

2017

# Dorothy Day's Distributism and Her Vision for Catholic Politics

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DOROTHY DAY'S DISTRIBUTISM AND HER VISION FOR CATHOLIC POLITICS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Political Science

by

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August 2017

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is a study of Dorothy Day's political ideas, her creation of the Catholic Worker movement, and her relationship with Distributism, the official socio-economic teaching of the Catholic Church. In order to fully understand Day's views, it is necessary to review her intellectual development, and the foundational ideas and documents of Distributism. As is noted in the introduction, precious little scholarship has been done on Distributism, and few outside of Catholic academic circles are even aware of its existence. Beyond that, Day, herself, is not especially well-known, as existing scholarship tends to focus on either her early, Socialist activities and radicalism, or her later life at the Catholic Worker. Neither emphasis includes a sustained evaluation of her political and economic beliefs vis-à-vis Distributism. After review of her writings over the course of six decades of journalism and activism, it can be shown that Day's Catholicism, her founding of the Catholic Worker, and her political vision centered around Distributism. This conclusion, alone, warrants a significant scholarly re-evaluation of Dorothy Day as a political thinker.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Dorothy Day

The central character in my dissertation is Dorothy Day. I want to examine Day's life and thought as a Distributist and as the author of a particular vision of Catholic politics. Day consistently stresses throughout her work during the Catholic Worker years that her political program is that of Distributism, and that she is attempting to wake Americans to the realities of crushing poverty, racism, and war that have dominated much of their own and world politics from the early Twentieth Century on. From her early experiences with community activism in the wake of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, Day always had a unique vision of what American society should be. This vision, although unknown to her at the time of its initial formation, is that of the socio-economic teaching of the Catholic Church, which she joined in 1927.

Any work dealing with the larger than life Dorothy Day is bound, simply by the demands of space limitations if nothing else, to omit certain aspects of her life and work. Day was an enormously complex woman, whose journey from solidly middle class, college educated Communist activist to voluntarily impoverished Catholic laborer represents in many ways an ideological odyssey that touches many shores of the Twentieth Century. Certainly, Day encountered and addressed socialism and its many variants including Marxism, Marxist-Leninist Communism, and Trotskyism, atheism, fascism, nationalism, liberal democratic capitalism, pacifism, anarchism, and classical liberalism (libertarianism).<sup>1</sup> That her experiences led her from atheism and socialism to Catholicism is nothing short of incredible. To capture the whole of her

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, as will be discussed later, Day personally knew, debated, and interviewed Leon Trotsky during his time in New York.

intellectual journey would demand a work twice, perhaps three times the size of this one. To also incorporate her biography, her journalism, and her teaching and writing would require ten more volumes. In this limited exploration of Day, I will sketch a brief biography, lingering on the intellectual milieu that informed her socialism and journey to Catholicism, then move along to her practical political beliefs and their Catholic foundations.

Where does this project fall within the realm of established scholarship, however? There is no shortage of books and journal articles dealing with the topics raised in this work:

Distributism, Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, the Inter-War Era and its intellectual currents. I shall briefly discuss the existing literature for each of the major themes, noting its content and where my own work falls in relation to it – be it a partial overlap, a new approach, or a wholly different concept. While this chapter is intended as an introduction and overview of the rest of the work, it will also serve as a brief literature review, highlighting the overall paucity of scholarship in this field.

To begin, I note that excellent biographies exist of Day, including Jim Forest's *All is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day*, Robert Coles' *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion*, and William D. Miller's *Dorothy Day: A Biography*.<sup>2</sup> Much work has also been done on the Catholic Worker movement, including Nancy L. Roberts' *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, Rosalie Riegle Troester's compilation, *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, and Marc Ellis' *A Year at the Catholic Worker*.<sup>3</sup> Another approach, sometimes seen in Catholic political scholarship, is to tie

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<sup>2</sup> Jim Forest, *All is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011); Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1987); William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Nancy L. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, (Albany, NY: State University of New Press, 1984); *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, Rosalie Riegle Troester (ed.), (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993); Marc Ellis, *A Year at the Catholic Worker*, (New York: The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 1978).

the Catholic Worker to the larger lay Catholic political movements of the 1960's and beyond; such a work as Francis J. Sicius' *The Word Made Flesh: the Chicago Catholic Worker and the Emergence of Lay Activism in the Church* is an example.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally, authors will focus on one aspect of Day's life, retelling it with a particular narrative focus: June O'Connor's *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day: A Feminist Perspective* is a superbly done biography of Day, albeit one told through the lens of second-wave feminism.<sup>5</sup>

My work is not a biography of Day. Granted, much of the above was published in the 1980's, shortly after her death, and recent scholarship on Day and the move to literally canonize her are certainly fertile grounds for an updated biography; that is a task for an American historian, however. Of course, my work does draw on the existing biographies, and on Day's own autobiographies (of which she wrote three, each addressing her life story in a different way), yet it is not an attempt at a retelling of Day's life. It is also not a retelling of the story of the Catholic Worker movement, although aspects of that story are central to my work.

Instead, my approach resembles in method, if not content or format, June O'Connor's work. None of Day's biographers or any of those who wrote about their experience with the Catholic worker such as Marc Ellis or Mark and Louise Zwick discuss in any kind of detail Day's Distributist program.<sup>6</sup> Of course, many note her Franciscan leanings, or discuss, however briefly, her dedication to lay spiritual devotion as an oblate of Saint Benedict. These things, while important to understanding Day's thought, run too far afield of a direct examination of the distributist program and Day's attempt to advance it in the American cultural-political landscape.

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<sup>4</sup> Francis J. Sicius, *The Word Made Flesh: the Chicago Catholic Worker and the Emergence of Lay Activism in the Church*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> June O'Connor, *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day: A Feminist Perspective*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Mark and Louise Zwick, *The Catholic Worker: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005).

## Distributism

In order to understand Day's program, it is necessary to understand Distributism.

Distributism is the unwieldy, but descriptive term that denotes the teachings of the Catholic Church on economics, politics, and social justice in the modern world. It was formally introduced by the Vatican in 1891, and fleshed out by later papal teachings and the work of lay authors such as G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, who devised the term "Distributism."<sup>7</sup> Neither Belloc nor Chesterton were particularly happy with the term, and Distributist scholar Joseph Pearce suggests that a better term might be subsidiarity (or subsidiarism), reflecting the vision for society encompassed by Distributism<sup>8</sup>. How useful this suggestion is, however, is debatable, as subsidiarity is, alas, another explicitly Catholic term that refers to the Church's teaching on the proper relationship between state and community. From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of *subsidiarity*, according to which "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good."<sup>9</sup>

So, while there may well be better terms to describe the theory of Distributism, none have gained wide-spread acceptance. I will, therefore, simply rely on the tried-and-true term Distributism.

This not being a work focused entirely on Distributism, I will steer firmly toward demonstrating the foundations of Distributism that Day knew of and attempted to implement. I will note the

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<sup>7</sup> The first mention of the term appears to be in Belloc's 1912 book, *The Servile State*, discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Pearce, "What is Distributism?", from *The Imaginative Conservative*, June 12, 2014, available in full online at : <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2014/06/what-is-Distributism.html> (accessed March 26, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, article 1883, citing, in part, the discussion of subsidiarity in the 1931 papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. The *Catechism* is available in full online at <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html#> (accessed March 26, 2017).



works on the subject that have preceded my own, and explain how my work addresses gaps or otherwise incorporates connections not previously explored.

Distributism, although an unwieldy term as its inventors conceded, contained within it a sense of its meaning: the widest spread distribution of property possible in a society built around a non-command economy. That is to say, economic, and, indeed political power as well, ought to be as widely distributed, as decentralized as possible. Perhaps decentralization might have been a better term to use, as distributism is a reaction against the centralizing tendencies of modernity, so dedicated as they are toward the radical accumulation of power by near-monolithic agencies (powerful national government [be it dictator, king, or president], international corporations, or shadowy non-governmental organizations).<sup>10</sup> For the Distributist, the subsidiarist model of strong local governments and localist economics are the ideal toward which leaders should aspire.

Distributism evolved in response to the twin evils of unrestrained finance capitalism and socialism. The former created unsustainable economic growth and wealth disparity that resulted in vast social unrest; the latter birthed class warfare and totalitarian politics that linger into the Twenty-First Century.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, key elements of a sustainable, humanist political theory were missing. The capitalism practiced both during the early days of Distributism and today is often missing a moral component; this is not the capitalism of Adam Smith, but rather an amoral capitalism that does not pretend to take into account any concern for right and wrong. The Socialists, on the other hand, understood society as merely a contest between owners and workers, with the ultimate triumph of the workers and the establish of an egalitarian paradise the

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<sup>10</sup> Indeed, there is great suspicion of power that runs throughout the Distributist literature, lending it something of an anarchist or libertarian flavor.

<sup>11</sup> China, Cuba, North Korea, and Venezuela are but several examples of socialist totalitarian governments.

end goal. In both cases, key elements of human nature are missing from the theory: the need for family and community, the drive for justice, and the spiritual dimension of human existence. The vision of Man proposed by the capitalist and the Socialist is *homo economicus*, in which Man is merely an economic creature, lacking a spiritual nature. In some respects, this harkens back to the Monophysite and Nestorian heresies of the Fourth and Fifth Century.<sup>12</sup> At the root of both ideologies is a philosophical anthropology that directly challenges that proposed by Christianity.

Distributism is an attempt to redress the errors made by political leaders of the Nineteenth Century. It is a proposed route to aligning the values of the past with the realities of the present. The Distributist literature advances a conception of human society based on the traditional family, with the small, the local, and the sustainable praised over the large, the global, and the unsustainable. At the heart of Distributism is the desire for human communities to live in harmony with each other and with nature.<sup>13</sup> There is both an agrarian and a conservationist element to much of Distributist literature, and preserving the beauty and uniqueness of the natural world is a key goal. Given that corporate capitalism has often demonstrated a casual disregard for conservation, it is no surprise that Distributism is at odds with it. At the same time, the environmental track record of many Socialist regimes is also very poor as seen in the utter ruin of East Germany during the era of the People's Democratic Republic, recent projects undertaken by the People's Republic of China such as Three Gorges Dam, and the lamentable state of parts of the old Soviet Union such as the Aral Sea.

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<sup>12</sup> Eric Voegelin, in particular, has discussed the Gnostic and heretical Christian roots of certain political ideologies.

<sup>13</sup> And, it is worth noting, that living in harmony with nature does not mean conquering or drastically altering nature to suit the whims of humanity.

Finally, it should be noted that, as Thomas Storck observes, Distributism is as much a cultural as a political program.<sup>14</sup> Its success is not measured solely by victory at the hustings, nor by triumph in the courts, but rather by a cultural strategy that intends to create gradual political change.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, many Distributists, such as Dorothy Day, disavowed formal political efforts to bring about the restoration of society. Distributism is, in a very real sense, a political theory, albeit one less concerned with direct political action, as with grassroots cultural change. In this respect, it shares something of approach, if not result, with anarchism and libertarianism. This is, perhaps, yet another reason to reconsider Day's vision of politics, as her dedication to the Distributist project places her not amongst the Socialists (authoritarians and centralizers), but rather amongst the decentralizing libertarians and Old Right conservatives (now known as paleo-conservatives).

In order to discuss Distributism, I will review the major contributors and their works chronologically, beginning with the earliest works on this topic, those that appeared contemporaneously with or shortly after the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, the first Distributist document. Issued on May 15, 1891, *Rerum* incorporated insights from Tomaso Zigliara, a Corsican Dominican, Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel, Freiherr von Ketteler, a German parliamentarian, and Henry Edward, Cardinal Manning, an English convert. Zigliara, a professor of philosophy and leading scholar of Thomism, championed (and likely co-authored) the earlier encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, formally recognizing Thomism as the official philosophy of the Catholic Church, and contributed to the epistemological, ethical, and metaphysical foundation of

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Storck, *Christendom and the West: Essays on Culture, Society, and History*, (Springfield, VA: Four Faces Press, 1999), 28 – 32, 34 – 36, 121 – 125.

<sup>15</sup> And, as noted elsewhere, there is similarity in approach to the controversial “Benedict Option” proposed by Eastern Orthodox political theorist Rod Dreher in his book of the same name.

*Rerum*.<sup>16</sup> Baron von Ketteler, a veteran of German politics, and an active opponent of the Prussian state and its anti-Catholic chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, contributed to the economic and social aspects of *Rerum*.<sup>17</sup> Manning, experienced in labor relations and the practical needs of the working class, contributed the theory of labor and class relations that forms the foundation of *Rerum*.<sup>18</sup>

The earliest works of Distributist authors other than those involved with the creation of *Rerum* were those of Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. Both British authors sought to expand on the principles of *Rerum* by fleshing them out into both a critique of the existing liberal/Socialist paradigm and a functional theory of society. Chesterton began his advocacy by initially criticizing existing systems in the 1905 work, *Heretics*; this was followed by his most profound statement of beliefs in the 1908 *Orthodoxy*.<sup>19</sup> Belloc also criticized the liberal and Socialist systems in the 1912 book, *The Servile State*; there are similarities in both argument and conclusion between this work and Friedrich Hayek's 1944 book, *The Road to Serfdom*.<sup>20</sup> Belloc produced a further work on Distributism meant to educate the audience about the practicalities of economics in the 1924 book, *Economics for Helen*.<sup>21</sup> Both authors spent significant time

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<sup>16</sup> Benedict Ashley, O.P., *The Dominicans*, "The Age of Compromise," (Chicago, IL: New Priory Press, 2012). Available in full online at: <http://opcentral.org/blog/the-age-of-compromise-1800s/> (accessed March 18, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm Emmanuel, Freiherr von Ketteler, "The Labor Question and Christianity," from volume 3 of *German History in Documents and Images*, Jeremiah Reimer (trans.), (Washington, D.C.: The German Historical Institute, 2012). Available in full online at: [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/6\\_EL\\_Catholic%20View\\_von%20Ketteler.pdf](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/6_EL_Catholic%20View_von%20Ketteler.pdf) (accessed March 18, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Vincent Allen McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: The Public Life and Influences, 1865-1892*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>19</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2006); *Orthodoxy*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Mudhouse Art and Literature, 2017). Chesterton's 1904 novel, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, shows profoundly Distributist leanings, although at this point, Chesterton had not yet committed to the idea formally.

<sup>20</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State*, (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007); F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Hayek credits Belloc's work as an inspiration in *The Road to Serfdom*. Brian Douglass of the Mises Institute discusses the connection between the earlier work, and Hayek's later blueprint for liberty in the 2009 short article "On the Road to the Servile State," available online at <https://mises.org/library/road-servile-state> (accessed March 19, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *Economics for Helen*, (Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2004).

debating with others regarding the merits of Distributism; Chesterton's debates with George Bernard Shaw are the stuff of legend, and Belloc tackled figures such as H. G. Wells and G.G. Coulton.<sup>22</sup> Of course, as journalists, both also contributed much on Distributism to newspapers and magazines such as *The New Witness* and *The American Review* (before its publisher, Seward Collins, outed himself as a fascist). Later works by both authors defending Distributism include *What's Wrong with the World* (1910), *The Outline of Sanity* (1926), and *Avowals and Denials* (1934) by Chesterton, and *The Cruise of the Nona* (1925), *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (1936), and *The Crisis of Civilization* (1937) by Belloc.<sup>23</sup>

Although other writers contributed to Distributist literature following *Rerum*, Belloc and Chesterton stand as the chief architects of the theory. In the interest of completeness, I will note that Eric Gill, Arthur Penty, and Vincent McNabb also contributed significant early Distributist works, however none were as influential as Chesterton and Belloc. Contemporary scholarship on the two heavyweights of Distributism include multiple biographies of Chesterton, multiple biographies of Belloc, and a significant literature on Chesterton's journalistic and literary works. Examples of the first include Ian Ker's *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography*, Garry Wills' *Chesterton, Man and Mask*, William Oddie's *Chesterton and the Romance of Orthodoxy: The Making of GKC, 1874 - 1908*, and Harold Robbins' *The Last of the Realists: A Distributist Biography of G. K. Chesterton*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Shaw and Chesterton were known to be close friends, although at times fierce opponents. Belloc's debates were mostly with historians or theorists of history such as Wells regarding the nature of human beings and the role of religion (particularly Catholicism) in history.

<sup>23</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong With The World*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994); *The Outline of Sanity* from *G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, vol. V*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987); *Avowals and Denials*, (London, UK: Methuen and Company, 1934); Hilaire Belloc, *The Cruise of the Nona*, (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2014); *An Essay on the Restoration of Property*, (Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2012); *The Crisis of Civilization*, (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Ian Ker, *G.K. Chesterton: A Biography*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Garry Wills, *Chesterton, Man and Mask*, (Rochester, NY: Image Press, 2001); William Oddie, *Chesterton and the Romance of Orthodoxy: The Making of GKC, 1874 – 1908*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Harold Robbins, *The Last of the Realists: A Distributist Biography of G. K. Chesterton*, (Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2010).

Examples of the second include Joseph Pearce's *Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc*, Robert Speaight's *The Life of Hilaire Belloc*, and A. N. Wilson's *Hilaire Belloc, A Biography*.<sup>25</sup> Of course, both men also wrote autobiographies, Chesterton in 1936, shortly before his death, and Belloc in 1925. Of the last, the best recent scholarship is mostly confined to journals such as *The Chesterton Review* (Seton Hall University), *The Distributist Review* (the American Chesterton Society), and *Gilbert* (the American Chesterton Society).

Later Papal documents on Distributism include the "constitution" of Distributism, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), the post-Soviet Era *Centesimus Annus* (1991), and the Twenty-First Century restatement *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). Of course, each of these was the result of a collaborative effort between the pontiffs and various scholars including Heinrich Pesch (noted German economist whose multi-volume works on solidarist economics were influential on *Quadragesimo*), Georges Cottier (Dominican theologian who contributed to *Centesimus*), and Joseph Ratzinger (who, as theology professor, former head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and pope was instrumental in laying the foundations for *Evangelii*). Of course, each of these addressed relevant contemporary issues in addition to reinforcing the Church's teachings on Distributism; *Centesimus*, for example, discussed the collapse of the Marxist power bloc in Eastern Europe.

Compendiums of these works exist, with some editorial commentary and analysis. Examples of this sort of literature include *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and *Catholic Social Thought: The*

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<sup>25</sup> Joseph Pearce, *Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc*, (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2015); Robert Speaight, *The Life of Hilaire Belloc*, (London, UK: Hollis and Carter, 1957); A. N. Wilson, *Hilaire Belloc, A Biography*, (New York: Atheneum Publishing, 1984).

*Documentary Heritage* (a publication of the Maryknoll Order).<sup>26</sup> Of course, general works discussing the themes of Distributist encyclicals also exist, such as *Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine*.<sup>27</sup> By and large, however, little scholarly work has been done on Distributism *qua* Distributism, as opposed to vague references in so-called Third Way economic scholarship. Works of this sort include *Toward a Truly Free Market: A Distributist Perspective on the Role of Government, Taxes, Health Care, Deficits, and More* (John C. Médaille’s idiosyncratic take on Distributism), *Third Ways: How Bulgarian Greens, Swedish Housewives, and Beer-Swilling Englishmen Created Family-Centered Economies - And Why They Disappeared* (Allan Carlson’s equally idiosyncratic take), and Jingjing Huo’s *Third Way Reforms: Social Democracy after the Golden Age*.<sup>28</sup> Recent scholarly articles on Distributism are few and far between, although short collections of essays and peer-reviewed journal articles have appeared in works such as *The Hound of Distributism: A Solution for Our Social and Economic Crisis, Distributist Perspectives (vols. I and II)*, and *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*.<sup>29</sup>

My work addresses some of the gaps in the existing literature, as it is neither a biography of Chesterton, Belloc, or any other Distributist, nor is it a compendium of Distributist teachings. Contra Carlson and Médaille, it is also not a party platform for the advancement of Distributism

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<sup>26</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Washington, D.C.: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011); *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> J. Brian Benestad, *Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> John C. Médaille, *Toward a Truly Free Market: A Distributist Perspective on the Role of Government, Taxes, Health Care, Deficits, and More*, (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2011); Allan Carlson, *Third Ways: How Bulgarian Greens, Swedish Housewives, and Beer-Swilling Englishmen Created Family-Centered Economies - And Why They Disappeared*, (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2007); Jingjing Huo, *Third Way Reforms: Social Democracy after the Golden Age*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> *The Hound of Distributism: A Solution for Our Social and Economic Crisis*, Richard Aleman (ed.), (Charlotte, NC: American Chesterton Society, 2015); *Distributist Perspectives (vols. I and II)*, J. Forrest Sharpe and D. Liam O’Huallachain (eds.), (Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2004 and 2007 [vol. II]); *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*, Tobias Lanz (ed.), (Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2008).

