need to extend the ideal of control to the State, given the political and religious convulsions of that period. Jean Bodin's theory of centralized and indivisible sovereignty, presented as a solution for the struggle among internal factions, was widely accepted (Eulau, 1941: 646). Hobbes presented a similar proposal but added the 'mechanistic' view of society, which was already a powerful tool on at least three accounts. First, humanistic secularization or 'immanentization' of politics presented a viable alternative to the internal struggle in Europe between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism(s), changing the idea of Origin into something that the 'neutral' and universal use of reason could apprehend. Even though Early Modern theorists keep 'God' in their vocabulary, the idea of natural law is highly neutralized by the new scientific way of reasoning. Hugo Grotius, for example, is perfectly able to state that the basis for natural law is human reason, nevertheless consistent with divine character (mind the concession), but even if God did not exist, natural law would still be valid (Grotius 2005:89). Dengerink (1978: 16) comments this passage saying that, for Grotius, "natural law, in the last analysis, is a product of human reason". G. W. Leibniz will go much further and reduce everything, including God, to essences that are co-eternal with Him and which He cannot resist. "It is important to recall", says Riley (1988: 6), "that, for Leibniz, God operates within limits". One of these limitations is justice, defined in terms of geometric harmony between love for one's neighbor and the use of wisdom. Such is the idea of Origin, in the Leibnizian system, of the State whose end is to allow the "empire of reason" (Leibniz, quoted in Riley, 1988: 23). In Leibniz and Grotius, autonomous reason acquires a central place. These cases illustrate the first type of influence of the new 'immanent' approach to natural laws.

⁵ There is also a considerable volume of scientific production outside the humanistic ground-motive. Early Modern science is not synonymous for 'humanistic thought' (Pearcey and Thaxton, 1994).



Secondly, the universalization of the mathematical method in the classic humanistic view of Nature gave political theory a certain neutrality and precision beyond theological quarrels permeating the Early Modern practice and study of 'international' relations. We notice this feature in the geometric-deductive and arithmetic methods. Baruch Spinoza, Grotius, Leibniz, Samuel Pufendorf (at least in the beginning) and many others described their arguments as Euclidian systems deduced from initial axioms. Dengerink (1978: 15), describing Grotius' method, calls it "purely deductive, after the fashion of geometry". Another use of this type of theorization by Early Modern humanists is their emphasis on the primacy of the parts over the whole (arithmetically inverting the Aristotelian relation inherited from scholasticism). This perspective was instrumental in the several attempts to reconcile the ideal of free personality with the ideal of control through the fiction of the 'social contract', hypothetically signed by a group of free individuals (or linked parties or the voluntary 'sum' forming a whole). Only in Pufendorf does the State finally acquire legal abstract personality, becoming a series of covenants between its many parts (Boucher, 1998: 236-238). The primacy of geometrical and arithmetical abstractions in the intellectual milieu strengthened the deductive mode of theorization and the notion of 'sets' fully emerging from their parts.

This procedure, applied to the analysis of society as a whole, was also present in the study of relations between different States. Conceived in light of the 'mechanistic' worldview, the State is defined as a closed set clashing with the other States or, as Hobbes defines, a 'body politic' subject to the same physical laws as the rest of the universe. It is not surprising that the same argument used in the analysis and synthesis of the 'state of nature' leading to the social contract is 'transposed' to relations between states. Although the Early Modern 'international' is based on the so-called 'domestic analogy', this does not mean that the 'outside' is a perfect mirror of what allegedly occurs 'inside' at the hypothetical moment of the social contract (Walker, 1993). One of the differences between the set of individuals in the state of nature and the set of States in the international system is the fact that States supposedly 'solved' the internal problem of order and security and are, therefore, able to defend themselves more adequately than individuals in the state of nature. This was the argument used by Pufendorf against the implication that only a world State could deal with international anarchy (Boucher, 1998: 239). To this, Grotius adds the concept of 'international society', conceived, also contractually, with basis on natural law (see Bull, 1977). In any case, it was widely accepted that States had the power to pursue stability using strategies like the balance of power or military alliances. By implication, there was no need for a universal centralized entity. Thus, though the same principle of survival and self-interest may be applied in both domestic and international politics, each level requires its own considerations, presenting yet another facet of the dialectic relation between the ideal of control and the ideal of free personality.

Defining the Holy Roman Empire as a polity, especially after the changes facilitated by Westphalia, was one of the great enigmas of humanistic 'internationalist' thought. Most theorists regarded scholastic and Classical thought as inferior to the mathematical approach. However, Aristotelian categories were still popular in the classification of political communities. Besides the insightful, yet ignored, proposal by Althusius, the available 'visions of the Empire' revolved around the Aristotelian concepts of monarchy, aristocracy or a mixture of both. The problem consisted in reconciling the already crystallized definition of sovereignty proposed by Bodin with the double claim of



sovereignty by the Empire, on the one hand, and the German princes on the other. This idea of sovereignty, if strictly maintained, would threaten the power of the local princes and favor the Emperor or, alternatively, reduce the Empire to a military alliance and favor the princes. This was yet another 'puzzle' derived from the tension between control and freedom in the humanistic religious ground-motive.