(or a platform for existing parties to adopt). Rather, my work discusses the foundations of Distributism as they are relevant to understanding Dorothy Day's political program. That is to say that this is not a dissertation on Distributism: it is not an intellectual history of Distributism, nor is it a critique of Distributism. Distributism, because it was so central to Day and the *Catholic Worker*, is necessarily discussed in some detail, but as an unbiased explanation, not an in-depth analysis. Certainly, there is a wide-open field for Distributist scholarship, given that much of what exists amounts to the uncritical glorification of the idea by gifted amateurs.<sup>30</sup> This work, however, does not attempt to explore that field.

This is a work on Dorothy Day's vision for Catholic politics in America. While necessarily focusing on Twentieth Century America, the insights of Day and others are as applicable to contemporary politics as during her lifetime. An important part of this project is a reassessment of Day, showing that in today's political terms she is not so easily classified as a figure of the radical Left. Indeed, the American political landscape has shifted so far to the political Left that Day, while likely unhappy with the term, would, of necessity, be considered a socially conservative libertarian or conservative today.<sup>31</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that Dorothy Day would approve of a party led by Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders, although she would certainly not approve of a party led by Donald Trump either. I cannot analyze the predicament of the politically homeless Right in this work, but I do think it important to note that

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<sup>30</sup> Please note that I am not here dismissing the high-quality work done by authors such as Dale Ahlquist, who know Distributism as well as any dedicated scholar would be expected to. My hesitation to recommend such works is that they are frequently published "in-house" or by presses known to lack academic rigor.

<sup>31</sup> As some evidence of this shift, consider that Bernie Sanders, a self-identified Socialist, came very close to winning the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party, and at least some pollsters and election gurus believe that he would have gone on to defeat Donald Trump. More evidence may be found in the effective implementation, at least in part, of several of the planks of the Communist Party as outlined by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*; 2,3,4,6, and 10 are undeniably in effect in some form.



Day would likely fall into this category, and her approach to politics might be the strategy that social conservatives and libertarians need to regain their strength in post-Trump America.

Throughout the main chapters of this work, chapters 2 through 5, I will discuss the formation of Distributist theory, its impact on politico-economic thinking, its influence on Dorothy Day, and her attempt to implement Distributism in America. In chapter 2, I will explain the philosophical foundations of Distributism in politico-economic works by Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, scholars such as Heinrich Pesch, and journalists such as G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Next, in chapter 3, I will move on to the intellectual climate of the Inter-War years, and the sea of political philosophies in which Dorothy Day swam. Chapter 3 will also focus on the impact of Distributist philosophy on Day, and how it was central to her new vision of Catholic, rather than Socialist, politics. I will show Day's Distributism in practice in chapter 4, by discussing the Catholic Worker movement, and how Day's approach to politics remained radical, not in spite of, but because of her understanding of Distributism. Finally, in chapter 5, I will discuss the lasting impact of Day's vision on American politics following her death in 1980.

Before moving on to the first substantive chapter, there are several key points that must be made concerning my understanding of Dorothy Day, and why Distributism is so central to her politics. Distributism is not well-known among either Catholics or scholars. Although easily pigeon-holed as a Twentieth Century political philosophy (or economic theory), it is much more than that. Distributism is a philosophy of human life and society. It incorporates a particular philosophical anthropology, a system of ethics, a sketch of political order (though it is careful not to suggest a regime type), and a clear explanation of the relationship between employer and worker. In part, Distributism, as a specifically Catholic philosophy, is a direct refutation of the Protestant capitalism that arose during the Reformation, in particular the Calvinist strain of

Protestantism, with its emphasis on wealth and material well-being. In some sense, it may be considered the last shot of the Counter-Reformation: on the one hand, the radical individualism and appeal to secular authority of the Protestant movements, on the other the institutional authority and tradition of the Catholic Church. There is much room for the application of an explicitly Catholic philosophy in the foundationally Protestant United States, given that much of liberal capitalist thought is built upon a Calvinist edifice.

Another issue raised by Distributism is the intra-faith debate amongst American Catholics regarding its applicability – is it merely suggestive, pastoral teaching, or is it dogmatic teaching on everyday Catholic life? The scholars at *The Distributist Review* take a firm stance on this issue: it is dogmatic, within the sphere of papal authority, and non-negotiable for faithful Catholics.<sup>32</sup> The key to the claim of authority in this matter, given that specific teachings on economics and politics are usually considered outside the realm of Catholic dogma, is the moral element implicit in the relationship between Man and wealth (means of lawful acquisition and limits of acquisition), Man and society (the most just politico-economic system [that most in line with the life and teachings of Christ]), and Man and Man (employer and laborer). Which is to say that economic decisions are implicitly moral decisions, and teaching on moral matters is well within the province of the Church.<sup>33</sup> Pope Leo XIII makes very clear that while he does not intend to offer specific guidance on econometrics, tax levels, or any of the other minutiae of

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<sup>32</sup> Phillip Campbell, “The Authority of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*,” from *The Distributist Review*, January 11, 2016, available in full at <http://distributistreview.com/the-authority-of-rerum-novarum-and-quadragesimo-anno/> (accessed April 28, 2017). Note, that Campbell does not suggest that either encyclical is infallible; he simply argues that based on the authoritative language used by the popes, these encyclicals should be considered binding and dogmatic.

<sup>33</sup> “We approach the subject with confidence and surety by our right, for the question under consideration is certainly one for which no satisfactory solution will be found unless religion and the church have been called upon to aid. Moreover, since the safeguarding of religion and of all things within the jurisdiction of the church is primarily our stewardship, silence on our part might be regarded as failure in our duty.” From *Rerum Novarum*, section 16.

economic science, he does mean to offer a specific moral foundation upon which economic decisions can be made.

As a philosophy built around concepts of decentralization and non-state action (chiefly, although not necessarily exclusively), Distributism is not easily adapted into a functional political platform. It is not a political ideology, *per se*, but rather a method of community organizing that predates the radical community activism of the 1960's.<sup>34</sup> Day's own vision of Distributism expressed the underlying ideals in a way that steered well clear of the political establishment. In fact, as can be shown, Day (and Maurin, especially) would have understood direct political participation in the American electoral system as being ultimately self-defeating. That is to say that, for Day, the means of capturing politics is destructive of the goals. Day opposed the Bishops' Statement, Father John Ryan, and the New Dealers on operationalizing Distributism via politics; she wanted a radical decentralization.

When evaluating Day, one must be aware of her regular correspondence with experienced Distributist leaders such as Hilaire Belloc, whom she welcomed on an American tour in his later years. She learned from the failures of the British Distributists, who focused heavily (in their early years, at least) on electoral politics. For example, Belloc was the Member of Parliament for Salford from 1906 until 1910, before abandoning the political establishment as entirely unsuitable for a true Distributist revolution.<sup>35</sup> Having learned from Belloc and others such as G. K. Chesterton, Eric Gill, and Arthur Penty that Distributism could not be

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<sup>34</sup> The block by block, decentralized tactics adopted by Saul Alinsky bear a resemblance to Distributist decentralizing in theory, if not in practice.

<sup>35</sup> The nature of Distributism made its goals and philosophy difficult to translate into clear party political platforms; much of what Belloc proposed had more in common with Tory politics of the time than with the general views of his own Liberal Party, yet the Catholic origins of Distributism made Tory support for it an impossibility. Of course, the shift in Liberal politics during the Nineteen Teens also meant that Liberal support for a decentralized, rural political strategy would never materialize (this was the Asquith-Lloyd George Era of Liberal Nationalism and centralization).

accomplished at the voting booth, Day was not an orthodox Distributist willing to work within the political system in the manner of Ryan and the New Dealers. Additionally, she saw the dangers of losing the spiritual dimension of Distributism by focusing solely on the political; this was a problem that caused many Catholic Workers to break with the movement and, in some cases such as Michael Harrington, with religion period.<sup>36</sup>

Day believed in a radical vision of politics, one that she felt was perfectly consistent with the radical decentralization and new society proposed by Distributism. Like her mentor Maurin, she understood Distributism to be dynamite that would shake loose American society. Day was certainly no conservative by the standards of her day, but her vision for society was very conservative: small, decentralized communities bound together by shared faith and the bonds of family (ideally, large Catholic families). The Catholic leaders of her day subscribed, to one degree or another, to the economic radicalism that is Distributism, but nearly all also adhered to political traditionalism. To Day, this was a betrayal of the essential radicalism represented by Distributism. This is the easy bridge between Day's radical socialism and her later radical Catholicism. I will show throughout the chapters on Day's politics and the Catholic Worker movement that her essential political orientation, as a political radical, never changed, although its expression did. This idea of a radical expression of what is at heart a conservative political vision, makes Day unique amongst political visionaries. Her movement toward Distributism, and her emphasis on the transcendent as a gateway to that movement, are also enormously valuable as a glimpse of how an authentic Catholic politics might work in the American system.

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<sup>36</sup> Harrington never forgot his Catholic education, but preferred to create a new post-religion West in which progressivism adopted the values of Catholicism and expressed them in a non-religious manner, see Gary Dorrien's interview with Harrington in "Michael Harrington and the 'Left Wing of the Possible'" from the June 2010 issue of *CrossCurrents*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 257 – 282.

## Chapter 2

### Historical Evolution and Foundations of Distributism

"Modern Capitalism is based on property without responsibility... Modern Communism is based on poverty through force." - Peter Maurin<sup>37</sup>

#### Distributism Overview

One of the first questions that many people ask when discussing Distributism is whether it is still a relevant field of study. This is usually preceded by the question "What is Distributism?" In numerous discussions with lay Catholics, clergy, professional historians, friends, and family, all seem essentially unaware of the phenomenon that is Distributism. After defining the ideas of the movement and briefly sketching its history, most say that it should be classed alongside Latin or classical Greek; the more generous allow that a very small niche may exist for the study of Distributism within the realm of Twentieth Century British literature. In the minds of many, Distributism is a dead philosophy with no relevance to the modern world.

The reports of Distributism's demise, however, are greatly exaggerated. Rather than a dead field, confined to musty old tomes buried in the labyrinthine corridors of academic libraries, Distributism, like Latin, is alive and well. The direct products of the original Distributist movement are still in evidence in 2017. For example, the Catholic Worker Movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin is still very active and operates several farms and communities throughout the United States. The study of G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien has enjoyed somewhat of a renaissance in recent years, with Lewis and Tolkien having been elevated to the forefront of popular culture by recent major motion pictures produced by Hollywood studios. Chesterton, in particular, is quite popular in Catholic academic

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Maurin, "Christianity, Capitalism, Communism," from *Easy Essays*, (New York: Sheed and Ward Inc., 1936), 74.

circles, with nationwide organizations dedicated to the study of his works existing in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. In addition, a non-profit research unit, the G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith and Culture, has been established at Seton Hall University and regularly publishes *The Chesterton Review*, a scholarly journal dedicated to Chesterton's works.

What is Distributism? This is not an easy question to answer. Indeed, Chesterton expressed little enthusiasm with the term Distributism itself, believing it to be unwieldy, though essentially accurate. The term was derived from the "Distributive State," the theoretical ideal state discussed by Belloc in his book, *The Servile State*.<sup>38</sup> Belloc contrasts the distributive state with the Socialist (communist) and servile (state capitalist) states. While the idea of the distributive state varies from author to author (Belloc's vision is quite different from, say, Father Vincent McNabb's), the general principles upon which that state is built are shared by all Distributist thinkers. Ideally, the distributive state is based on ownership of the means of production by workers (for example, co-operative enterprises and credit unions); Spain's Mondragon Corporation was founded by Father José María Arizmendiarieta Madariaga using the principles of Distributism explained in *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, the organization of workers into unions or guilds, an agrarian society, and a commitment to Catholic Christian values. This last concept has been widened in the more ecumenical spirit of the post-Vatican II world to include the values of Christianity more broadly speaking.<sup>39</sup>

What, then, is Distributism? It is not a Third Way economic system, charting a narrow path between socialism and capitalism. At first glance, it may appear that this is precisely what is intended by Distributist thinkers, given both the historical context of their writings and the

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<sup>38</sup> Belloc, *The Servile State*, 57-75.

<sup>39</sup> Christian Democrat parties in Europe have been laboring, since at least the 1990's, to gather support from like-minded non-Islamist Muslims and Jews. This has met with some success in Germany, though not France.

political advantage that might logically be gained by appealing to a broad swath of the electorate, that is, those frustrated by the inequity of capitalism, but similarly frustrated by the inadequacy of the Socialist solution to the problems of capitalism. This is incorrect, however, as the root philosophical understanding of many, though not all, capitalists and Socialists regarding the nature of Man and his society is virtually indistinguishable. Distributism is a both a political theory and a cultural proposal: a return to the values of Western civilization before the tragic misjudgments of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries destroyed it.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Liberal and the Distributist on Man and his Society**

For the liberal (the capitalist), Man exists within a purely contractual society, disconnected from the bonds of kith and kin, and linked only to others by (1) his voluntary exchange of x commodity with them [x in the liberal view being anything of value, corporeal or incorporeal including, though certainly not limited to, consumer goods, ideas, and sex] and (2) his legal rights which must not be infringed upon by either another natural person or juridical person such as a corporation or government. Ludwig von Mises, one of the key theorists of contemporary liberalism, explains this concept:

Liberty and freedom are the conditions of man within a contractual society.... The member of a contractual society is free because he serves others only in serving himself. What restrains him is only the inevitable natural phenomenon of scarcity. For the rest he is free in the range of the market. There is no kind of freedom and liberty other than the kind which the market economy brings about.<sup>41</sup>

Mises reaches this conclusion in part because of his determined effort to split off any consideration of metaphysics and ethics from economics, which he views as a purely scientific

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<sup>40</sup> And what were the French Revolution, the First World War, and the Second World War if not the cultural and political suicide of the West, carried out across the course of a Century and a half? See Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality: The Challenge of Our Times*, (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2014) and *Leftism Revisited: From de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Pol Pot*, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1991).

<sup>41</sup> Von Mises, Ludwig, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics*, (Chicago, IL: Regnery Press, 1966), pp. 282-83.

endeavor rooted chiefly in epistemological and psychological investigations. While certainly appreciating the fact/value distinction (or the is/ought in the language of moral philosophers), I, and most Distributists such as Chesterton, Day, Maurin, and the Popes consider it highly problematic to make utilitarian philosophy the keystone of one's edifice of economic theory.

Here, Mises makes precisely this error:

[I]t is no part of the task of science to examine ultimate questions or to prescribe values and determine their order of rank. Nevertheless, one may call the fulfillment of these tasks higher, nobler, and more important than that of the simpler task of science, which is to develop a theoretical system of cause-and-effect relationships enabling us to arrange our action in such a way that we can attain the goals we aim at.... Metaphysics and science perform different functions. They cannot, therefore, adopt the same procedures, nor are they alike in their goals. They can work side by side without enmity because they need not dispute each other's domain as long as they do not misconstrue their own character.<sup>42</sup>

The problem here is not so much a disavowal of ethics or metaphysics in the natural sciences, although that, too, is a serious problem. Rather, the problem is Mises' reductionist attitude toward economics, which, while no doubt a dismal science, is, nevertheless a human or social science, unlike physics, for example, which is a natural science. I think it not incorrect to posit that economics and political science are fundamentally linked as demonstrated by the economic repercussions of political actions and vice versa. Following Eric Voegelin, however, political science (and, I think by extension economics and every other science of Man) is not a natural science and any attempt to reduce it to such is doomed to failure.<sup>43</sup> A final quote from Mises demonstrating exactly the utilitarian approach that he recommends (and which the Church condemns):

When those who recommended the abolition of involuntary servitude on general humanitarian grounds were told that the retention of the system was also in the interest of the enslaved, they knew of nothing to say in rejoinder. For against this objection in favor of slavery there is only *one* argument that can and did refute all others—namely, that free

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<sup>42</sup> Von Mises, Ludwig, *Epistemological Problems of Economics*, (New York: Van Nostrand, 1960), p. 49. Although von Mises discusses this concept throughout *Human Action*, as well.

<sup>43</sup> Voegelin, Eric, *The New Science of Politics*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).



labor is incomparably more productive than slave labor. The slave has no interest in exerting himself fully. He works only as much and as zealously as is necessary to escape the punishment attaching to failure to perform the minimum. The free worker, on the other hand, knows that the more his labor accomplishes, the more he will be paid.... We liberals do not assert that God or Nature meant all men to be free, because we are not instructed in the designs of God and of Nature, and we avoid, on principle, drawing God and Nature into a dispute over mundane questions. What we maintain is only that a system based on freedom for all workers warrants the greatest productivity of human labor and is therefore in the interests of all the inhabitants of the earth. We attack involuntary servitude, not in spite of the fact that it is advantageous to the "masters," but because we are convinced that, in the last analysis, it hurts the interests of all members of human society, including the "masters."<sup>44</sup>

The Distributist rejects precisely this sort of reasoning, not only on the grounds offered by Voegelin, but also because it is proper for any science of Man to include a three-layered appreciation of Man as foundational. The first layer is metaphysical, in which it must be understood that Man is a created being that exists within a hierarchy defined by his creator. The second layer is moral, in which it must be understood that Man ought to act toward a morally right teleological goal; put more simply, there is a final, morally good end toward which all of Man's actions should be directed: the *summum bonum*, the greatest good, understood by the Church and most, though not all Distributists, as the beatific vision and the Christian moral worldview.<sup>45 46</sup> The third and final layer is political, but in the sense used by Aristotle. By this is

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<sup>44</sup> Confusingly, two differently named editions of the work in which this quote appears exist. The original 1927 German version was published in English in 1962 [and reprinted in the edition that I am here quoting from] as *The Free and Prosperous Commonwealth: An Exposition of the ideas of Classical Liberalism*. However, another edition published by the Ludwig von Mises Institute in 2010 also exists, albeit under the title *Liberalism*. The texts are virtually identical, although the LMI version offers a new introduction and appendix, and different page numbering. My edition is a 2012 facsimile reprint of the 1962 edition published by Martino Fine Books of Eastford, CT.

<sup>45</sup> Chesterton among others, noted that there was no reason why an atheist or non-Christian should not embrace Distributism. Maurice, Lord Glasman, a British Labour Party Peer is a case in point, as his political theory "Blue Labour," is strongly distributist-leaning. Despite the fact that he is both English and Jewish, Lord Glasman has spoken favorably of Catholicism, particularly its social teachings. See James Mummford's article discussing Glasman, "Distributism isn't outdated," at the American Conservative, November 13, 2014 online edition, available at <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/Distributism-isnt-outdated/> (accessed July 16, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Too, there is a rising interest in Distributism from those who are not openly religious in any way: the organic farming movement. See Douglas Fox, "Distributism: A Third Way," from the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association website: <http://www.mofga.org/Publications/MaineOrganicFarmerGardener/Fall2013/Distributism/tabid/2667/Default.aspx> (accessed July 18, 2015).

meant that Man is not only social or gregarious, but also able to evaluate the ordering of his society, and seek out that form of constitution that is most just.<sup>47</sup> The first two layers here stand clearly at variance with the capitalist's notion of political science, while the third is, arguably, also at variance, given the manifest errors of social ordering exhibited by liberal capitalist theory and practice.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Socialist and the Distributist on Man and his Society**

In Socialist theory, there is a recognition that economic justice is a vital organizing principle of human society. Here, the Distributist is fully in agreement. While effectively criticizing capitalism, the Socialist theoretical foundation unnecessarily, and incorrectly, narrows the horizon of possible correctives. By focusing solely on a materialist conception of human relations, entirely at the expense of the other aspects, the Socialist, whether consciously or unconsciously depending on the theorist, truncates Man. The multi-dimensional being, Man, experiences, if he lives authentically, not only vegetative and animalistic modes of being, but also a spiritual mode of being. The most profound error of the Socialist is to devolve Man by unravelling his higher orders of being: the Mind and the Soul.

These concepts have been more fully unpacked elsewhere, but a brief restatement, as I previously provided for capitalism, is useful here. Elaborating a bit on the chief error of socialism, that of the unnecessary and incorrect limitation placed on Man's being, there are two aspects of this, the first, the Mind, is a product of inadequate understanding of human psychology. Here, the capitalist's argument is superior, as the acquisitive and competitive aspects of Man's psychological motivations are strong, so strong that merely asking him to labor

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<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, T.A. Sinclair (trans.), (New York: Penguin Books, 1962, revised edition, 1992).

<sup>48</sup> I do not mean to beg the question here, or assume that which I am trying to prove, but I suggest that the many injustices inflicted by liberal capitalist society discussed throughout this work are at least *prima facie* evidence that the capitalist has not chosen the most justly ordered society.

for the good of society or the nation is simply inadequate over a long period of time. The second aspect of the error is the failure of the Socialist to appreciate the need for spiritual inquiry and expression, chiefly, though perhaps not exclusively, through the auspices of established religion. While the freedom of the worker to religious worship has, more often than not, been guaranteed by Socialist regimes, simple religious freedom is only one small aspect of spiritual inquiry. So focused as he is on the challenge of creating horizontal equality between men, that the Socialist allows himself no time to appreciate the need for the vertical dimension of Man's existence. Given that at least some portion of this vertical dimension includes the erotic desire for knowledge (in this case, of God, Man's place in the order of creation, and Man's purpose and future), the Socialist denies Man the experience of the erotic.<sup>49</sup>

### **Defining Distributism**

A more precise definition of Distributism is:

[A]n economic system in which private property is no longer regarded primarily as something to be manipulated, sold, resold, exchanged and transformed for gain *alone*, but for the production of necessary goods and services, which, supported by legal and social systems, serves human life and society... It is that economic system or arrangement in which the ownership of productive private property, as much as possible, is widespread in a nation or society. In other words, in a Distributist society most heads of families would own small farms or workshops, or in the case of entities which are necessarily large, such as railroads, they would either be jointly owned in some manner by the work force (be it noted: workers of hand *and* brain) themselves, or, more exceptionally, by the government. Thus, another name for Distributism might be the system of micro-property.<sup>50</sup>

These definitions hinge upon belief in Aristotelian philosophy, seen very clearly through the lens of Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of that philosophy. Particularly important concepts

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<sup>49</sup> Which cannot be compensated for by any amount of sex. This is an error made by New Left left-libertarians and, for lack of a better term, *volk* Marxists who revel in the many and varied expressions of sexual identity, but lose sight completely of the erotic relationship between Man and knowledge, especially knowledge of God. Too, the fetishization and commodification of sex by both bourgeoisie and misled *volk* Marxists (many operating under the sway of the Freudians) is a distraction from the socialists' *raison d'etre*, the fight for justice for the poor. Here, I find support from older Marxists such as Eric Hobsbawm, see, for example, his essay, "Identity Politics and the Left," from *New Left Review*, May-June, 1996 edition, issue 217, (London: New Left Review), 1996).

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Storck, "Capitalism and Distributism," from *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*, 77-78.

throughout Aristotle, Aquinas, and the Distributists' works are the roles of materialism, natural law, private property, money (capital), and usury (explicitly condemned by Distributism).<sup>51</sup> In any discussion of Distributism then, the definitions of these concepts must be drawn from Thomist philosophy which, in turn, is derived from Plato and Aristotle.<sup>52</sup>

In Book I of *The Politics*, for example, Aristotle defines natural acquisition through the prism of natural law (*dikaion physikon*), "Such a mode of acquisition is clearly given by nature herself to all creatures."<sup>53</sup> Natural acquisition is the use of productive labor to obtain the goods necessary for the continued survival of the household. Unnatural acquisition, on the other hand, has its roots in the development of the barter system whereby one household exchanged a necessary good for another necessary good of equal value; this, in itself, was not unnatural. The barter economy gave rise, however, to the invention of currency and the supersession of barter with trade. Trade, an unnatural form of acquisition, concerned itself with the development of skills used to maximize profit in coin. Aristotle points out the folly of coinage and, indeed, any currency system: "[I]f those who employ a currency system choose to alter it, the coins cease to have their value... And it will often happen that a man with wealth in the form of coined money

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<sup>51</sup> Usury, as Distributists tend to define the term, is the lending of money at interest. It has been condemned by the Church multiple times: the Third Lateran Council, the Council of Vienne, and any number of papal documents. However, there is much debate over whether usury should be defined as merely the lending of money at interest. The Fifth Lateran Council seems to have changed the Church's understanding of usury, as has Pope Benedict XIV's encyclical *Vix Pervenit*. In favor of the older definition, see Mark and Louise Zwick, "John Paul II calls for end of usury," from the newsletter of the Catholic Worker House in Houston, June 1, 1999, available online here: <http://cjd.org/1999/06/01/john-paul-ii-calls-for-end-to-usury-support-for-peter-maurin-catholic-worker-theme/> (accessed June 20, 2017). In favor of the newer definition, see David J. Palm, "The Red Herring of Usury," from the website CatholicCulture.org, available online here: <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=646> (accessed June 20, 2017). For an unbiased, technical discussion of usury and the Church's view, see William Bainbridge, "Catholic Social Thought and the Law: Usury," from his website, available online at <http://www.professorbainbridge.com/professorbainbridgecom/2014/11/catholic-social-thought-and-the-law-usury.html> (accessed June 20, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> The term "Thomist philosophy" is here referring to both the corpus of Aquinas' original work and that of his later followers such as the Distributists, the Neo-Thomists [in particular Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain], and analytical Thomists such as Peter Kreeft, Elizabeth Anscombe, and John Haldane.

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle. *The Politics*, 78.

will not have enough to eat."<sup>54</sup> He follows this with a condemnation of the acquisition of wealth for its own sake. For Aristotle, goods are meant to be acquired for the use of the household, not for later trade and the pursuit of profit and hoarding of money (this is very like Karl Marx's condemnation of the capitalist as a producer of nothing, merely a manipulator of wealth derived from the labor of others). The Distributist thinkers accept the criticism of capital made by both Aristotle and Marx, which forms the basis for their insistence on an agrarian society devoid of usury or the practice of finance capitalism.

Having now defined Distributism, it becomes important to restate its relevance in the modern world, and why Dorothy Day thought it a viable alternative to the dominant liberal capitalist and Socialist systems. The ideals of Distributism are kept alive today and are the direct source of inspiration for the many worldwide Christian Democrat parties. Of particular significance are the CDU (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschland*), the CSU (*Christlich Soziale Union Bayern*), the EPP (European People's Party), and the CDOA (*Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América*). The first two named parties are the creation of the leaders of post-Second World War Germany who rejected socialism. Konrad Adenauer, in particular, sought to advance the ideal of Christian Democracy and became the first Chancellor of West Germany. Adenauer, known in West German political circles as *Der Alte* (the Old Man), sought to unify Catholics and Protestants into one pro-democracy party based on the Christian ideals of Distributism - although the term itself was rarely, if ever used. Reflecting long-held federalist ideals and regional pride, the CDU-leaning leaders in Bavaria created their own, local version of the CDU, the CSU (originally the Catholic Social Union of Bavaria, later changed to reflect a more inclusive name). Together, the CDU/CSU coalition has produced more chancellors of post-

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<sup>54</sup> *The Politics*, 78.

1945 Germany than any rival party, including current Chancellor Angela Merkel. The EPP is the EU Parliamentary party representing the various Christian Democrat and Christian Democrat-leaning parties throughout Europe. The EPP is one of the more successful parties throughout Europe, enjoying the largest representation in the EU Parliament with 216 seats and having 8 of 28 member nations' heads of state as members of the locally- aligned EPP parties. Finally, the CDOA is the New World equivalent of the EPP with representative parties in almost every South and Central American nation. Although these parties are, by no means, doctrinaire Distributist parties, nevertheless they take their inspiration from the foundational ideals of Distributism.

Thus, Distributism is very much alive and well in much of today's world, although few know the proper name to ascribe to the set of ideals which were established over a Century ago. Any scholar interested in the modern history of the Catholic Church, economics, political science, international relations, British literature, sociology, United States history, European history, British history, or Latin American history should at least develop a passing familiarity with Distributism, given that its influence is so widely felt. Additionally, given the international economic crisis facing much of the world today, the lessons of Distributism are more relevant than ever.

Many of the citations in this essay come directly from papal encyclicals. Although all of these are available in English at the Vatican's website, it is much more convenient to refer to published works containing the relevant encyclicals.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, throughout most of this work, citations of encyclical material are from *Catholic Social Thought*, a compilation of major Vatican documents since 1891 (relevant encyclicals are indicated where needed to avoid confusion).<sup>56</sup> Additionally, note that the term "Distributism" is not used by the vast majority of Distributists

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<sup>55</sup> [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

<sup>56</sup> *Catholic Social Thought: A Documentary Heritage*.

and/or Distributist-leaning thinkers. As noted above, the term was used almost exclusively by Chesterton and Belloc, and they considered it unwieldy at best.<sup>57</sup> This essay uses the term Distributism as an umbrella reference term referring to the many facets of Distributist thought: from the Christian anarchism of Dorothy Day to the anti-technology movement of McNabb to the mid-Twentieth Century anti-authoritarian Jeffersonian agrarians of the American South to the formal politico-economic system expounded by the Vatican. Despite surface disagreements, all of these systems share in common a deep respect for natural law, the primacy of the traditional family, the importance of a life connected to the land (i.e. agriculture), and a broad opposition to both statism in its several guises (e.g. Fascism, Communism, etc.) and monopolistic finance capitalism (as distinguished from a free-trade, family and co-operative business-based model in which usurious debt plays no part).

### **Prelude to the Distributist Movement**

Like every other movement in history, Distributism evolved in a particular context. Europe at the dawn of the modern age, let us say 1789 although that may be too late a date, stood poised on the brink of one of the most massive socio-economic booms in human history. Fueled by the sometimes-competing ideals of liberalism, industrialization, nationalism, radical egalitarianism, and violent revolutionary spirit, the whole continent erupted in a wave of reaction (and counter-reaction) against the virtues of the Renaissance Era and *Ancien Régime*. Although the spirit of the age was initially embodied in the American Revolution of 1776, what Richard John Neuhaus calls a, "[S]ometimes curious mix of the Scottish Enlightenment and Calvinist Christianity, shaped by the emergence of democratic insight among English dissenters, and colored by their idealization of republican Rome and Periclean Athens," it took a violent,

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<sup>57</sup> Belloc, *The Servile State*.

egalitarianism in the French Revolution of 1789 and has dominated European history to the present day.<sup>58</sup>

The Jacobins of 1789 were very much the spiritual ancestors of the revolutionary Socialists of 1848 and 1917. Although the ultimate goals of the revolution of 1917 and all Socialist revolutions since have included the creation of the dictatorship of the working class (the industrial, or in the case of China the agricultural, proletariat), the leaders of each of those revolutions, and the leaders of the French Revolutions of 1789 and 1848 and the American Revolution for that matter, were of staunchly middle-class backgrounds. Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, James Madison, Maximilien Robespierre, Georges Couthon, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon III), Karl Marx, and Leon Trotsky were all men of letters; most, in fact, were lawyers. All were men of privilege, though not members of the upper-class elite. Latter day revolutionaries such as Ernesto "Che" Guevara, brothers Fidel and Raoul Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Hugo Chavez were also men of broadly middle-class backgrounds, educated and comfortable enough financially to be allowed leisure time in which to organize and lead their various revolutions. World leaders might do well to remember the power of the nascent middle class when planning policy - the bourgeoisie are comfortable enough to have the spare time needed to contemplate politics whilst simultaneously given the motive to do so by their failure to achieve the status of the upper-class elite.

Although the leaders of the various revolutions of the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries were men of the middle class, the soldiers of those revolutions were mostly urban, working poor. Although the agrarian peasantry contributed to the revolutions, in many cases

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<sup>58</sup> Richard John Neuhaus, *Doing Well and Doing Good: The Challenge to the Christian Capitalist*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4.



they represented the foot-soldiers of the counter-revolutionary forces (i.e. the civil war in the Vendee during the French Revolution, the armies of the White Russians in 1917-21).<sup>59</sup> The revolutions, then, were mainly focused on urban population centers and were conducted by impoverished workers led by educated, middle class leaders. Why did the urban industrial proletariat follow the lead of men such as Saint Just and Lenin? The answer, although complex and multi-faceted, can essentially be boiled down to the hopelessness of daily life. Additionally, as Eric Voegelin has noted in his many works, the ability of the revolutionary leaders to become "activist mystics" and promise to immanentize the eschaton contributed heavily to their power over the masses.<sup>60</sup>

To accurately recreate the situation faced by the urban worker of late Nineteenth Century Europe, we must first journey back to Scotland, circa 1776. The Industrial Revolution had already taken off in Britain, although it was rapidly picking up speed on the Continent, especially in Frederick the Great's Prussia. Russia under Catherine the Great continued on the long path to Westernization begun, in earnest, by Peter the Great. Notably lagging in industrial development were Bourbon Spain, Braganza Portugal, fragmented Italy, and the Habsburg Holy Roman Empire. Louis XVI's France lay somewhere between the two, sometimes showing the capacity to develop its heavy industry while at other times neglecting such pursuits in favor of agricultural and natural resource development - a consequence of the economic policies of the physiocrats.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Communist uprisings since the Nineteenth Century have, in many cases, erupted in peasant societies. Given the fact that many Catholic nations of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries were peasant, agrarian societies, Distributists have been ever wary of Communism (given that their own societies were perfect breeding grounds for Communist revolutions).

<sup>60</sup> Eric Voegelin. *History of Political Ideas, volume IV: Renaissance and Reformation*, from *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 22*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), among other works from Voegelin visiting this theme.

<sup>61</sup> The physiocrats were a group of economic thinkers who significantly influenced the economic policies of late Bourbon (1700-1789) France. Their economic beliefs centered on the notion that a nation's economic power was drawn from the strength of its land and natural resources. They emphasized the development of agriculture, mining,

On March 9 of that year, Scottish philosopher and civil servant Adam Smith published what is considered by many to be the founding work of capitalist economics, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.<sup>62</sup> Smith, previously known as a specialist in moral philosophy, created a stir in British government circles, although his work remained largely unknown on the Continent until after his death in 1790. *Wealth of Nations* stands as a monumental criticism of the mercantilist and protectionist economic policies of the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods.<sup>63</sup> Its most important contributions to the science of economics (or political economy as it was known in Smith's day) were the concept of the division of labor, the labor theory of value (later abandoned by Smith, but taken up by David Ricardo and used extensively by Karl Marx), the accumulation and use of capital, the operation of the free market, and the concept of the "Invisible Hand" of the market.<sup>64</sup> Politically moderate, Smith's economic ideas represented the ideals of the "liberal" faction of the British government, the Whigs.

Although more frequently out of power than in, the Whigs nonetheless played a significant role in the shaping of British economic and foreign policy until the party's mid-Nineteenth Century split. The Whigs, usually divided amongst themselves on many issues, were broadly in agreement in favor of ending British involvement in the American Colonies (in practical effect, though not necessarily in formal policy, they supported American

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etc. over industry (textiles, ironworks, etc.). Smith was certainly familiar with their work. Prominent physiocrats include Turgot, Quesnay, and Du Pont. Physiocrats were proto-classical economists.

<sup>62</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), xiii-xiv.

<sup>63</sup> Mercantilism was the dominant economic system in Western Europe during the Eighteenth Century. It is characterized by vigorous imperial expansion and trade, although this trade was heavily regulated by protectionist schemes. For example, British colonies were only allowed to purchase manufactured goods from Britain.

<sup>64</sup> Smith believed that in primitive economies, a purely labor theory of value was necessary, but once more complex economies developed, labor became only a part of the value computation. See Albert C. Whitaker, *History and Criticism of the Labor Theory of Value in English Political Economy*, dissertation produced in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctorate of political science at Columbia University, 1904. Available in full online at <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/whitaker/labortheory.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2017).

independence), the ending of the African slave trade, and laissez-faire capitalism.<sup>65</sup> Although the first of these was put into effect in Smith's lifetime and the second effected (at least in Britain) shortly thereafter, the last would prove elusive until the Victorian Age with the repeal of the Com Law in 1846.

### **Classical Liberalism**

Classical liberal economics, or laissez-faire capitalism, represented a break with the mercantilist and protectionist schemes of the Enlightenment period and the guild system of the Renaissance and medieval periods. Although very much an Enlightenment idea, laissez-faire capitalism failed to fully develop until the post- Enlightenment period. This new economic system promised a virtual free-hand to any person with money to invest (capital) and the desire to invest it. Any idea or business, no matter how fanciful or dangerous, was allowed under the rule of the liberals.

Champion of German liberal-conservatism (*Ordoliberalism*) and one of the deans of the Austrian School of Economics<sup>66</sup>, Friedrich Hayek delights in this period of history:

Only since industrial freedom opened the path to the free use of new knowledge, only since everything could be tried - if somebody could be found to back it at his own risk - and, it should be added, as often as not from outside the authorities officially intrusted with the cultivation of learning, has science made the great strides which in the last hundred and fifty years have changed the face of the world.<sup>67</sup>

Hayek continues this line of thought by continuing to sing the praises of the laissez-faire policies of the Industrial Revolution:

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<sup>65</sup> An important division in the party existed during Smith's lifetime as his ally Edmund Burke led the more moderate anti-Jacobin faction while Charles Fox led the pro-French Revolutionary Whigs.

<sup>66</sup> The Austrian School of Economics is one of the premier laissez-faire capitalist schools of economic thought. The Austrians emphasize maximization of individual liberty, strong private property rights, and the smallest possible government (that is, they are mostly minarchists, although some are anarcho-capitalists). Many of the original Austrian thinkers immigrated to the United States where they heavily influenced the University of Chicago School of Business. Prominent thinkers include Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard.

<sup>67</sup> *The Road to Serfdom*, 19-20.

To appreciate what it meant to those who took part in it, we must measure it by the hopes and wishes men held when it began: and there can be no doubt that its success surpassed man's wildest dreams, that by the beginning of the twentieth Century the workingman of the Western world had reached a degree of material comfort, security, and personal independence which a hundred years before had scarcely seemed possible.<sup>68</sup>

This attitude gradually spread across the whole of Europe, smothering any attempts to return to the ideals of the *Ancien Régime* (strongly associated with the Catholic Church).

Very closely linked to the rise of laissez-faire capitalism were the overthrow of Thomist philosophy and a radical re-interpretation of Natural Law philosophy. Although the history of philosophy points to Niccolò Machiavelli and René Descartes as the first modern philosophers (Machiavelli as the first to overthrow the ethics of the ancients and Descartes the first to overthrow the metaphysics and logic of the ancients), the real assault on Thomism and Natural Law did not begin until the Eighteenth Century. Building on the ground so well prepared by Descartes, the British Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, Hume), the French *philosophes* (Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert), and others such as Benedict de Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz, demolished the accepted philosophical underpinnings of Western civilization in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries.

Central to the challenge to Thomism (the Medieval, Christian understanding of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy) was an emphasis on the physical world (or sense-data). The empiricists insisted that human knowledge was simply an accumulation of sense-data, that which we can experience with the five senses. While they accepted *a priori* knowledge, they denied that humanity could have knowledge of that beyond the reach of the senses; in the case of deists this simply meant that God was inscrutable, in the case of others, such as Hume, this meant agnosticism or atheism.

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<sup>68</sup> *The Road to Serfdom*, 19-20.

Spinoza took another track and disseminated a corpus of philosophical work describing the world in terms that put him into conflict with the leaders of his own, Jewish faith. Specifically, Spinoza believed that the world was composed of only one substance (monism), a view that placed him so at odds with the most influential rabbis of his time that he was banned from synagogues across Europe. Although Spinoza did not necessarily mean to conduct a war against Judaism, some of his spiritual successors, the *philosophes*, most certainly embraced revolutionary thoughts about Christianity.

Voltaire and his peers took up the empiricists' assault on the underlying ontological framework of Christianity and carried it a step further - a direct attack on the institution of the Catholic Church. Although Voltaire himself was no disciple of Hume (Hume being nearly two decades his junior), both were champions of empiricism. Voltaire gladly led the charge of the Continental empiricists against the rationalists (as Hume did in Britain), writing scathingly against the philosophy of Leibniz, among others.<sup>69</sup> By 1789 however, the *philosophes* and the disciples of the British empiricists parted ways; the heirs to the *philosophes* would embrace violent revolution, harsh anti-Catholicism, and early modern socialism, while the empiricists' successors would become the Nineteenth Century liberals. The socio-economic policies of both groups would produce suffering for untold millions throughout much of the Nineteenth Century.

By the late 1840's, Europe had become a boiling cauldron, ready to spill over into revolutionary violence at any moment. The brief restoration of the *Ancien Régime* to power in the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna failed to solve any of the problems presented by the French Revolution; rather, it simply delayed the implementation of realistic solutions. Although more progressive leaders had risen to power in the 1830's, such as Louis-Phillipe the "bourgeois

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<sup>69</sup> *Candide* is widely considered a critique of Leibniz's optimism.

king" of the French and William IV of Great Britain, the entrenched aristocracy and rising *nouveau riche* capitalists prevented real change in socio-economic policy.<sup>70</sup> Laissez-faire capitalism was still the rule throughout most of Western Europe and regard for the lives of the workers was at a nadir. At this critical point in European affairs, an obscure German philosopher made his entrance onto the world stage. Although few people would recognize his name within his own lifetime, Karl Marx would become a specter haunting human history for the next Century.

### **The Failure of Classical Liberalism**

Marx began his career as a philosophy student, devoted to the works of Plato and Hegel. During his time at university, he began an association with other disciples of Hegel which would continue throughout the rest of his life. These "Young Hegelians," as they were called, produced three significant thinkers who would influence the next several generations of German philosophers: Marx, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Bruno Bauer. A proper discussion of the full impact of Marx and the Young Hegelians, however, does not belong here, but rather will feature later in my analysis of the rivals of Distributism.