The cases of Pufendorf and Leibniz are particularly illuminating. Pufendorf sees in sovereignty, described by Bodin and Hobbes, as "the defining characteristic of a State", and even proposes a distinction between regular and irregular States, in which only regular polities have "unified and effective" sovereignty, reducing irregular States to failed attempts at providing security for citizens (Seidler 2007:xvii-xviii). Pufendorf (2007: 176-177), denying any applicability of the Aristotelian categories of aristocracy and monarchy to the Empire, is led to conclude that "*Germany is an Irregular Body, and like some mis-shapen Monster*" (*monstro simile*), which, nevertheless tends more to a "system of States" (i.e. a military alliance) than a unified monarchy. Eulau (1941: 657-658) comments on the humanistic procedure which leads to that conclusion, stating that:

Pufendorf's method [...] consisted in juristic and logical deductions from a priori conceived assumptions. He unconditionally accepted the views of Bodin and Hobbes on the absolute unity and complete independence of the sovereign state. From the nature of state thus conceived, he deduced its sovereignty; from the nature of sovereignty, its indivisibility; and from this indivisibility, the monstrosity of any state supposedly composed of other states. A state cannot contain within itself several other states.

Pufendorf's advice is simply that there should be a greater coordination among the members of the Empire so that it truly fulfils its purpose of being a military alliance and becomes an effective system of States.

Leibniz, on the other hand, was not satisfied with the traditional concept of sovereignty. Criticizing the abstraction of the Hobbesian view, since "no people in civilized Europe is ruled by the laws that he has proposed" (Leibniz, 1988: 118), Leibniz suggests that "the position of the Emperor is a little more elevated than one commonly thinks" (1988: 111). He explains the emergence of States and of the Empire based on the need for coordination in the administration of larger territories. He states that the right to territorial jurisdiction (*Landeshoheit*) of those princes able to lead their own army and in control of a considerable extension of land corresponds to the kind of sovereignty one may find in many countries outside the Empire (1988: 114-117). He establishes the difference between a confederation (military alliance) and a union, stating that in the latter there is a permanent "administration, with some power over the members [...]. Here I say exists a state" (Leibniz, 1988: 117). As for the 'monstrosity' referred to by Pufendorf, Leibniz declares (1988: 119) that these are "monsters similar to those kept by the Dutch and the Polish and by the English and even by the Spanish and the French". In Pufendorf, the traditional idea of sovereignty is maintained as an axiom of the whole system, leading to the Empire being classified as a sub-optimal solution for the dilemma between control and freedom. That problem



can only be solved based on a contract among the parties so that the whole system becomes more effective. Leibniz's proposal, in turn, is arithmetic: sovereignty loses its unitary feature and is divided between main and secondary parts. This fractioning allows the Empire to be classified as a sovereign State, a kind of predecessor of the federal State.

VI. Final Remarks

The Classical Form/Matter motive influenced the scholastic view of Nature, synthesized under the realm of Grace. The core ideas of Nature/Grace, together with the Aristotelian primacy of the whole over the parts and stoic cosmopolitanism, shaped the framework for medieval political thought and later scholastics. This included the concept of Christendom and the coordination between the universal political jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire and the spiritual rule of the Papacy. The synthesis of the medieval ground-motives followed its course under the institutional authority of the Church until the onset of the Modern Era. The Reformation, however, allowed for alternatives in Christian humanism and in Protestant thought in general. Though many Protestants kept their scholarship surprisingly close to Roman Catholicism, some in the Reformed branch developed a pluralist ontological system, from which they derived a perspective on society in accordance with their radically Biblical assumptions. In classical humanism, on the other hand, a more secularized theory of Nature together with mathematical elements constrained political theory in terms of both method and content. Facing the issue of reconciling the ideal of control with the ideal of freedom inherent to this new ground-motive, humanists never fully escaped the ultimate questions related to the Origin of cosmic existence, coherence and diversity. The 'long-term' analysis developed here allowed me to illustrate how religious assumptions tacitly influence ontological models on which specialized theorization depends. Whether explicit or implicit, these presuppositions of pre-theoretical *reconnection* with transcendental ideas of Origin have always influenced 'internationalist' political thought.

Both the Holy Roman Empire, and general notions of international order (including the unity and diversity of political communities) operate as a more or less stable point of comparison between distinct trends of thought. My aim was not to provide a history of the Empire or the 'international', though this analysis may eventually contribute to that end by discussing how *ideas* about the Empire and the 'international' were historically formed, shaped by their basic presuppositions. The correspondences between those *ideas* and the 'real' Empire or the 'international' are interesting, yet secondary, issues here. The most important point was, rather, the exploration of the Reformational notion that there is a strong link between the ultimate assumptions of theoretical thought, derived from a certain inclination to a set of transcendental ideas on Origin, and their implications for the specialized analysis of a given object. The impact of that relation cannot be denied in the case of the 'visions of the Empire' and the 'international' at the onset of the Modern Era. During that period, theories belonging to several trends of thought emerged which focused on political order relating 'inside' to 'outside' and the role of the Empire in the general scheme. The nature of 'internationalist' political thought itself, as Keene (2005: 10) affirms, involves coherence and diversity of political community. Therefore, if ontological inquiry is inevitable – as it seems to be, even



today (see Wight, 2006) – then the way in which different ontologies find their roots in religious ground-motives of theoretical thought is also worthy of our attention.

Discussions on ontology are always happening in any specialized academic discipline. In the field of International Relations, where both object of study and ways of theorizing are in constant motion, such debates are welcomed with open doors. The implications of the argument advanced here for the historiography of International Relations and International Law are manifold, and their fertile potential, remarkable. Despite this, little exploration on the theme has been attempted. From ancient times to the onset of the Modern Era, internationalist political thought has evidenced philosophical and religious roots. Any concept of the 'international' will maintain something deeply religious. The manner in which this has occurred has changed over time, but we have no indication that we will ever break completely free from that key dimension of theorization. It may well be the case that most contemporary thought on the 'international' shares a unique set of ground-motives and assumes a certain neutrality and autonomy in theoretical thought. That is still an open issue. Even in this case, it is in *that* presupposition that we find the inclination of contemporary thought towards an Origin.

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