By 1870, then, the liberal-influenced system of peaceful free trade and limited warfare amongst the European powers was clearly showing signs of collapse. "Prussianism" was on the rise in Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was settling into a long, slow decline, Second Empire France with its "imperial socialism" was on course to a fatal collision with Bismarck's Germany and would not live to see 1871, the Ottoman Empire (the "Sick Man of Europe") was even further in decline than the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Balkans were a powder keg

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<sup>70</sup> Although William was not, in any real sense, the leader of the British government, he certainly exercised some influence in Parliament. For example, he helped to pass the Reform Act of 1832 through Parliament by threatening to create more Whig peers to "pack" the House of Lords.

waiting to erupt, and Tsarist Russia descended further into the madness of a police state.<sup>71</sup>

Partially insulated from the problems of Europe, laissez-faire industrial capitalism continued to thrive in the United States, fresh from the Greek tragedy of its own civil war. Against this backdrop of the collapse of liberalism and the rise of imperialism stood the specter of Karl Marx and his Communists, fanning the flames of revolution throughout Europe, seething from their defeat in 1848, and ready to exact vengeance on their opponents.

To understand the motivations of the foot soldiers of the various revolutionary groups (such as the Communists), one need only read the words of many of the authors of the period to hear the cries of the impoverished given voice. Fyodor Dostoevsky's misery-laden works well portray the suffering of the poor. In particular, one may look to his description of the character Raskolnikov: "He was so badly dressed that even a man accustomed to shabbiness would have been ashamed to be seen in the street in such rags. In that part of town, however, scarcely any shortcoming in dress would have created surprise."<sup>72</sup> Dostoevsky makes quite clear in his works that the look of Raskolnikov was hardly uncommon in the Russian Empire of the last Tsars.<sup>73</sup>

Victor Hugo provides equally vivid and disturbing portraits of Louis Napoleon's France.<sup>74</sup> Spectacular amongst them is his description of the common street urchin of Paris, the *gamin*, and the flora and fauna associated with him and Paris itself: "This cherub of the gutter

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<sup>71</sup> The Second Empire technically collapsed with the capture and abdication of Napoleon III, although a French national government did continue to organize a defense against the German invasion between Napoleon's capture and the fall of Paris in January of 1871. While some liberalizing measures were taken in Russia by Alexander II, his successors, Alexander III and Nicholas II were supporters of the old police state mindset and undid much of Alexander II's reforms.

<sup>72</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Constance Garnett, (trans.), (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2007), 6.

<sup>73</sup> I mean to use Raskolnikov only as a useful physical description of the average impoverished peasant of the period. The character of Raskolnikov, himself, is of no interest to me here.

<sup>74</sup> Although *Les Misérables* is set during an earlier period than that in which it was written, it is a useful depiction of the living conditions of France's poor during the reign of Napoleon III. The life of France's poor did not seem to noticeably change between 1815-1860.

sometimes has a shirt, but then he has only one; sometimes he has shoes, but then they have no soles; sometimes he has a shelter, and he loves it, for there he finds his mother; but he prefers the street for there he finds his liberty.”<sup>75</sup>

Continuing: "Every region of Paris is famous for the discoveries which can be made in it. There are earwigs in the wood-yards of the Ursulines, there are wood-lice at the Pantheon, and tadpoles in the ditches of the Champs-de-Mars.”<sup>76</sup>

Echoing these sentiments, diarist Jules de Goncourt describes the conditions at a Paris slum home:

[A] room where the planks that form the walls are coming apart and the floor is full of holes, through which rats are constantly appearing, rats which also come in whenever the door is opened, impudent poor men's rats which climb on to the table, carrying away whole hunks of bread, and worry the feet of sleeping occupants. In this room, six children; the four biggest in a bed; and at their feet, which they are unable to stretch out, the two smallest in a crate. The man, a costermonger, who has known better days, dead-drunk during his wife's labor. The woman, as drunk as her husband, lying on a straw mattress and being plied with drink by a friend of hers, an old army canteen attendant who developed a thirst in twenty-five years' campaigning and spends all her pension on liquor. And during the delivery in this shanty, the wretched shanty of civilization, an organ-grinder's monkey, imitating and parodying the cries and angry oaths of the shrew in the throes of childbirth, piddling through a crack in the roof on to the snoring husband's back!<sup>77</sup>

Against this backdrop of abject poverty danced the well-meaning, though inept reformer Emperor.<sup>78</sup> Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon III) and his grand schemes met harsh criticism from almost all segments of society: Chambord, Hugo, Marx, and Emile Zola each took the Emperor to task.<sup>79</sup> This contrast of imperial high society and the stark suffering of the masses

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<sup>75</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, C.E. Wilbur, (trans.), (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003), 342.

<sup>76</sup> Hugo, 342.

<sup>77</sup> Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt: Memoires de la vie litteraire* cited in Alastair Horne's *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune 1870-1871*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 25- 26.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 90 – 96.

<sup>79</sup> René Rémond, *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle*, James Laux (trans.), (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969).



inspired a certain cynicism amongst the French populace who embraced the works of the realists, including the ever jaded Gustave Flaubert.

Although the sickly-sweet facade of Second Empire Paris was enough to tum the stomach of all but the most hard-hearted, it was nothing to the permanent dismal gray cloud that hovered over Victorian London. The well-known slums were fodder for the literary minds of the time who envisioned such legendary characters as Oliver Twist, Ebenezer Scrooge, Sherlock Holmes, and the surreal Jack the Ripper. Despite the veneer of prosperity to be seen throughout St. James, official London seemed deprived of both life and luster. Discussing Joseph Chamberlain's first impression of the Colonial Office upon becoming Colonial Secretary in 1895, Thomas Pakenham notes that: "Chamberlain found the Colonial Office was almost a parody of a Whitehall Department. Behind the glittering Roman facade, commissioned by Lord Palmerston, the place was unbelievably drab."<sup>80</sup> In fact, the Colonial Office of the greatest empire on Earth lacked electric lighting even as late as 1896, still resorting to candles and the occasional gaslight; Chamberlain further complains that much of the furniture was broken and many of the carpets worn threadbare.<sup>81</sup> If the greatest empire on Earth was unable even to maintain the office of one of its most important ministries, how then did the poor of that empire fare?

If Whitehall resembled nothing so much as a collection of broken down relics of the Napoleonic era, the East End and the slums of London were positively chaotic remnants of feudal and Elizabethan England, with residents appearing more like inhabitants of Third World villages than citizens of the capital of the world's richest empire. It was into this environment of poverty and revolution - Marx and Engels did most of their work in England -that the great

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1979), 20.

<sup>81</sup> Pakenham, 20.

thinkers of early Distributism were born and raised.<sup>82</sup> Chesterton, Belloc, and Arthur Penty witnessed firsthand the evils and social failures of Victorian England and Second Empire/early Third Republic France. One need look no further than the work of Charles Dickens, he who spun such vivid imagery of Victorian poverty, to see the effect of one of Distributism's oldest and most bitter foes, usury: "The father of this pleasant grandfather, of the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, was a horny-skinned, two-legged, money-getting species of spider who spun webs to catch unwary flies and retired into holes until they were entrapped. The name of this old pagan's god was Compound Interest."<sup>83</sup>

Against this and many other sins would labor the greatest minds of the next Century. Britain, though inured from the more extreme violence of the French Revolution of 1789 and the Socialist uprisings on the Continent in 1848, nonetheless enjoyed its share of bloody labor violence. Taking the form of both anti-industrial riots and small-scale guerrilla warfare in the countryside Luddite riots of the 1830's and the more familiar workers' strikes and riots in the industrialized cities throughout the mid- and late Nineteenth Century, the British workers had little reservation about taking to the streets to express their frustration with the shortcomings of laissez-faire capitalism. Noted conflicts between labor and the government included the Chartist movement which, although initially unsuccessful during the 1840's, eventually triumphed in the 1860's in the form of several Parliamentary bills (the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 and the Ballot Act of 1872, for example).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> While Marx and Engels were not terribly influential in Britain, they drew much of the inspiration for their works from the plight of the British industrial worker.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2005), 249.

<sup>84</sup> The Chartists were a political reform movement seeking, among other things, universal male suffrage, a reform of electoral districts, an end of property-rights requirements to sit in Parliament, and voting by secret ballot. Many of their objectives were accomplished in the 1867, 1872, and 1884 Acts.

Into this chaotic era of labor violence, political turmoil and increasing government oppression, a former Anglican bishop turned Roman Catholic Cardinal named Henry Newman emerged as a major player on the European stage. As a well-respected clergyman and friend of the working class, Henry Newman was something of an "establishment" anti-establishment figure. Newman's conversion from the Church of England to the Church of Rome represented more than a small scandal in British socio-political circles, and his advocacy for the rights of the workers only contributed to his *persona non-grata* status amongst the liberal British upper class. Despite this, Newman's position as a leader of British Catholics meant that the establishment had to take him somewhat seriously, and his key role in de-escalating several labor strikes before they became violent gradually endeared him to both the capitalists and the proletariat. Additionally, Henry Edward, Cardinal Manning, a colleague of Cardinal Newman, had become directly involved in the London Dock Strike of 1889. Manning, like Newman an Anglican convert to Catholicism, was the key mediator between the workers and dock owners during the critical period of the Strike and is largely credited with its peaceful resolution. Manning's work during this time inspired a young Hilaire Belloc, one of the future champions of Distributism; Newman, on the other hand, became a great inspiration for Belloc's greatest friend and fellow Distributist, G. K. Chesterton. As the 1880's progressed and more and more bishops labored to alleviate the suffering of the working poor, the Vatican began to take a more active role in the struggle. The election of Gioacchino Pecci to the Papacy as Leo XIII proved a major turning point in the role of the Church in the affairs of the secular world. A new phenomenon, named Distributism by later authors, was about to be introduced.

**Encyclical Foundations of Distributism: *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno***

"The idea, then, that the civil government should, at its own discretion penetrate and pervade the family and the household, is a great and pernicious mistake."<sup>85</sup> - Pope Leo XIII

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were strong believers in personalism and distributism, twin philosophies that helped define the pre-World War II Church. In reacting to the challenge of modernity presented by the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century revolutions, the Church sought to restate, in explicitly modern terms, its vision of a Christ-centered community. This process began as early as the Italian Wars of Independence fought, off and on, from 1830 to 1871.<sup>86</sup> The Holy See began, in 1826, to issue increasingly strident encyclicals and apostolic exhortations against membership in revolutionary societies (including by implication, though not by name, Freemasonry), liberal political parties, and anti-clerical nationalist groups.<sup>87</sup> Pope Gregory XVI, an oddly inconsistent occupant of the Chair of Peter, issued as his first encyclical *Miarari Vos (You Wonder)* cautioning against too close an association between Church and State, but at the same time condemning religious pluralism as dangerous. This peculiar policy of conservatism and liberalism continued in *In Supremo Apostaltus (At the Summit of Apostolic Power)*, an encyclical first distributed at the 1839 Provincial Council of Baltimore, that condemned the slave trade as utterly incompatible with Christian faith and charity while, at the same time, setting the stage for the First Vatican Council's explication of papal infallibility and supreme spiritual authority.<sup>88</sup> Pope Gregory

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<sup>85</sup> "Rerum Novarum" from *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, 18.

<sup>86</sup> Some historians might dispute this dating, arguing for an earlier start such as the fight for Corsican independence in the wake of the events of 1789, but I think it fair to say that the 1830 insurrections that directly brought Austrian, French, and Papal pressure to bear are a more accurate dating. For views differing from my own, see, for example, Edgar Holt, *The Making of Italy: 1815–1870*, (New York: Murray Printing Company, 1971).

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, *Quo Graviora* and *Mirari Vos*.

<sup>88</sup> Given the time and place where this encyclical was promulgated, it is impossible to see this as anything but a broadside against the Atlantic slave trade and its American consumers.

explains that, following the 1639 letter of Urban VIII, slavery is to be neither practiced nor supported in any way.

In our time Pius VII, moved by the same religious and charitable spirit as his Predecessors, intervened zealously with those in possession of power to secure that the slave trade should at least cease amongst the Christians. The penalties imposed and the care given by Our Predecessors contributed in no small measure, with the help of God, to protect the Indians and the other people mentioned against the cruelty of the invaders or the cupidity of Christian merchants, without however carrying success to such a point that the Holy See could rejoice over the complete success of its efforts in this direction; for the slave trade, although it has diminished in more than one district, is still practiced by numerous Christians. This is why, desiring to remove such a shame from all the Christian nations, having fully reflected over the whole question and having taken the advice of many of Our Venerable Brothers the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and walking in the footsteps of Our Predecessors, We warn and adjure earnestly in the Lord faithful Christians of every condition that no one in the future dare to vex anyone, despoil him of his possessions, reduce to servitude, or lend aid and favour to those who give themselves up to these practices, or exercise that inhuman traffic by which the Blacks, as if they were not men but rather animals, having been brought into servitude, in no matter what way, are, without any distinction, in contempt of the rights of justice and humanity, bought, sold, and devoted sometimes to the hardest labour. Further, in the hope of gain, propositions of purchase being made to the first owners of the Blacks, dissensions and almost perpetual conflicts are aroused in these regions.

We reprove, then, by virtue of Our Apostolic Authority, all the practices abovementioned as absolutely unworthy of the Christian name. By the same Authority We prohibit and strictly forbid any Ecclesiastic or lay person from presuming to defend as permissible this traffic in Blacks under no matter what pretext or excuse, or from publishing or teaching in any manner whatsoever, in public or privately, opinions contrary to what We have set forth in this Apostolic Letter.<sup>89</sup>

Subsequent pontiffs wavered between conservatism and liberalism, though never so widely was this contradiction present in a single pope as it had been in Gregory.

Despite the language used in these mid-Nineteenth Century works, it is possible to tease out the first strands of contemporary rights-based language and a respect for the individual human person (though within the framework of a community, ideally a Catholic one). Where

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<sup>89</sup> *In Supremo Apostaltus* available in full online at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16sup.htm>

Gregory's concern for the person is evident in his exhortation to treat black slaves as human beings, not subhuman servants or animals. While this sounds unusual, even bizarre to the ears of contemporary Westerners, in fact, Gregory was a man very much ahead of his time in 1839. Consider that the United States had banned (at least *de jure*) the importation of African slaves only in 1808 (and did not end the institution of slavery totally until 1865), slavery was abolished in the British Empire only in 1833, while British efforts to stamp out slavery continued for another Century (General Gordon sought to remove the scourge of slavery in the Sudan in 1877, only to find that the taste for slaves was so intense, especially European slaves, that at least part of the rise of the Mahdi was linked to Gordon's disruption of the slave trade), and serfdom did not end in Russia until 1861.<sup>90</sup> This is certainly not to suggest that this most curious of popes was a true personalist, but a leader at least willing to set the Church on the road to using language that made possible the rise of personalism.

Turning, for a moment, to Gregory's predecessor, Leo XII, we find, even earlier, the use of personalist language. In his encyclicals and letters, there is the repeated use of the term "dignity," in reference to the sacredness of each human person (and presumably the salvation of his soul). In condemning anarchist organizations and noting the unheeded warning against such groups made by his predecessor, Leo says this:

Would that those who were in charge of matters then had assumed these Decrees to be of such value as the salvation of both the Church and the State was demanding! Would that they had convinced themselves that they ought to respect in the Roman Pontiffs, Successors of Blessed Peter, not only the Universal Pastors and Teachers of the Church, but also the Vigorous Defenders of their Dignity, and the most diligent heralds of the dangers which threaten!<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1877 banned trade in foreign slaves [white European slaves] and export of domestic slaves effective that year, while banning all slavery by 1889; see Paul Lovejoy's *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>91</sup> From Leo XII's 1826 encyclical, *Quo Graviora* ("The more grave"), section 5.

Hardly was Leo the occasional progressive that Gregory was, but nevertheless there is the language of dignity that refers not only to the more conservative reading (dignity of office or station or other social hierarchical position), but also to the more personalist reading of genuine valuing of leaders due a certain measure of value and respect as Man *qua* Man personhood.

Following on from Leo and Gregory, we see decidedly illiberal Pius IX who, while doing great service to many nations (calling worldwide attention to and begging for assistance for the Irish during their famine years, demanding an end to persecution of Armenian Catholics by Turkish authorities, struggling with the Tsar for the fate of Poland), seems rarely to have spoken at length about the individual.<sup>92</sup> Although there are passages in his 1864 encyclical *Quanta Cura (Great Care)* that mention divine and human law (and by implication their relationship via natural law), little is directed at the concrete person, but rather at abstractions such as society and political entities. While the restatement of the importance of natural law is a stone on the path to both distributism and personalism, Pius' pre-occupation with a theoretical understanding of the world, coupled with his foreign and domestic political difficulties made for very little progress toward the modern or contemporary understanding of these things.<sup>93</sup>

If Pius' exceptionally long tenure, at thirty-one and a half years the longest in papal history, saw little progress, then that of his successor, Leo XIII, the third-longest serving pope in history, more than made up for it. Leo, born Gioacchino Pecci, was elected to fill the Chair of Peter at the age of sixty-eight (in 1878, this was considered quite old), and it was thought that his pontificate would be a short and uneventful one. How wrong the electors were! Over the course of twenty-five years as pope, Leo intervened to allow a future saint and doctor of the Church,

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<sup>92</sup> So unpopular was Pius IX that the intensely anti-Catholic Italian republicans attempted to steal his body and dump it in the river Tiber shortly after his death. His successor prevented the plan's execution.

<sup>93</sup> It should not be forgotten that as a consequence of the Franco-Prussian War and Italian Unification, the Papal States fell to the Italian Army and Pope Pius was confined to the Vatican (the "Prisoner of the Vatican").

Therese Martin (Saint Therese of Liseux, the Little Flower of Jesus), to enter the convent at fifteen (a year earlier than normally allowed), restored Thomist philosophy as the official philosophy of the Church in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (*Eternal Father*) and the republished complete works of Thomas Aquinas (the so-called “Leonine” edition), created the Catholic University of America, consecrated all of humanity to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the encyclical *Annun Sacrum* (*Holy Year*), re-opened the Vatican Observatory, opened the Vatican Secret Archives to researchers, elevated John Henry Newman to the College of Cardinals, composed the Leonine Prayers (including the exceptional Prayer to Saint Michael), and led the most significant re-orientation of the Church since the Council of Trent via his letters, addresses and encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (*New Things*).<sup>94</sup> Quite an accomplishment for the oldest pope in history!<sup>95</sup>

What strikes the casual observer most about Leo, I think, is his dedication to both scholarship and politics. In the aforementioned encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, Leo defined the relationship between faith and reason (or science and religion in his terms) as one of mutual benefit. That is, Leo sees no conflict between them, but rather that both are used to grasp essential truths about the nature of creation, science focusing upon observations of the natural world, while religion seeks and analyzes the supernatural (or metaphysical) world. This was a generally understood relationship, but one that had been sorely tested during the reigns of previous pontiffs (Urban VIII and Leo’s immediate predecessor Pius IX especially). The

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<sup>94</sup> The Leonine Prayers, although no longer obligatory after Mass following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, are still encouraged by post-conciliar popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Also of interest is that Leo is the first pope to have been recorded on video and the first to have been recorded on audio; this is truly remarkable for a man born the year after Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>95</sup> Pope Leo XIII was ninety-three at the time of his death, a good life by today’s standards, but even more so by the standards of Nineteenth Century medicine.



language and understanding used in *Aeterni Patris* is closely mirrored in later encyclicals on this topic issued later in the Twentieth Century such as *Fides et Ratio* (*Faith and Reason*).

It is one of the great ironies of the age that although Leo XIII was elected with the expectation that his would be a quiet and short papacy, in fact, he brought a new energy to the Vatican and a new sense of engagement with the world. The Church, as an institution, had suffered badly throughout the Nineteenth Century, and the latter half of the Century saw a fierce outbreak of anti-clericalism erupt across Europe. Leo's predecessor, Pius IX, had endured a difficult and tumultuous reign, being ultimately reduced to virtual prisoner status within his own city after the loss of the Papal States in 1870.<sup>96</sup> Despite these massive setbacks, Leo assumed the Chair of St. Peter in 1877 with much optimism and energy, determined to re-engage the Church with the modern, secular world. By 1891, Leo was still defying the expectations of both his friends and enemies. After consultation with Henry, Cardinal Newman, a long and thoughtful consideration of the works of Marx, Engels, and other Socialists, and firsthand observation of the misery of the urban poor, Leo determined to issue a pronouncement destined to shape the course of all modern Catholic social teachings.

*Rerum Novarum*, issued on the fifteenth of May, 1891, was fairly short in length, a mere 24 pages in twelve-point font, but tremendously powerful in its content, out of all proportion to its size. It contains a discussion of socialism, liberalism, laissez-faire capitalism, the relation between employer and employee, the plight of the poor, and the role of the Church. The groundwork for this earthshaking encyclical had already been laid by Leo in 1879 with his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, as noted above, in which he declared the primacy of Thomist philosophy as the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. Although, with the exception of

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<sup>96</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 12.

socialism, none of these themes were new, the Church had never issued an encyclical dealing with economic and labor theory in such specifics.

*Rerum Novarum* (literally "new things") begins with an explanation of its purpose:

Therefore, venerable brethren, as on former occasions, when it seemed opportune to refute false teaching, we have addressed you in the interests of the Church and of the commonwealth, and have issued letters on political power, on human liberty, on the Christian constitution of the State, and on similar subjects, so now we have thought it useful to speak on the condition of labor.<sup>97</sup>

Leo understood the wretched conditions under which many of the poor of Europe labored; however, he was careful to couch much of the language of *Rerum* in peaceful, non-revolutionary terms. He notes the danger of his words being perverted early on:

The discussion is not easy, nor is it free from danger. It is not easy to define the relative rights and the mutual duties of the wealthy and of the poor, of capital and of labor. And the danger lies in this, that crafty agitators constantly make use of these disputes to pervert men's judgments and to stir up the people to sedition.<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps this is recognition of Marx's opinion on philosophy: "Philosophers have merely *interpreted* the world in different ways; but the point is to *change* it."<sup>99</sup> Marx's disciples would have been only too pleased to use the words of a papal encyclical to advance their revolutionary agenda; Leo guarded carefully against this possibility.<sup>100</sup>

Although aware of the need to tread carefully, Leo recognized the volatility of the situation confronting Europe and understood that a remedy was swiftly needed: "[S]ome remedy must be found, and quickly found, for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor."<sup>101</sup> He continues by lamenting the destruction of

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<sup>97</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 14.

<sup>98</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 14-15.

<sup>99</sup> Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" from *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2005), 181.

<sup>100</sup> Marx had, in fact, been dead since 1883, but his disciples were becoming more and more active in European labor unrest.

<sup>101</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 15.

the old guild system during the Enlightenment period and the rise of the frequently condemned practice of "rapacious usury."<sup>102</sup> The question of usury and Leo's condemnation of it echoes Aquinas: "To receive interest (usury) for lending money is unjust in itself for something is sold that does not exist, and this obviously results in an inequality which is contrary to justice."<sup>103</sup>

Although the challenge to the lending of money with interest and a thinly veiled rebuke to industrial robber barons and monopolists might seem to ally the Vatican with socialism, Leo is quick to point out its errors as well, "To remedy these evils the *Socialists*, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, endeavor to destroy private property, and maintain that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or municipal bodies."<sup>104</sup> This last point is quite important, as Leo takes great pains to defend the right of individuals to own private property. In fact, Leo is almost directly citing Adam Smith's theories of economics, by pointing out that by honest labor, a fair wage, a frugal living, and wise investment, a poor man might make a better life for himself and his family.<sup>105</sup> This is contra socialism which, Leo points out, strikes at the interests of wage earners by denying them the right to spend or invest their wages as they so desire; that is, they are denied the liberty to use their wages to improve their lot in life. And this is a large part of *Rerum's* argument against socialism: that it is manifestly unjust and its policies the enemy of liberty.

Leo continues this analysis of private property by including a discussion of reason and natural law that incorporates the essentials of Thomist philosophy, abandoned by European intellectuals during the Enlightenment. In particular, and perhaps in anticipation of Socialist

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<sup>102</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 15. The Church's view of usury has evolved over time from a total condemnation of all lending at interest to a more nuanced condemnation of exploitive lending. See *Caritas in Veritate* issued in 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "The Sin of Usury" from The Second Part of Part II of *Summa Theologica* from *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, Paul Sigmund, (trans.), (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 74.

<sup>104</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 15.

<sup>105</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2010).

tyranny, Leo's reference to Thomism reminds us of Aquinas' view of unjust laws: "Therefore if a case emerges in which the observance of the law would be harmful to the general good, it should not be observed."<sup>106</sup> Additionally there is more than a little suspicion on Leo's part that the rulers of the modern secular states were hardly molded in the Aristotelian tradition: "Legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator."<sup>107</sup>

These points on the nature of Man and natural law are critical to Leo's explanation of the family as a community predating the state or nation and the overriding authority of the family over the positive laws of the secular state.

That right of property, therefore, which has been proved to belong naturally to individual persons must also belong to a man in his capacity of head of a family; nay, such a person must possess this right so much the more clearly in proportion as his position multiplies his duties. For it is a most sacred law of nature that a father must provide food and all necessaries for those whom he has begotten.<sup>108</sup>

Importantly, and somewhat controversially, Leo here uses his explanation of the rights of the family as a justification for civil disobedience, rebellion, or revolution against the state: "If the citizens of a State - that is to say, the families - on entering on association and fellowships, experienced at the hands of the State hindrance instead of help, and found their rights attacked instead of being protected, such associations were rather to be repudiated than sought after."<sup>109</sup> This is an important doctrine which would be used by later leaders to justify resistance to Socialist regimes. Leo allows that families that find themselves in great difficulty and with nowhere else to turn should receive aid from the State. Additionally, he acknowledges that grave injustice may arise within a family and that the State must interfere in such situations to protect

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<sup>106</sup> *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, 56.

<sup>107</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* from *Introduction to Aristotle*, Richard McKeown (ed.), (New York: Modern Library Classics, 1992), 352.

<sup>108</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 18.

<sup>109</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 18.

the rights of all involved. Here, though, Leo believes state interference must halt; the authority of the family is sacrosanct and should be considered inviolable by state authorities. Leo identifies socialism with a direct attack on the family (a point Marx acknowledged in *The Communist Manifesto*): "The Socialists, therefore, in setting aside the parent and introducing the providence of the State, act *against natural justice*, and threaten the very existence of family life."<sup>110</sup>

Importantly, and striking at one of the key themes of the encyclical, Leo explains the proper relationship between employer and employee. He utterly rejects the Socialist thesis of class warfare and claims that both rich and poor are necessary to society. In fact, Leo boldly proclaims that the solution to class strife is harmony provided by the teachings of the Church: "First of all, there is nothing more powerful than religion (of which the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing rich and poor together, by reminding each class of its duties to the other, and especially of the duties of justice."<sup>111</sup> Leo lays out very clearly the duties of the worker to his employer and of the employer to his workers. The key points in both relations are justice, compassion and consideration, honesty, and the avoidance of violence. Here, again, is a reproach of socialism with its insistence on revolutionary violence. Marx specified: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."<sup>112</sup>

Leo next turns to an *homage* of sorts to labor and laborers. He cites Christ as the perfect example of an impoverished laborer - a humble carpenter. In fact, one of the central beliefs of Christianity is the transitory nature of worldly life and thus the futility in expending unreasonable effort to acquire riches. We shall all be called to account for the use of our riches in life on the

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<sup>110</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 19.

<sup>111</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 20 – 21. I am reminded of Cantos XIX and XX of Dante's *Paradiso*.

<sup>112</sup> Marx, 41.

Day of Judgment and the right use of money is clearly explained both by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and by Aquinas. "But when necessity has been supplied, and one's position fairly considered, it is a duty to give to the indigent out of that which is left over. 'That which remaineth give alms.'"<sup>113</sup> And again, Leo revisits the dignity of labor and the laborer and reminds us that Christ was a laborer. In discussing this, Leo returns to Aquinas and Aristotle to explain the *summum bonum*, the greatest good for Man:

[T]he true dignity and excellence of man lies in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; that virtue is the common inheritance of all, equally within the reach of high and low, rich and poor; and that virtue, and virtue alone, wherever found, will be followed by the rewards of everlasting happiness.<sup>114</sup>

The conclusion of both Aquinas, in *Summa Theologica*, and Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, is that the greatest good for Man is happiness and that happiness can only be achieved by the living of a life according to virtue. A modern analytical Thomist philosopher, Peter Kreeft, expands upon this point: "Christ is the single touchstone of morality... But he is more than the touchstone, He is also the goal, the good we seek, the 'meaning of life,' the *summum bonum*, the end, the 'one thing necessary.'"<sup>115</sup> Again, we see the insistence of Leo on the doctrines of Thomism. He earnestly argues for the idea that a virtuous life according to Christian teachings will bring harmony between poor and rich. In fact, Leo openly favors the poor stating, "Nay, God himself seems to incline more to those who suffer evil; for Jesus Christ calls the poor blessed; he lovingly invites those in labor and grief to come to him for solace; and he displays the tenderest charity to the lowly and oppressed."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 22 – 23.

<sup>114</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 23. Also, this argument is repeated in paragraph 57 of Pope Saint John Paul II's Distributist encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, in which he notes that poverty is not solely material, but can also manifest as cultural and spiritual poverty, the cure to which is virtue.

<sup>115</sup> Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Jesus*, (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 115-116.

<sup>116</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 23. This is an early reference to the preferential option for the poor.

To address the direct criticism of the Church by many Socialists of the era, Leo explains, in some detail, the work that the Church has done and continues to do on behalf of the poor. He discusses the teachings of the Church regarding living a frugal and virtuous life and, most importantly, giving alms and other charity to those in need. Also, he cites the early Church Fathers' praise of the charity of Christians and of the creation of the post of deacon by the early Christians with the specific responsibility to distribute charitable gifts to the poor. Finally, Leo cites the many religious orders within the Church dedicated to the aid of the poor.<sup>117</sup> He concludes his defense:

At the present day there are many who, like the heathen of old, blame and condemn the Church for this beautiful charity. They would substitute in its place a system of State-organized relief. But no human methods will ever supply for the devotion and self-sacrifice of Christian charity. Charity, as a virtue, belongs to the Church; for it is no virtue unless it is drawn from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.<sup>118</sup>

Leo now turns to a discussion of the proper role of the State in the regulation of labor and relief of poverty. He cites the need for rulers to enforce "distributive justice" within their realm.<sup>119</sup> This includes such things as the flourishing of morality, respect for religion, justice, and the family, and wise use of natural resources. Additionally, Leo provides "The First Law of Government," that explains the duties of the State:

[T]hat peace and good order should be maintained; that family life should be carried on in accordance with God's laws and those of nature; that religion should be revered and obeyed; that a high standard of morality should prevail in public and private life; that the sanctity of justice should be respected, and that no one should injure another with impunity; that the members of the commonwealth should grow up to man's estate by strong and robust, and capable, if need be, of guarding and defending their country.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 25.

<sup>118</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 25.

<sup>119</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 26.

<sup>120</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 28.

Leo insists also that the rights of citizens and the ownership of private property be safeguarded by the State. To preserve good order within the state, he is explicit in his demand that the proper state authorities restrain the activities of revolutionaries both in terms of their actual violence and their incitement of workers to violence. Although Leo frowns on the injury to trade and commerce done by labor strikes, he acknowledges the legitimate wrongs done to laborers and holds that laws should be passed to address these injuries prior to the crisis point of a strike being reached.

Next, Leo comes to the issue of employment. He explains clearly that the Church does not support employers who work their employees excessively and that it deplores and utterly condemns the use of child labor in workshops and factories and the use of female labor in undignified or physically excruciating labor such as that done in mines. Although Leo does not go so far as to specify the 8-hour workday, he does give general guidelines to employers that they should take into account the difficulty of the physical labor done by their employees and the season of the year and its associated climate conditions. Stress is placed in all of these matters on the importance of the family; male laborers must have time home to rest with their families, female laborers should be employed in positions that preserve their dignity and allow for them to properly raise their children.

He next turns to the critical issue of "just wages." This doctrine has re-appeared over and over throughout the papal encyclicals of the Twentieth Century and has occupied the time of many Catholic bishops, theologians, and economists. Leo absolutely recognized the importance of this issue and the necessity of getting Church teaching on this matter right. "We now approach a subject of very great importance and one on which, if extremes are to be avoided, right ideas



are absolutely necessary."<sup>121</sup> Leo immediately attacks the contract theory foundation of liberal economics by pointing out that simply because a worker and employer have agreed upon a wage does not necessarily make it fair or just or even reasonable. The essential nature of labor, however, is not merely personal - that is, it is not simply a matter of one individual exerting himself for personal profit. If this were true, then, of course, all contracts regarding employment and wages should be entirely governed by the private negotiations between employer and employee (or the "bargain between man and man" as Leo puts it).<sup>122</sup> The critical aspect of labor that is ignored by this sentiment is the *necessary* nature of labor. This refers to the fact that Man cannot survive without labor; he earns his sustenance through the sweat of his brow. Therefore, the wages for his labor must be enough to support both himself and his family. The contractual negotiation of wage between worker and employer may be twisted or perverted by either employer or the situation of the worker as Leo points out. Specifically, "If through necessity or fear of a worse evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will give him no better, he is the victim of force and injustice."<sup>123</sup> Later economists, of the Austrian School in particular, would object to this opinion regarding labor.<sup>124</sup>

In order to address concerns over just wages as well as matters such as workplace safety and working hours, Leo would resort to the modern incarnation of the ancient guild system, the workers' union. He clearly objects to state intervention in matters of this sort, save for interference in order to protect the unions from undue pressure or violence against them by anti-union forces. Leo proceeds to defend the rights of workers to form unions and the duties that

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<sup>121</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 31.

<sup>122</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 31.

<sup>123</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 31.

<sup>124</sup> Walter Block, *The U.S. Bishops and their Critics: An Economic and Ethical Perspective*, (Vancouver, Canada: The Fraser Institute), 1986.

unions should undertake (he refers to unions as workmen's associations). "History attests what excellent results were effected by the artificer's guilds of a former day. They were the means not only of many advantages to the workmen, but in no small degree of the advancement of art, as numerous monuments remain to prove."<sup>125</sup> Again, Leo cites Aquinas' views on public and private society, indicating their application to the civil life (public society) and guild or union life (private society). Here, in something like a defense of the right to assemble, Leo will defend the absolute right of workers to form unions: "Particular societies, then, although they exist within the State, and are each a part of the State, nevertheless cannot be prohibited by the State absolutely and as such. For to enter into a 'society' of this kind is the natural right of man."<sup>126</sup> This does not extend to revolutionary societies intent on violence as he clearly points out that the State has a right, in accord with the principle of protecting human life, to forbid the formation of such associations, but clearly this is not the intent of unions as Leo sees them. Although he declines to give specific rules for the organization and conduct of unions, seeing such things as necessarily varying from culture to culture, Leo does not hesitate to explain the goal of all unions:

[W]orkmen's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost, in body, mind and property. It is clear that they must pay special and principal attention to piety and morality, and that their internal discipline must be directed precisely by these considerations; otherwise they entirely lose their special character, and come to be very little better than those societies which take no account of religion at all. What advantage can it be to a workman to obtain by means of a society all that he requires, and to endanger his soul for want of spiritual food?<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 33.

<sup>126</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 33.

<sup>127</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 35 – 36.

In further support of such associations, Leo points to the early Christian communities and to the Apostles of Christ. Although they lived in poverty, through industriousness, good, peaceful conduct and faith, they won over to their side the favor of the most powerful empire on Earth.

It is important to note that the guilds or unions or workingmen's associations that Leo has in mind are significantly different than the modern reader's understanding of a union. The modern union is both more flexible in its membership and much more politically corrupt than even the old, intensely political guilds.<sup>128</sup> The union of today is not, by any means, the ideal that Leo envisioned for workingmen's protective societies. The guilds of old served as a vocational training school in that an apprentice would learn a craft under the tutelage of journeymen and masters; the union of today provides no equivalent. The guilds also expected a lifetime commitment whereas one may, in most cases, freely leave a modern union. These distinctions are critical in the discussion of the role of unions/associations throughout Distributist literature.

*Rerum Novarum* concludes with a plea for workers to renew their faith and join together, peacefully, in unions. Leo takes great pains to graphically describe the plight of the poor:

They cannot but perceive that their grasping employers too often treat them with the greatest inhumanity, and hardly care for them beyond the profit their labor brings; and if they belong to an association, it is probably one in which there exists, in place of charity and love, that internal strife which always accompanies unresigned and irreligious poverty. Broken in spirit and worn down in body, how many of them would gladly free themselves from this galling slavery!<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Note, for example, the Employee Free Choice Act of 2009 and the debate surrounding it in the US Congress. See Carl F. Horowitz, *Union Corruption in America: Still a Growth Industry*, (National Legal and Policy Center: Falls Church, VA, 2004), available in full online at <http://www.nilrr.org/files/Horowitz.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2017). Also see Steven Greenhouse, "Fierce Lobbying Greets Bill to Help Workers Unionize," from *The New York Times*, March 10, 2009 edition, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/11/business/11labor.html?ref=business> (accessed June 20, 2017).

<sup>129</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 37.

This language of slavery is very important as the same imagery would be used, repeatedly, by the secular authors who would further the message of *Rerum Novarum* in the next Century. In fact, Chesterton and Belloc would constantly refer to the working class as "wage slaves."

In 1891, then, the idea of Distributism was born. Though not yet given a formal name (that would have to wait for the work of Chesterton and Belloc), it unleashed a tidal wave throughout the Catholic world which would continue to impact all future relations between the Church and secular world. Leo's papacy and that of his successors Pius X and Benedict XV would usher in a new Catholic Renaissance that would gift unto the world some of the greatest minds of the twentieth Century. Although the Catholic nations of the Continent would contribute to this new Renaissance (in particular, the revival of Thomism would be championed by French philosophers Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain), the intellectual and spiritual heart of the new Catholicism would be infamously anti-Catholic Britain, as I discuss later.

### **Heinrich Pesch, S.J., Pius XI, and Quadragesimo Anno**

"The State must *guarantee* the social security of its citizens, but it must not *supply* that security. Freedom from want must not be purchased by freedom from freedom."

-Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen<sup>130</sup>

The Great Depression that began in the United States in 1929 and spread throughout the world shortly thereafter created both a great challenge to and a great opportunity for Distributism and its thinkers to advance their socio economic ideas. Already conflict between capitalism and Communism had erupted with each side's adherents claiming to have the solution to the problems of worldwide economic depression; in truth, neither seemed to offer much new material. Die-hard laissez-faire capitalists presented nothing better than a demand for less

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<sup>130</sup> Sheen, Fulton J, *Seven Pillars of Peace*, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1944), 54-55, cited in Thomas C. Reeves, *America's Bishop: The Life and Times of Fulton J. Sheen*, (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001), 92.

government regulation, while raving red revolutionaries offered only violence and social disruption. Despite the fact that Communism was, even at this early date showing signs of decay, totalitarianism and failure, many otherwise intelligent individuals were lured into its clutches. For the most part, these were well-meaning socialites who, in many cases, simply closed their eyes to the realities of Bolshevism.<sup>131</sup> Others, such as those in the government of President Franklin Roosevelt, offered a program of limited socialism in the form of the New Deal. Although many throughout the United States and Europe rushed to support such plans, the Catholic Church and many of its thinkers staunchly opposed these statist solutions, preferring to follow the path established by Pope Leo XIII and now expanded by Pope Pius XI in his 1931 encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*.<sup>132</sup>

Although the world stood in the midst of one of the first truly global economic crises, the Church was well prepared, with thinkers as diverse as English novelists, French expatriates, American journalists, German Jesuits, and Spanish monks having been hard at work laboring to analyze and explain to the world the full meaning of and consequences of *Rerum Novarum* forty years earlier. In fact, the title of Pius' encyclical was meant to both celebrate the fortieth anniversary of and further contribute to the work begun in 1891. It was as if the Vatican wanted to show the world that it had not lain dormant for four decades, but rather strove mightily to bring the truth of Distributism to the public. In compiling *Quadragesimo*, Pius could draw on some of the finest politico-economic analyses compiled since Adam Smith's day. Particularly important was the 4,000-plus page work of German Jesuit Heinrich Pesch.

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<sup>131</sup> Richard Wright, a communist activist during this period, later offered a scathing criticism of upper-class socialite communists of the 1920's and 30's in two of his works: *Native Son* and *Black Boy*.

<sup>132</sup> Of course, there were a significant number of Catholic thinkers who supported the New Deal, or similar programs. See, for example, the US Bishops' Program for Social Reconstruction of 1919 and the subsequent works of its author, Father John A. Ryan.

Pesch's monumental critique of socialism and liberalism (that is liberal capitalism) is still considered the bedrock of Catholic economic philosophy. Published in 1918, *Ethik und Volkswirtschaft* shook many economists to their core by its rigorous (and, at times, plodding) analysis of Smith, Ricardo, Bastiat, Marx, and Engels. Pesch offered a thoroughly Thomist critique of each major facet of liberalism and socialism, and an alternative rooted in Aristotelian virtues and the teachings of the Gospel and the Church. Pesch's work includes vast amounts of discussion of Catholic economics and its critics; unlike many authors, Pesch does not set-up pale and lifeless straw man versions of his opponents' ideas, but strives, like the Scholastic philosophers of old, to put forth opposing theories' best arguments. An example of Pesch's critique of socialism is its emphasis on industrialization and the industrial worker (proletariat). In particular, he derides the depersonalization of factory labor and the "psychic difficulties" inherent in it.<sup>133</sup> "The industrial worker, given the extent to which division of labor has progressed, performs only a small part of the overall task; unlike the craftsman, therefore, he does not turn out the completed product."<sup>134</sup> The remedy for this situation, as had been recommended by Chesterton, Belloc, and Penty, among others, was to return to the system of small craftsmen organized in guilds and a re-emphasis on farming.<sup>135</sup>

The work of the farmer is rich in variety, since it permits him to become part and parcel of his enterprise, and of his land and soil. Every season brings its own different kinds of tasks, and the busy harvest time is richly rewarding followed by the winter which allows for some rest and its special gratification.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Heinrich Pesch, S.J. *Ethics and the National Economy*, Rupert Ederer (trans.), (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1918; IHS Press edition: Norfolk, 2004), 67.

<sup>134</sup> Pesch, 67.

<sup>135</sup> Arthur Penty was a British socialist activist during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. Penty was initially active in the Fabian Society and helped to organize workers' unions; however, he later split with the group over religious disputes and became a Distributist theorist and an active supporter of Christian workingmen's associations.

<sup>136</sup> Pesch, 67.

On the other hand, the industrial laborer is put-upon all year long. "In contrast, the labor of the industrial worker is monotonous, his whole life is inconstant, and it is characterized by hard labor and quick pace which are equally oppressive in summer and winter."<sup>137</sup>

Although Pesch's analysis of the life of the industrial proletariat is a serious critique of Communism, he speaks of capitalism in equally harsh terms.

The liberal school of thought, whose ideas were expressed by Frederick Bastiat, proposed that a universal harmony of interests would be the assured and remarkable outcome of the free pursuit of self-interest and of free competition. Today we appreciate how the predominance of the liberal economic system and the consequences of it have culminated in precisely the opposite kind of condition.<sup>138</sup>

To give only a brief overview of Pesch's understanding of the key difference between secular economics, of both the liberal and Socialist kinds, and Catholic economics, we can look to a passage in which he discusses Pellagrino Rossi's endorsement of the virtues of Christian culture.

Men are brothers; labor is an obligation; idleness is a vice. He who employs his talents in a productive manner has acted properly... Those are the maxims - the basic principles. Now then, if economics wants to do away with a catechism of ethics, can it prescribe another one which presents its own point of view? There would be only one difference: the economist would present those principles as the prescriptions of reason, or as deriving from the calculations of self-interest. Religion, on the other hand, appeals to human conscience, the sense of obligation; and it crowns its doctrinal structure with the kind of sanction which man cannot provide and from which he also cannot exempt himself.<sup>139</sup>

With Pesch's analysis in hand, Pius was well armed to provide the world with a formal blueprint for the creation and maintenance of a truly Catholic Christian politico-economic system.

*Quadragesimo* begins by explaining the intellectual foundation laid for *Rerum* during the early years of Leo XIII's papacy. It continues by extolling the work of Catholic religious and laity since 1891 and then concludes its preface with a statement of purpose:

And now that the solemn commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* is being enthusiastically celebrated in every country... we deem it opportune, venerable

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<sup>137</sup> Pesch, 67.

<sup>138</sup> Pesch,, 90.

<sup>139</sup> Pesch, 130-131.

brethren and beloved children, first to recall the great benefits which this encyclical has brought to the Catholic Church and to the world at large: secondly to develop as regards certain points the teaching of so great a master on social and economic affairs after vindicating it from some doubts which have arisen: finally after arraignment of the contemporary economy and listening to socialism's charges, to expose the root of the present social disorder, and to point out the only way to a salutary renewal, namely a Christian reform of morals. Such are the three topics chosen for treatment of the present letter.<sup>140</sup>

Pius next offers thanks to those who worked to ensure that Leo's vision of a new Christian society would come to pass. In particular, he praises union organizers who, even at the risk of their freedom (for many countries were openly hostile to the organizing of workingmen into unions), worked tireless to ensure that laborers enjoyed the protection of unions such as collective bargaining, aid with burial expenses, and pensions and other aid to widows and orphans.<sup>141</sup> "Eager to carry out to the full the program of Leo XIII, the clergy and many of the laity devoted themselves everywhere with admirable zeal to the creation of such unions, which in turn became instrumental in building up a body of truly Christian working men."<sup>142</sup>

After praising *Rerum Novarum* as a new Magna Carta for social order, Pius passes on to the important issue of responding to Distributism's critics. He begins this section of *Quadragesimo* by defending the authority of the Catholic Church to pronounce on the matters dealt with in *Rerum* and *Quadragesimo*. Pius reiterates Pope Leo's argument that it is the right and duty of the Church to speak out on social and economic problems. While acknowledging that the Church has no business pronouncing on specific technical matters, Pius argues that it would be a failure of the Church's duty to God were it to fail to pronounce on all matters that have an

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<sup>140</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 44 - 45.

<sup>141</sup> It must be noted that even though Pius was supportive of the organizing of laborers, he, like Dorothy Day, was greatly concerned that Socialists were dominating these new unions. Like Day, he felt that the failure of the Catholic laity to organize distinctly Christian workingmen's associations would lead to an abandonment of the Church and an embrace of Socialism by the working class; time has shown that he was at least partially correct.

<sup>142</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 48.



impact on moral conduct.<sup>143</sup> He elucidates the Church's position in no uncertain terms: "For the deposit of truth entrusted to us by God, and our weighty office of propagating, interpreting, and urging in season and out of season the entire moral law, demand that both social and economic questions be brought within our supreme jurisdiction, insofar as they refer to moral issues."<sup>144</sup>

Responding to Socialist criticism of *Rerum Novarum* for its perceived bias toward property owners (i.e. the bourgeoisie), Pius explains the Leonine doctrine of ownership of private property.

Their [Leo and the theologians of the Church] unanimous contention has always been that the right to own private property has been given to man by nature or rather by the Creator himself, not only in order that individuals may be able to provide for their own need and those of their families, but also that by means of it, the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose. Now these ends cannot be secured unless some definite and stable order is maintained.<sup>145</sup>

He is very clear in arguing against the two extremes to which property (material wealth) may drive Mankind: radical individualism and collectivism. By radical individualism, Pius means a runaway materialism and laissez-faire capitalism most vividly described and promoted by later author Ayn Rand (Objectivism). This would take the form of a Nietzschean superman overcoming established morals and creating his own (specifically the triumph of selfishness); the most perfect example of this is Rand's ideal man, John Galt, from *Atlas Shrugged*. On the other hand, Pius makes clear that the Church opposes the dream of the collectivists (Socialists and other variants of Marxist) to destroy private property. His vision of the proper balance of property ownership is nicely summed up by Chesterton: "Too much capitalism does not mean too many capitalists, but too few capitalists."<sup>146</sup> Pius would, along with other Distributist

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<sup>143</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 50-51.

<sup>144</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 51.

<sup>145</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*.52.

<sup>146</sup> *Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*, vol. IV, 246.

thinkers, like to see ownership of private property in the hands of as many people as possible. In challenging the capitalists and Socialists, he finds that neither has a healthy respect for human nature or for private property. Chesterton aptly explains Pius' position: "Thieves respect property. They merely wish the property to become their property that they may more perfectly respect it."<sup>147</sup> An even better explanation of the situation, again from Chesterton:

A pickpocket is obviously a champion of private enterprise. But it would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that a pickpocket is a champion of private property. The point about Capitalism and Commercialism, as conducted of late, is that they ... have at best tried to disguise the pickpocket with some of the virtues of the pirate. The point about Communism is that it only reforms the pickpocket by forbidding pockets.<sup>148</sup>

Lest politically informed observers be led to the belief that Pius (and, by definition, the Church) is staking out a position on the classic left-right political spectrum, the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us of the motivation for the Church's sudden involvement in previously secular issues (that is, prior to *Rerum Novarum*):

A *just wage* is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. "Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good." Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages.<sup>149</sup>

Importantly, this item falls under the heading of both the Seventh Commandment ("You shall not steal") and the Golden Rule ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself"). Additionally, the Church makes clear its thinking in §2432, "Those *responsible for business enterprises* are

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<sup>147</sup> G. K., Chesterton, *The Man Who was Thursday*, (London, 1908. Barnes and Noble Books edition, New York, 2004), 35.

<sup>148</sup> *Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*, vol. V, 41.

<sup>149</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church 2nd edition*. §2434. Retrieved from the Vatican archives website: <http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a7.htm> (accessed December 11, 2014). The Catechism was issued in 1994, but serves to explain the Church's mindset from *Rerum Novarum* forward to the present day.

responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations."<sup>150</sup> The language in both articles is directly drawn from *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. Pius does not mean to throw the weight of the Church behind either the liberal or the Socialist position; rather, he hopes to demonstrate the folly of both extremes and the left-right political divide that they create. Rupert Ederer, a professor of economics, describes the reasoning behind the move to more fully involve the Church in socio-political issues:

The impact on human society, including grossly distorted income distribution patterns, has bordered on the catastrophic in the temporal dimension, spilling over also into the spiritual one. The anti-life attitude, with birth prevention and contraception backed up by abortion, as it prevails in the wealthiest nations, is an example of such "spillover." Hence the Catholic Church has felt *compelled* to involve itself in the discussion over the past Century.<sup>151</sup>

Having then responded to criticism of *Rerum, Quadragesimo Anno* takes the step that *Rerum* made possible, but did not itself accomplish: the blueprint for the complete re-ordering of society. While *Rerum* was written with the intent to reform a rapidly crumbling society, the authors of *Quadragesimo* recognize the fact that failure to heed Leo's advice has led to a failed society. Confronted with the creeping advance of totalitarianism in Italy, Spain, the Soviet Union, Germany, and Austria, the Vatican takes the unheard-of step of attempting to entirely remake Western civilization. This is, of course, revolutionary, as the Church had never gone so far as to actually compile a document explaining, in detail, the running of a secular government; even Aquinas' work is considered a blueprint for reform rather than rebuilding. Consider, however, the situation facing Christendom in 1931: Marx's specter of Communism was indeed haunting Europe, liberalism was collapsing in the face of global recession, the great liberal dream, the League of Nations, was rapidly becoming the butt of jokes as aggressive

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<sup>150</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church 2nd edition* §2432.

<sup>151</sup> Rupert Ederer, "Heinrich Pesch and Catholic Economics" from *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*, 90.

industrialized nations preyed on their weaker neighbors, and, in Europe at least, fascism was the word on everyone's lips. Literally faced with the collapse of Western civilization in a way much more profound than that represented by Christendom's civil war (the First World War), Pope Pius felt obligated to offer one of the most daring documents ever issued by the Vatican.

*Quadragesimo* is a call for a return to sanity in a world rapidly going mad.

Throughout the remainder of *Quadragesimo*, Pius describes the workings of an authentically Christian society. Key principles of this vision are two terms that would play a vital role in the pontificate of Karol Jozef Wojtyla (Pope Saint John Paul the Great): solidarity and subsidiarity. The first term appears frequently in Pesch's magnum opus and Pius integrates it very nicely into his encyclical. Solidarity is an attempt to overcome Marx's theory of class warfare. Put simply, solidarity is: "Harmony between Ranks in Society."<sup>152</sup> Pius explains further:

Now this is a major and pressing duty of the State and of all good citizens to get rid of conflict between "classes" with divergent interests, and to foster and promote harmony between the various "ranks" or groupings of society. It is necessary that social policy be directed toward the reestablishment of functional groups. Society today continues in a strained and hence unstable and uncertain condition, for it relies upon "classes" with diverse interests and opposing each other and hence prone to enmity and strife.<sup>153</sup>

The solution proposed is the ordering of those involved in functionally similar tasks or industries into social groups. This is an extension of the Leonine theory of a return to the guild system; in fact, many later historians and political scientists have referred to this theory pejoratively as corporatism.<sup>154</sup> A risk of misunderstanding corporatism as defined by the Catholic Church and many of the secular advocates of Catholic corporatism, such as Engelbert Dollfuß and Antonio

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<sup>152</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 60.

<sup>153</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 60.

<sup>154</sup> Numerous examples exist of this condemnation; widely read works incorporating such themes include John Kenneth Galbraith's *New Industrial State* and John Saul's *The Unconscious Civilization*.

Salazar, exists and has led to the error of conflating corporatism with fascism. Mussolini's discussion of the relevant subject matter in his autobiography and *La Dottrina Del Fascismo* has also added to the confusion, as his use of the term corporatism is substantially different in meaning than that of Dollfuß, Salazar, or Pius. Corporatism derives its name, not from any association with legally incorporated business entities, but rather from the Latin term *corpus* or body. Pius urges workers, employers, thinkers, etc. with common interests such as laboring in the same or related industries to form representative bodies with the goal of influencing governmental policies. He explains this free association of individuals in clear terms:

Just as the citizens of the same municipality are wont to form associations with diverse aims, which various individuals are free to join or not, similarly, those who are engaged in the same trade or profession will form free associations among themselves, for purposes connected with their occupations.<sup>155</sup>

Ultimately, these associations would form something like representative parliamentary bodies meant to decide the policies of nations. Salazar and Dollfuß both drew up constitutions for their nations based on the corporatist model. Dollfuß was so devoted to the idea of Catholic corporatism that he lifted entire sections of *Quadragesimo Anno* and incorporated their language into legislative bills.<sup>156</sup> Pius hoped that the social Darwinism of liberal capitalism would be tamped down by the guild-like system of competition built into corporatist bodies. At the same time, he hoped that the aid such bodies would offer to the workers would negate the influence of socialism.

Pius' second key principle is *subsidiarity*. Subsidiarity, very loosely defined, is the idea that problems can and should be solved at the lowest level possible. For example, replacing an inkjet cartridge at Dell Corporation should not require the personal attention of Michael Dell.

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<sup>155</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 61.

<sup>156</sup> See Johannes Messner, *Dollfuß, An Austrian Patriot*, (I H S Press: Norfolk, VA, 2004) and Stanley G. Payne, *Civil War in Europe, 1905 – 1949*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Similarly, repairing potholes on city roads should not involve a nation's highest legislative body.

Pius explains this basic concept very nicely:

[I]t is a principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies.<sup>157</sup>

As Ederer points out in his essay, the concept of subsidiarity did not originate with Pius, although his is the first papacy in which the term is used in official teachings.<sup>158</sup> Solidarity and subsidiarity would, of course, become central themes in John Paul the Great's papacy and his struggle to liberate his home country from the icy grip of Soviet Socialist totalitarianism.

Pius next identifies two terms that are central to his ideal of a Christian society: social justice and social charity. Despite the obvious conflict of interpretation over corporatism, fascism, and the official teaching of the Church, no other term has caused as much misunderstanding of Church teaching as social justice. By the Twenty-First Century, the very term social justice has become so loaded down with baggage as to become practically useless. Sadly, the Church itself has factionalized over interpretation of the idea of social justice, with more conservative elements insisting that the term refers to little more than "golden rule" type virtue, while more radical thinkers derive liberation theology and its accompanying vices from it. In order to fully understand Pius' meaning here, it is essential to pay very careful attention to the context in which he uses the term. He first explains, in a lengthy section, the idea of restoring Christian principles to economic life in the modern age. After first condemning radical individualism and the liberal school of thought, Pius provides an alternative:

It is therefore very necessary that economic affairs be once more subjected to and governed by a true and effective guiding principle. Still less can this function be exercised by the

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<sup>157</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 60.

<sup>158</sup> *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism*, 91.

economic supremacy which within recent times has taken the place of free competition: for this is a headstrong and vehement power, which, if it is to prove beneficial to mankind, needs to be curbed strongly and ruled with prudence. It cannot, however, be curbed and governed by itself. More lofty and noble principles must therefore be sought in order to regulate this supremacy firmly and honestly: to wit, social justice and social charity.<sup>159</sup>

Pius' later encyclical, *Divini Redemptoris* would clarify, to some degree, the meaning of the term social justice as he uses it.

Section III of *Quadragesimo* presents a very clear explanation of the changes in the competing economic theories of capitalism and socialism since 1891. Pius notes that, rather than reforming itself and working toward a greater portion of business owners, capitalism has, instead, become even more competitive and monopolistic. A serious problem in the world economic order was developing by 1931. Specifically, Pius' concerns center on the development of state capitalism and its more nationalist sibling, fascism. The drive for economic domination will ultimately lead to wars between nations centered on the accumulation of natural resources (land, oil, etc.). In hindsight, of course, we note that Pius was quite prescient, as some of the main goals of the German National Socialist government were to acquire "*lebensraum*" or living space, arable land, and oil. Additionally, the Japanese Empire was quite explicit in its drive for the creation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a less than subtle attempt to form an empire encompassing China, Korea, Indonesia and Southeast Asia, and India (and all the accompanying resources) led by the Japanese, the Asian "master race," to use the terminology of Nazism.

Although, of course, Pius' warning extends to the actions and ambitions of national governments, it also applies to the everyday business practices of the modern corporation. In particular, he warns of the danger of finance capitalism (and the attendant sin of usury).

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<sup>159</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 62.

[I]t is patent that in our days not alone is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and that those few are frequently not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure.<sup>160</sup>

And the cause of this domination?

This accumulation of power, a characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of unrestrained free competition which permits the survival of those only who are the strongest. This often means those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience."<sup>161</sup>

Well might Pius have been discussing the United States in the Twenty-First Century. In this discussion, we see the beginning of a warning which the Church has continued to issue up to the present day: the call to fight against social Darwinism. To phrase it another way, Pius is here encouraging an end to the capitalist system which rewards only those who utterly crush their competitors (i.e. monopolists). Rather, the Church's teaching since *Quadragesimo* has been that honest, free competition is healthy, so long as the ends do not involve monopoly or the maximizing of profits (wealth) at the expense of either consumers or employees. Pius concludes his warning against the evils of monopolistic capitalism by emphasizing the dangers inherent in state capitalism and economic imperialism (which more radical thinkers such as Kirkpatrick Sale have interpreted as an open declaration of war against globalization and nation-building).<sup>162</sup>

Pius next turns to a critique of the socialism of the 1930's (that is, post October Revolution socialism). He notes that the success of Bolshevism in Russia had created a significantly different situation for the anti-communists of his era than that faced by those in Leo XIII's time. Pius cites a clear divergence within international socialism, with communists and

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<sup>160</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 65.

<sup>161</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 65.

<sup>162</sup> See, for example, Kirkpatrick Sale, *After Eden: The Evolution of Human Domination*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) and *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution: Lessons for the Computer Age*, (New York: Basic Books, 1996).



moderate Socialists choosing two different and often competing paths to achieve their shared dream. Despite this rivalry, however, the Church still condemns both as fundamentally flawed given their shared underlying assumptions about the nature of Man and society.

Although the Church had been historically anti-Socialist since *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI may well be counted as its first anti-communist crusader. He delivers not only a stinging rebuke to both the Bolshevik and moderate forms of socialism, but also provides a warning to the adherents of such philosophy: societal ruin, economic disaster, and the creation of a wasteland in Eastern Europe and Asia. Time proved Pius right as the wreck of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe is still not fully recovered twenty-five years after the communist collapse. Additionally, Pius, again proving quite prescient, condemns "religious socialism" or "Christian socialism" as not only heretical, but inherently contradictory. Specifically:

If, like all errors, socialism contains a certain element of truth (and this the sovereign pontiffs have never denied), it is nevertheless founded upon a doctrine of human society peculiarly its own, which is opposed to true Christianity ... No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.<sup>163</sup>

Again, looking forward to the 1970's and beyond, Pius seems quite the prophet as his warning about the rise of "Christian socialism" was not heeded by later Church leaders and the liberation theology movement was the result. In fact, Pius specifically addresses what he terms "Catholic Deserters to Socialism" by pointing out the essential incompatibility of the two and welcoming back those deserters to the Church upon their denunciation of socialism.<sup>164</sup>

Pius concludes his encyclical by both proclaiming the source of the evils of capitalism, socialism, and fascism, and providing a short treatise on Christian ethics as a remedy. As an interesting insight into both the specific thinking of Pius and, more generally, the Vatican's

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<sup>163</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 69.

<sup>164</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 69 – 70. I cannot help but think of individuals like Michael Harrington here.

approach to the post- Enlightenment world, we may look to two statements drawn from *Quadragesimo*. First, "Let us bear in mind that the parent of this cultural socialism was liberalism and that its offspring will be bolshevism."<sup>165</sup> Second,

The fundamental cause of this defection from the Christian law in social and economic matters, and of the apostasy of many workingmen from the Catholic faith which has resulted from it, is the disorderly affection of the soul, a sad consequence of original sin, the source of these and of all other evils. By original sin the marvelous harmony of man's faculties has been so deranged that now he is easily led astray by low desires, and strongly tempted to prefer the transient goods of this world to the lasting goods of heaven.<sup>166</sup>

These two statements reflect the historical continuity of thought within the teachings of the Church since the ancient Church fathers (up to Augustine), through the medieval scholastics (including Aquinas and Francis of Assisi), and on through the great teachers of the early modern and modern age (Ignatius Loyola, for example). Despite the reforms that each of those named preached, the central doctrines remained the same: the fallen state of Man and a dedication to the revealed wisdom of God and the *summum bonum* of the beatific vision.

Philosopher and political theorist Eric Voegelin noted the ability of the Catholic Church to adapt to reform up to the time of Luther and beyond.<sup>167</sup> Significantly, the Church would be put to a severe test in the years immediately following the issuance of *Quadragesimo Anno*. The nature of the Church's relationship with socialism, fascism, Communism, and monopolistic laissez-faire capitalism (all of which Pius considered children of modern, Enlightenment liberalism) would change drastically. Distributism, by its very nature, is nothing if not the struggle of a particular, Thomist philosophy rooted in the ancient and medieval ages against the competing philosophies of the Enlightenment. No longer would this debate be philosophical (as it had been in Leo XIII's time) or even political (as it seemed in 1931); rather, the rivalry

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<sup>165</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 69.

<sup>166</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 71.

<sup>167</sup> Eric Voegelin, *History of Political Ideas, volume IV: Renaissance and Reformation*.

between the Church and these man-made ideologies would become a shooting war with real lives lost and entire nations consumed in flames. By the end of 1945, over 10,000 clergy had been murdered by Socialists, Nazis, and communists.<sup>168</sup>

### **British Distributism**

"There is apparently something elvish and fantastic about saying that when capital has come to be too much in the hands of the few, the right thing is to restore it to the hands of the many." - G. K. Chesterton<sup>169</sup>

Before moving on to the intellectual milieu of the early Twentieth Century that influenced Dorothy Day, it is necessary to first discuss her immediate predecessors in the Distributist movement, in fact, the first practical Distributists, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. In one of the great ironies of history, that nation which struggled more passionately against Catholicism than any other nation in Europe - England - would become the breeding ground for the greatest Catholic revival since the Twelfth Century. From 1850 till 1940, Britain, in general, and England, in particular, would see an intellectual rebirth of Catholicism so powerful as to set Henry VIII, the Wesley brothers, and John Knox spinning in their graves. Despite, or perhaps because of, the long-held prejudices against and legal restrictions on Catholicism, the faith flourished in post-Victorian England. Although many of the era's intellectuals, poets, and artists flocked to the banners of socialism (e.g. George Bernard Shaw,

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<sup>168</sup> Although exact figures do not exist for the many martyrs of the wars of the 1930's and 40's, two excellent sources of data exist. Julio de la Cueva discusses, in detail, the martyrdom of clergy during the Spanish Civil War in his article "Religious Persecution, Anti-clerical Tradition, and Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History*, volume 33 (3), (Los Angeles: SAGE publications, 1998). The US Holocaust Memorial Museum provides some figures for Catholic clergy murdered by the Nazis (for example, figures from Dachau are shown). A discussion and the relevant figures appear on their website at <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/students/learning-materials-and-resources/poles-victims-of-the-nazi-era/terror-against-the-intelligentsia-and-clergyarch/library/faq/details.php?lang=en&topic=03#03>.

<sup>169</sup> *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton, Volume V*, 42.

Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and the Fabian Society), scientism (e.g. Charles Darwin, H.G. Wells), imperialism (e.g. Rudyard Kipling), or romantic nihilism (e.g. the Bloomsbury Group), a not insignificant number joined the growing ranks of British Catholics and Catholic-leaning Anglicans.

This rebirth can be traced to the Boer War years in which British imperialism reached its zenith. Coming at the end of the "Scramble for Africa," of the late Nineteenth Century, the Boer War was little more than an exercise in coercive acquisition of territory and natural resources. Lured into a war against the local German-Dutch farmers of South Africa (the Boers) by Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit's promises of gold and diamonds aplenty, the British fell into the trap of a prolonged guerrilla war against a resourceful, determined foe. The atrocities of the Boer War and the obvious, naked imperialism shown by the British government in entering the war turned much of the British intelligentsia against the war.<sup>170</sup> Following on the heels of numerous, bloody defeats (Spion Kop, for example), the British public joined the elites in their opposition to the war.<sup>171</sup> Among those who opposed this lust for riches and territory were an obscure art student and poet named Gilbert Chesterton, his even more obscure journalist brother Cecil, and their expatriate French friend, Hilaire Belloc.

G.K. Chesterton spent most of the last years of the Nineteenth Century as an unemployed student of art and occasionally published poet. Laboring, some would say in vain, at the Slade School of Art, Chesterton seemed an unlikely dragon slayer. Despite these humble beginnings, Chesterton was known to have a sharp mind, having been educated at St. Paul's School where,

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<sup>170</sup> Atrocities included the wide-scale use of forced native labor, the murder of prisoners, and the creation of the concentration camp by British forces attempting to blackmail Boer commandoes into surrendering by holding their wives and children as prisoners. See Pakenham's *The Boer War* for further details.

<sup>171</sup> Alfred Milner, who had staked his career on the successful prosecution of the Boer War, was reduced to near collapse during this period; he obtained relief only upon the arrival of Lord Roberts to assume overall command from Sir Redvers Buller, who had been fêted by the public upon his departure for South Africa.

with his lifelong friends Lawrence and Maurice Solomon and Digby and Waldo D'Avigdor, he was a founder of the Junior Debating Society. Like many aspiring young artists and intellectuals in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, Chesterton was somewhat hazy on questions of religion. Nominally an Anglican, Chesterton did not display a great deal of interest in religious topics, only truly grappling with the nature of faith in his 1908 philosophical masterpiece, *Orthodoxy*. From this point on, Chesterton's work becomes much more oriented toward both Christian apologetics and an extended explanation and defense of Distributism.

It should be remarked at this point that various Chesterton biographers disagree about Chesterton's early religious opinions and his later trajectory toward theological orthodoxy. Garry Wills' *Chesterton: Man and Mask* paints the early Chesterton as a pained outcast, focused on paradox, and refusing to become embroiled in scholarly debates.<sup>172</sup> Additionally, Wills paints Chesterton as a 'jester-critic" dancing on the edge of nihilistic annihilation, with a restless intellect and an appreciation for Christianity found mostly in its paradoxes.<sup>173</sup>

This melancholy, restless Chesterton seems a different man than the upbeat, romantic poet described by William Oddie.<sup>174</sup> Oddie's Chesterton is not Wills' pained, withdrawn figure wrestling with paradox, but rather a romantic intellectual who developed a coherent philosophy of religion very early in life. Oddie dismisses Chesterton biographers who explain Chesterton's religion as a merely emotional response to severe depression. "We could (as most observers in fact do) explain the origins of Chesterton's later Christianity principally in emotional terms, as a response to . . . personal depression... the pessimism of the *fin de siecle*... and then to his

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<sup>172</sup> Wills, *Chesterton: Man and Mask*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 42, 28.

<sup>173</sup> Wills, 209-210.

<sup>174</sup> William Oddie, *Chesterton and the Romance of Orthodoxy: The Making of GKC, 1874-1908*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

beloved young wife's devoted Anglo-Catholicism."<sup>175</sup> Oddie, instead, prefers to examine Chesterton's early poetry as indicative of his transition from a Non-Conformist Christianity heavily influenced by the sermons of Reverend Stopford Brooke to a thoroughly mainstream and theologically orthodox Roman Catholicism.<sup>176</sup>

Finally, Joseph Pearce's Chesterton is a brilliant, deliberately and thoughtfully naive anti-Establishment crusader.<sup>177</sup> Pearce notes that Chesterton's scholarly works were often broad swipes at the comfortable British Establishment. "In fact, Chesterton's 'general criticism of the general view' was something of a personal crusade against the establishment Whig view of history. This view, generally accepted at the time, was, according to Chesterton, a classic case of history being written by the victors to justify their own position."<sup>178</sup> Pearce also calls out numerous Chesterton biographers for failing to appreciate the intellectual center of Chesterton's life: his Catholic faith.<sup>179</sup> Finally, Pearce points out the treatment afforded to Chesterton because of his faith and generally anti-Establishment views: on the occasion of his death, Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pius XII) sent a telegram on behalf of the Holy See offering condolences to Frances, Chesterton's widow, and naming Chesterton, "[D]evoted son [of the] Holy Church [and] gifted Defender of the Catholic Faith."<sup>180</sup> The press, falling back on the excuse that the title "Defender of the Faith" was reserved for the King (despite the fact that it had, in fact, been bestowed upon the English monarchs by Pope Leo X), refused to publish the telegram, denying Chesterton this final honor.

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<sup>175</sup> Oddie, 66-67.

<sup>176</sup> Oddie, 68-69.

<sup>177</sup> Joseph Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence: A Life of G.K. Chesterton*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996).

<sup>178</sup> Pearce, 236.

<sup>179</sup> Pearce, 485.

<sup>180</sup> Pearce, 485.

Chesterton's lifelong friend, Hilaire Belloc, presents as interesting a study in character and intellectual development as does Chesterton himself. Belloc, son of a French attorney father and English author mother, was raised mostly in West Sussex County on the English Channel, his mother returning home to England upon his father's death (Belloc was then barely a toddler).<sup>181</sup> Standing well over six feet tall, very broadly built, and with ruggedly handsome Gallic looks, Belloc's imposing physical stature and seemingly endless stamina served him well throughout his life and was well-paired with an equally formidable mind. Relatively poor throughout much of his early life, Belloc spent a great deal of time walking, including memorable journeys from Toul to Rome, and most of the way from Missouri to northern California. As a young veteran of the French army (in which he had enlisted in the capacity of artilleryman), Belloc returned to England in the early 1890's and earned much distinction at Balliol College, Oxford, taking first class honors in History upon graduation and becoming a naturalized English citizen shortly thereafter.

Initially a lapsed Catholic, Belloc experienced a transformative event that renewed his faith in the Catholicism of his childhood.<sup>182</sup> Although never publicly discussing this spiritual reawakening, Belloc began a spirited defense of Catholicism and Distributism around the turn of the Century that ended only with his death in 1953. Historian, economist, political theorist, literary critic, poet, travel author, philosopher, and theologian, Belloc's accomplishments as an author and scholar are remarkable even in as distinguished a family as his: his great, great grandfather was a chemist, grandfather a painter, father a lawyer, mother a poet, and sister a

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<sup>181</sup> For the first few years of his life, Belloc and his family lived in near-poverty, his late father's investments having been annihilated as a result of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/1.

<sup>182</sup> Allusions to this event are scattered throughout *Cruise of the Nona*, but no exact details can be accurately pinned down, as such.

novelist. Perhaps the earliest example of an Odd Couple pairing, witty and eccentric Chesterton was a large, heavysset, Bohemian artist with wild curly hair, never seen without his pince-nez spectacles and sword-cane, while the passionate and suave Belloc was a tall, dashing French army veteran and Oxford man. Certainly, Neil Simon could not have asked for better inspiration than these two unusual men. Despite their obvious differences, the friendship and intellectual partnership of the "Chesterbelloc," as their frequent critic and rival H.G. Wells termed them, would produce some of the finest literature of the Edwardian and Interwar periods and, more significantly, the necessary intellectual musculature to flesh out the skeleton of Distributism provided by *Rerum Novarum*.

It is a rather Herculean task to attempt to separate apologetics and philosophy from socio-political theory in the various works of Chesterton and Belloc; both would probably reply that such an undertaking would be a fool's errand as they, themselves, would make no such distinction between "secular" and "religious" topics. Readers must largely accept that any comments on political or economic topics that issue forth from Chesterton or Belloc are likely paired to a comment on Christianity (or its absence). Despite this difficulty, neither author is a dull-read, as both are lively in their prose and unapologetically biased in their opinions.<sup>183</sup> Certainly Belloc and Chesterton took unpopular positions in opposing imperialism, liberalism, and progressivism and arguing for the cause of Catholicism, Distributism, and traditionalism. These views brought both men into frequent and intense conflict with both the government and its supporters (Chesterton was *persona non-grata* to almost every administration from Salisbury to Baldwin) and the progressives and Socialists of the time (most of whom belonged to or were

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<sup>183</sup> For example, Belloc's *The Crusades* is a surprisingly enjoyable romp through the period and is a well-written, scholarly history, although it is also an unapologetically pro-Crusader work. Belloc believed both here and in *The Great Heresies* that Islam was a heretic Christian sect and one of the most dangerous forces in the world.



otherwise associated with the Fabian Society). If a thinker may be judged by the quality of his opponents, then certainly the reputations of Chesterton and Belloc are in no danger as they sparred with George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Clarence Darrow, and G.G. Coulton. Along the way, they brought the ideas of Distributism to life, as their frequent contributions to various newspapers and literary journals helped to arouse the interest of the British public in the traditional, agrarian lifestyle that both men favored. Given the popularity of Chesterton's work and the availability of most of it in print currently, it is on his ideas that I shall primarily focus when sketching out Distributism.

Chesterton's public career began in the final days of the Nineteenth Century, as he became involved in the anti-imperialist movement in Britain then protesting the Boer War (1899-1902). Although not a professional journalist like his brother, Cecil, Chesterton was a regular contributor to several newspapers throughout his life.<sup>184</sup> He used this outlet to both expand on the views that he introduced in his books and speeches, and defend them from all-too-frequent criticism.

Chesterton's fierce opposition to imperialism was based both on an inherent distrust of government power (in line with the principle of subsidiarity) and a strong dislike of finance capitalism which Chesterton felt was the major motive for the British involvement in South Africa. As he labored against imperialism, in vain as future events would show, he became acquainted with and quite critical of the greatest prophet and spiritual leader of British imperialism, Rudyard Kipling. Kipling represented much of what Chesterton despised about the "establishment." Although Chesterton considered Kipling a fair poet and author, he was

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<sup>184</sup> Chesterton's work appeared in at least 4 different newspapers from 1900-1930: *Illustrated London News*, *Dublin Review*, *The New Witness*, and *G.K.'s Weekly* (the successor newspaper to *The New Witness*). *Gilbert Magazine*, volume 12, number 4, January/February 2009 edition, (Edina, MN: The American Chesterton Society, 2009).

frequently critical of the latter's militarism, rigid devotion to discipline, and his cosmopolitanism (by which Chesterton meant Kipling's fundamental lack of appreciation for Britain, rather than the British Empire).

The great gap in his mind is what may be roughly called the lack of patriotism-- that is to say, he lacks altogether the faculty of attaching himself to any cause or community finally and tragically; for all finality must be tragic. He admires England, but he does not love her; for we admire things with reasons, but love them without reasons. He admires England because she is strong, not because she is English.<sup>185</sup>

The twin plagues of militarism and unthinking obedience to orders were the foundations of a greater evil that Chesterton would fight tooth-and-nail until his death in 1936:

Prussianism.<sup>186</sup> This distinctly Teutonic phenomenon would infect the minds of Germans and their leaders well into the 1930's, plunging that nation into the darkness of Nazism. Noted American Rabbi Stephen Wise, writing shortly after Chesterton's death, remarked that, "When Hitlerism came, he was one of the first to speak out with all the directness and frankness of a great unabashed spirit. Blessing to his memory."<sup>187</sup>

Chesterton's opposition to British imperialism and its disciples (Kipling, Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain, and Alfred Milner, among others) gradually brought him into conflict with the "establishment" and all that it represented: imperialism, liberalism, and contempt for authentic faith.<sup>188</sup> On this last point, my emphasis is on a Kierkegaardian reading of the situation in Britain. The national churches of Britain (mainly the Anglican, though, to a lesser extent, the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, as well) were rapidly becoming more form than reality as

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<sup>185</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, from *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton, Volume I*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 59.

<sup>186</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *The End of the Armistice*, from *G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, Volume V*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987), 594 – 595.

<sup>187</sup> Ian Boyd, "Introduction," from *The Chesterton Review*, Vol. XXXII No.'s 3&4, Fall/Winter 2006 edition, (South Orange, NJ: The G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith and Culture at Seton Hall University), 276.

<sup>188</sup> By the "establishment," I mean the leaders of the British government, leading financiers and industrial tycoons, and the more powerful clergy of the Church of England. This is not to say that all government leaders or business people were lacking in authentic faith, but certainly a growing number were abandoning the virtues of religion.

Britons began to leave Christianity behind to embrace the various movements of modernity. This attitude contributed to the departure of Manning and Newman from the Church of England. This is not to say that some stalwarts did not remain within Anglicanism, carrying on an authentic Christian faith - Austin Farrer, for example. From the Kierkegaardian perspective, however, faith is more important than pretense, and the Church of England appeared to have fallen into the same trap as that of Denmark, the institution against which Kierkegaard addressed much of his work.<sup>189</sup> While the pews of many Anglican churches would remain full for some time to come, the faith and practice of Christianity were dying. It was this spiritual malaise and abandonment of the principles of Christianity that drove Chesterton from the Church of England into the open arms of the Church of Rome, although, in fairness, Chesterton had already begun to exhibit much impatience with the Anglican leadership's unwillingness to seriously challenge the government on labor issues and increasing British militarism.<sup>190</sup>

Chesterton's own brother, Cecil, outed him as a Catholic in 1908, although this was not quite correct, as Chesterton's formal conversion did not occur until 1922.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, this shift in Chesterton's views brought him into contact with key figures that would influence him throughout his life: Belloc, Ronald Knox, Vincent McNabb, Eric Gill, T.S. Eliot, Arthur Penty, and Sir Henry Slessor. Chesterton's struggle began full-out with the publication of *Heretics* in 1905 and its companion volume, *Orthodoxy*, three years later.<sup>192</sup> Both works are monumental defenses of traditional Christian beliefs against progressivism, modernism, scientism, liberalism,

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<sup>189</sup> Kierkegaard's most scathing attack against the Church of Denmark is probably *Judge for Yourselves*, although *Practice in Christianity* also comes across as a bit of a jeremiad at times.

<sup>190</sup> Jay P. Corrin, *G.K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle against Modernity*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 89.

<sup>191</sup> Anonymous (actually Cecil Chesterton), *G.K. Chesterton: A Criticism*, (London: Alston Rivers, Ltd., 1908), 99.

<sup>192</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2006); *Orthodoxy*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Mudhouse Art and Literature, 2017).

imperialism, and socialism, all topics that Dorothy Day dealt with throughout her life. While *Heretics* is more of a polemic, providing salvoes against Kipling, Shaw, Wells, Paganism, Yellow Journalism, and Science, *Orthodoxy* is an intensely personal odyssey in which Chesterton grapples with questions of faith, philosophy, and the greatest good in life (*summum bonum*). To place the intellectual evolution of the man in context then, *Heretics* represents a summary of all that Chesterton does not want to be, while *Orthodoxy* represents very much a profession of faith, a discovery of all that Chesterton does want to be.<sup>193</sup> An example of *Heretics'* combativeness can be seen in Chesterton's introductory remarks. Commenting on the lack of interest by the public in matters of philosophy and metaphysics (both very dear to Chesterton's heart), he notes:

Examples are scarcely needed on this total levity on the subject of cosmic philosophy. Examples are scarcely needed to show that, whatever else we think of as affecting practical affairs, we do not think it matters whether a man is a pessimist or an optimist, a Cartesian or a Hegelian, a materialist or a spiritualist.<sup>194</sup>

Chesterton presses the point further by criticizing the prevailing laziness of thought apparent in turn of the Century Britain.

Let me, however, take a random instance. At any innocent tea-table we may easily hear a man say, 'Life is not worth living.' We regard it as we regard the statement that it is a fine day; nobody thinks that it can possibly have any serious effect on the man or on the world. And yet if that utterance were believed, the world would stand on its head. Murderers would be given medals for saving men from life; poisons would be used as medicines; doctors would be called in when people were well; the Royal Humane Society would be rooted out like a horde of assassins. Yet we never speculate as to whether the conversational pessimist will strengthen or disorganize society; for we are convinced that theories do not matter."<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Day was familiar with Chesterton's works, in part through her friendship and correspondence with Hilaire Belloc. There is something of this structure in her three autobiographical works, in which the first is her journey to Christianity laying out all that she reject, the second is all that she wants to embrace (and is a missionary appeal to both her brother and her former friends amongst the socialists), and the third is her full profession of faith.

<sup>194</sup> *Heretics*, 40.

<sup>195</sup> *Heretics*, 40.

This sort of thinking infuriated Chesterton as it had Søren Kierkegaard half a Century earlier. Chesterton blamed British liberalism for the intellectual and spiritual malaise that had infected society by the 1900's.

When the old Liberals removed the gags from all the heresies, their idea was that religious and philosophical discoveries might thus be made. Their view was that cosmic truth was so important that everyone ought to bear independent testimony. The modern idea is that cosmic truth is so unimportant that it cannot matter what anyone says.<sup>196</sup>

He notes that the only people who seemed to still care about God were atheists; Charles Bradlaugh had fought a long battle for the right to assume public office (in his case, a seat in Parliament) without taking an oath on the Bible. "It is still bad taste to be an avowed atheist. But their agony [referring to Bradlaugh and his followers] has achieved just this - that now it is equally bad taste to be an avowed Christian."<sup>197</sup>

So, in this sense, Chesterton, like Kierkegaard, did not condemn the world for being wicked; rather he condemned it for lacking passion.<sup>198</sup> Along the same lines, he refuses to allow the world to lapse into simple nihilism, lashing out at the disciples of Nietzsche.<sup>199</sup>

It is important to note that Chesterton was aware of the shift in underlying philosophy governing Western Europe from the traditional Aristotelian Natural Law to Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century replacements in the form of nihilism, moral relativism, moral intuitionism (also known as moral emotivism), and logical positivism. Chesterton, like later analytical Thomist philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, realized that the central conflict in Twentieth Century philosophy was the Aristotelian view versus the Nietzschean view.<sup>200</sup> Key players in this movement away from Natural Law were the Bloomsbury Group (Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-

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<sup>196</sup> *Heretics*, 41.

<sup>197</sup> *Heretics*, 41. Bracketed reference is mine.

<sup>198</sup> Kierkegaard's discussion of this issue is most clearly presented in *Either/Or*.

<sup>199</sup> *Heretics*, 146 – 147.

<sup>200</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (3rd edition), (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 118-119.

West, John Maynard Keynes, G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and E.M. Forster among others) and the Fabian Society (Woolf, Russell, Keynes, H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw, among others). The influence of both groups would be heavily felt in British politics throughout the entire Twentieth Century (Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are both Fabians). Chesterton was bitterly opposed to the beliefs of both groups and he, along with his allies Belloc, McNabb, Knox, and Roy Campbell offered frequent criticism of the individual members' works.<sup>201</sup>

Anticipating Distributist theories of the 1920's and 30's and spelling out in detail many of the ideas touched upon by Day and Maurin, Chesterton begins laying the groundwork for his solution to the problems of liberalism and socialism in the later parts of *Heretics*. He devotes an entire chapter to the central social unit of the Distributist system: the traditional family.

The family may fairly be considered, one would think, an ultimate human institution. Everyone would admit that it has been the main cell and central unit of almost all societies hitherto, except, indeed, such societies as that of Lacedaemon, which went in for "efficiency," and has, therefore, perished, and left not a trace behind.<sup>202</sup>

The problem with the moderns, however, is that they wish to destroy or so redefine the family that it no longer has any relevance to society.

But some sages of our own decadence have made a serious attack on the family. They have impugned it, as I think wrongly; and its defenders have defended it, and defended it wrongly. The common defense of the family is that, amid the stress and fickleness of life, it is peaceful, pleasant, and at one. But there is another defense of the family which is possible, and to me evident; this defense is that the family is not peaceful and not pleasant and not at one.<sup>203</sup>

Chesterton believed that the small community or clan was much larger in its outlook than the large cities or cliques, because the members of a small community, clan, or family do not

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<sup>201</sup> Campbell, in particular, is noted for his very personal feud with the Bloomsbury Group. This is well documented in Joseph Pearce's *Unafraid of Virginia Woolf: The Friends and Enemies of Roy Campbell*, (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2004).

<sup>202</sup> *Heretics*, 136.

<sup>203</sup> *Heretics*, 137.

choose their neighbors or friends; they are forced to interact with others who do not necessarily share the same world views. In a large city, the inhabitants are free to choose their friends and thus they do not come into frequent contact with those of differing opinions.

A big society exists to form cliques. A big society is a society for the promotion of narrowness. It is a machinery for the purpose of guarding the solitary and sensitive individual from all experience of the bitter and bracing human compromises. It is, in the most literal sense of the words, a society for the prevention of Christian knowledge.<sup>204</sup>

Chesterton appreciated the fullness of diversity of the small and local over the large and exotic.

It is quite proper that a British diplomatist should seek the society of Japanese generals, if what he wants is Japanese generals. But if what he wants is people different from himself, he had much better stop at home and discuss religion with the housemaid. It is quite reasonable that the village genius should come up to conquer London if what he wants is to conquer London. But if he wants to conquer something fundamentally and symbolically hostile and also very strong, he had much better remain where he is and have a row with the rector."<sup>205</sup>

Further challenging the modern conception of the family and romance (inter-related themes for Chesterton), he notes that the liberty they strive so mightily for is a tame liberty, an unsexed and dull romance.

They think that if a man makes a gesture it would be a startling and romantic matter that the sun should fall from the sky. But the startling and romantic thing about the sun is that it does not fall from the sky. They are seeking under every shape and form a world where there are no limitations - that is, a world where there are no outlines; that is, a world where there are no shapes... They say they wish to be as strong as the universe, but they really wish the whole universe as weak as themselves.<sup>206</sup>

Where *Heretics* is polemical, *Orthodoxy* is philosophical. Here, we see the more mature Chesterton at work, explaining to the world not where it has gone wrong (that was *Heretics'* mission), but rather where it might yet go right. *Orthodoxy*, in fact, begins almost apologetically, with Chesterton explaining that it is written only as a response to the critics of *Heretics*, who

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<sup>204</sup> *Heretics*, 137.

<sup>205</sup> *Heretics*, 140.

<sup>206</sup> *Heretics*, 145.

complained that it was all very well and good to attack others' views of the world, but what was Chesterton's own philosophy?<sup>207</sup> Responding specifically to Mr. G.S. Street, a critic, Chesterton replies that:

But after all, though Mr. Street has inspired and created this book, he need not read it. If he does read it, he will find that in its pages I have attempted in a vague and personal way, in a set of mental pictures rather than in a series of deductions, to state the philosophy in which I have come to believe. I will not call it my philosophy; for I did not make it. God and humanity made it; and it made me.<sup>208</sup>

Many have remarked that *Orthodoxy* is Chesterton's magnum opus, but that it came so early in his career, his later works, especially those focused explicitly on the socio-economic teachings of Distributism, tend to be overlooked. From the point of view of the study of history, Chesterton was only just beginning, as he produced what are still considered amongst the finest modern biographies of Thomas Aquinas and Francis of Assisi.<sup>209</sup> Additionally, he challenges Hegel, Marx, and Wells in his 1925 work *The Everlasting Man*.<sup>210</sup> His contributions to literature and poetry only truly began after *Orthodoxy* as well, with *The Ballad of the White Horse* appearing in 1911 and the Father Brown detective stories appearing periodically from 1910 until Chesterton's death.<sup>211</sup> Finally, Chesterton's political commentary only began in earnest with the Balkan wars, the Moroccan crises, and the run up to First World War as his contributions to the various newspapers that he was associated with increase in frequency.

It is important to note that while Chesterton was as die-hard a Distributist as any, even becoming the spiritual leader and public face of the Distributist League (founded in 1926), his

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<sup>207</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, from *G. K. Chesterton, Collected Works, Volume 1*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), 211.

<sup>208</sup> *Orthodoxy*, 211.

<sup>209</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002); *Saint Francis of Assisi*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2008).

<sup>210</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1993).

<sup>211</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *The Ballad of the White Horse*, (New York: Dover Books, 2010); *The Complete Father Brown*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1981).



works focused mainly on theology, social issues, and the transformation of society from industrial (whether capitalist industrial or Socialist industrial) to agrarian. Although never one to shy away from a fight, Chesterton's work is much less clearly political than Belloc's or Maurin's, much more in line with Day's work. This may be natural as Chesterton was, at heart, an absent-minded, retiring figure, whereas Belloc was a raging fire, eager to spread anywhere and everywhere.<sup>212</sup> This is most clearly shown by Belloc's interest in public service, whether in the form of military service, political life (he stood one term as the Member of Parliament for Salford South), or academia as a frequent guest lecturer and debater. There is more than a little evidence showing that Belloc might have sought further political office but for his disillusionment with the party system in Britain.<sup>213</sup>

One need look no further than Belloc's list of works to see his fascination with politics, history, and economics; Chesterton only directly addresses economics and politics in *Utopia of Usurers*, *The Outline of Sanity*, *What's Wrong with the World*, and newspaper columns, his other works being much more concerned with issues of faith and ethics as noted above.<sup>214</sup> Snippets of Chesterton's views on politics and government may give a better understanding of his political philosophy (which seems to mirror the Christian anarchy of McNabb and Dorothy Day). "If the policeman regulates drinking, why should he not regulate smoking, and then sleeping, and then speaking, and then breathing?"<sup>215</sup>

And Chesterton on the state of marriage (like Marx, he was deeply critical of philanderers):

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<sup>212</sup> I do not wish to push the comparison too hard here, but there is something of the same dynamic between Chesterton and Belloc that there is between Day and Maurin, albeit with the former it is a dynamic of equals, whereas with the latter it is one of student and teacher. Day's work mirrors Chesterton's (and she was a journalist, as was he, to boot), while Maurin's mirrors Belloc's (and both were Frenchmen born to the land).

<sup>213</sup> Corrin, 122. It should also be noted that Belloc was influenced by Cecil Chesterton and Arthur Penty who were avid crusaders for the overthrow of the existing British political system (the Party System).

<sup>214</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity* and *Utopia of Usurers* from *G. K. Chesterton, Collected Works, vol. V*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987).

<sup>215</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Illustrated London News* June 5, 1920.

Two different standards of will appear in ordinary morality, and even in ordinary society. Instead of the old social distinction between those who are married and those who are unmarried, there will be a distinction between those who are married and those who are really married.<sup>216</sup>

On the rise of Eugenics, abortion, and totalitarian governments:

Hygiene may any day enforce the pagan habit of cremation. Eugenics is already hinting at infanticide. The next adventure in the long story of the strange sect called Christians may be to be asked once more to worship the god of Government; to be told once more to offer incense to Divine Caesar.<sup>217</sup>

On universalism (as espoused by Nineteenth Century liberal philosophers) and lasting world

peace: "If we are to make any attempt to tolerate all men, we must give up all attempts to tolerate all opinions."<sup>218</sup> Finally, speaking through the voice of his detective priest Father Brown, on

Capitalism and Communism:

Of course, Communism is a heresy; but it isn't a heresy that you people take for granted. It is Capitalism you take for granted; or rather the vices of Capitalism disguised as a dead Darwinism. Do you recall what you were all saying in the Common Room, about life being only a scramble, and nature demanding the survival of the fittest, and how it doesn't matter whether the poor are paid justly or not? Why, *that* is the heresy that you have grown accustomed to my friends; and it's every bit as much a heresy as Communism. That's the anti-Christian morality or immorality that you take quite naturally.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *The Superstition of Divorce*, Ch.4, from *Gilbert Magazine Volume 12 Number 4* (January/February 2009), (Minneapolis, MN: The American Chesterton Society,) 5.

<sup>217</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Dublin Review*, October, 1910.

<sup>218</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Illustrated London News*, April 28, 1917.

<sup>219</sup> G. K. Chesterton, "The Crime of the Communist," from *The Complete Father Brown*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1981,) 672.

## Chapter 3

### The Intellectual Climate of the Inter-War Era

Stepping back in time momentarily, the period between 1919 and 1939 was one of the most creative, daring, and productive in human history. Coming on the heels of the armistice of November 1918, the era saw the emergence of worldwide Communism and fascism, post-war economic boom followed shortly by worldwide depression, leaps in technological innovation, and, amongst artists and intellectuals, a period similar in many ways to the Renaissance. Into this swirling melee of dueling ideas arrived Dorothy Day, twenty-one years old in 1918, a veteran of civil rights strikes (the Suffragette movement in particular), an experienced journalist with a resume that included *The Liberator*, *The Masses*, and *The Call* (all Socialist newspapers), and a woman with a lengthy police record (numerous arrests and one lengthy detainment in late 1917 after participating in a Suffragette picketing campaign in Washington, D.C. when she was released early from a thirty-day sentence because of a ten-day hunger strike that resulted in the authorities granting the strikers' demands).<sup>220</sup> As will be seen, many of the period's celebrities would influence Day in one way or another.

#### Existentialism and Nihilism

Beginning in the period immediately following the war, we see the beginnings of a certain spiritual malaise set-in amongst Europeans, although some of this would also infect Americans. As the Spanish influenza pandemic raged across the world, leading to tens of millions of deaths, following so closely on the massive death toll of the First World War, life, itself, seemed to have diminished in value. The ideals of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the

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<sup>220</sup> See Dorothy Day's own version of much of this in *The Long Loneliness*, 50 – 83, and Bill Kaufman's anarchist narrative of Day's life in *Look Homeward America: In Search of Reactionary Radicals and Front-Porch Anarchists*, (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006). The irony of Kaufman's work being published by a company co-founded by William F. Buckley, perhaps the worst of Kaufman's *bête noires*, should not be lost on readers.

immediate periods prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, were crushed utterly as the nationalism and liberalism (or quasi-liberalism in the case of nations such as Britain) that drove the race to war paid poor dividends for the investment of lives and wealth. One cannot help but see a hint of foreshadowing of this titanic disaster in the waning days of the Nineteenth Century (the fin-de-siècle reading like one long, slow suicide note). With the grand idealism of the period now dashed into the ruined fields of the Western Front, what new animating spark could arise to inspire the hearts and minds of the Western world?<sup>221</sup>

At first, nihilism seemed the dominant mode of the day, as trends in art and literature saw the emergence of bleak, hopeless realism and anti-realism – Dada in the art world, discordance in the literary and poetic. Examples of the first are the hopeless motion captured by Marcel Duchamp in *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even* and Hannah Höch in *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, while T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* are illustrative of the second.<sup>222</sup> Despite this malaise continuing throughout the decade with mid to late 1920's works such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Strange Interlude*, and the dark surrealism of *L'Étoile de mer*, an early silent film, some break with this soon began to show.<sup>223</sup>

Before moving on from the war-weary depression of the early part of this period, it is necessary to first examine works that were popular at the time, although not necessarily of the time; this provides some hints to the breakthroughs of the later part of this period, much like the original Renaissance that emerged in large part by rediscovery of classical ideas. Consider Day's

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<sup>221</sup> Putting aside, for space considerations, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the rest of the non-Western world, which now seemed to follow on the path blazed by Europe prior to 1914 – nationalism.

<sup>222</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland and Other Poems*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1998); James Joyce, *Ulysses*, (Ware, United Kingdom: Wordsworth Editions, 1998).

<sup>223</sup> Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, (New York: Balantine Books, 1987); Eugene O'Neill, *Strange Interlude*, (London: Nick Hern Books, 1991).

own reading list from the period: the Bible and the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson in her mid to late teens, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment* in her late teens and early twenties, and, in the period discussed here, an almost never-ending parade of works by anarchists, radical Christians, and Socialists. Examples of this eclectic bunch include all of Tolstoy's works, Jack London's *Martin Eden*, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Carl Sandburg's collections of poetry, Frank Harris' *The Bomb*, all of Prince Kropotkin's works, and whatever she could lay hands on from aging revolutionary Veraigner.<sup>224</sup> As a Socialist activist, Day also read Marx, Lenin, and possibly Bakunin given that her socialism had an anarchist bent. She certainly knew Trotsky's work very well, having met and interviewed him at length for the Socialist newspaper *The Call* in 1917.<sup>225</sup> Her college friend, Rayna Raphaelson, a Jewish communist who later died in Moscow in 1927, had early published on the spirit of the age and the animating and restorative power of Communism.<sup>226</sup> Too, she engaged with radical activists such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (whom she found powerfully persuasive), and Margaret Sanger (whom she later broke with over the abortion question).<sup>227</sup> This certainly helped to draw Day toward Communism on an emotional level, although intellectually, Day was still more enamored of Christian radicalism than dogmatic Marxism.

Of course, the disillusionment of the age, expressed so brilliantly by F. Scott Fitzgerald in a trio of early 1920's novels, also led to a search for a way out of the dreary nihilism other than

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<sup>224</sup> Day writes at length of her reading lists in *The Long Loneliness* among other places, see especially 36 - 46. In this same section, she discusses her university education noting that she was well-versed in Greek and Latin (though lost interest in it while in college), and almost certainly French; there is some possibility that she also read German and perhaps Russian, though she never explicitly makes this claim. See, for example, Walter G. Moss' discussion of Day's lifelong friendship with Helene Iswolsky, daughter of the last Tsarist ambassador to Germany, Ursula Niebuhr, Reinhold Niebuhr's wife, and Georgy Fedotov, the Russian émigré author in "The Wisdom of Dorothy Day," available in full online at <http://www.wisdompage.com/DorothyDayWisdom.pdf> (accessed January 3, 2017).

<sup>225</sup> Moss, 10.

<sup>226</sup> Rayna Raphaelson, "The Hedonism of Disillusionment in the Younger Generation," from *Ethics*, vol. 32, no. 4, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, July, 1922).

<sup>227</sup> Moss, 10 -11.

mere stunted materialism and bourgeois degeneracy.<sup>228</sup> A few sought refuge in earlier works or works inspired by them. Consider the Neo-Scholastic and subsequent Neo-Thomist movements that emerged around the turn of the Century and continued on into the 1930's. Certainly, the papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1877, confirming Thomism as the official philosophy of the Catholic Church, helped to inspire a burst of new scholarship. This inspired local religious leaders like Henry, Cardinal Newman and Edward, Cardinal Manning, both former Anglican bishops turned Catholics. It also filtered through to religious activists like G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, who took Aquinas and Thomist thought very seriously.<sup>229</sup>

Others sought to pick-up on the ideas of middle and late Victoriana, when some Westerners were already sensing a slide into nihilism and hopelessness. For example, the works of Bergson, Brentano, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche enjoyed renewed popularity. Chesterton, in particular, noted the prevalence of Nietzschean thought amongst the British artistic and intellectual elite, while Jean-Paul Sartre noted the same trend in France, and Miguel de Unamuno commented on its influence in Spain.<sup>230</sup> Of course, some of the darker roads upon which philosophers of this sort trod led to the dangerous temptation of fascism, seen by Mussolini, for example, as a path to Western spiritual regeneration. On the other hand, the existential Christianity proposed by Kierkegaard, at least when paired with Catholicism, led to a renewed defense of the Western liberal tradition of free trade and republicanism in Unamuno and his French colleague, Gabriel Marcel.

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<sup>228</sup> *This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and the Damned, and The Great Gatsby.*

<sup>229</sup> Chesterton's biography of St. Thomas Aquinas is considered amongst the very best ever written on him by serious Thomist scholars such as Peter Kreeft.

<sup>230</sup> G.K. Chesterton, May 31, 1919 column in *Illustrated London News*; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Hazel Barnes (trans.), (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993); Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, Crawford J.E. Fritch (trans.), (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 50 – 51 especially but all throughout.

An outgrowth of this Christian existentialism, similar but not identical to the works of Marcel and Unamuno, was personalism, a break with existing philosophy that centered value on the individual human being. Personalism was initially developed by Charles Péguy, a French poet formerly influenced by Socialist Jean Jaurès, but who broke with socialism near the turn of the Century to embrace Catholicism. Péguy, a lieutenant serving with a French infantry regiment, was killed during the early months of the First World War, but his philosophy was embraced and further developed by Emmanuel Mounier, the author of *The Personalist Manifesto* quoted at length by Distributist activist Peter Maurin.<sup>231</sup> Later, Karol Wojtyła formally adopted personalism as a philosophy of the Catholic Church, albeit a personalism tied directly to Thomist thought. Specifically, Wojtyła introduced personalism in two major works, *Love and Responsibility* and *Memory and Identity*, and his series of lectures given over the first five years of his pontificate, referred to collectively as *Theology of the Body*.<sup>232</sup> Two other major Catholic works also expanded on personalism, the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. In essence, Man is the only real, actually existing thing (dismissing Platonic idealism as mere abstraction, perhaps useful for illustrating points) and he can define himself by living authentically in harmony and charity with God and other men.<sup>233</sup>

### **The Rise of Phenomenology**

Even outside the realms of Christian philosophy, there was some desire for a renewed theory of Man; a new philosophical anthropology. The existentialism of the Inter-War period

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<sup>231</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *The Personalist Manifesto* [republished as *Personalism*], (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1989).

<sup>232</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, Grzegorz Ignatik (ed.), (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2013); *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium*, (New York: Rizzoli Press, 2005); *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

<sup>233</sup> This is a very rough summary drawn chiefly from *Caritas in Veritate*. It is almost impossible not to see the Kierkegaardian influence on this philosophy of life.

saw a burst of creative output by the above noted Sartre, Marcel, and Unamuno, but also relative newcomers to the scene such as Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Albert Camus, Martin Buber, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Paul Tillich. Of course, older theories such as Neo-Kantianism and Hegelianism continued during this period, some disciples of those schools now attempting a synthesis with the newer school of existentialism; Karl Jaspers comes to mind here.

Another new school emerged in this period, although its origins were, like existentialism, chiefly to be found in the Victorian period: phenomenology. Where existentialism sought a new analysis of Man's existence and metaphysical freedom via philosophy and psychology, phenomenology sought to understand Man through an analysis of his lived experience. In some ways, phenomenology could ground itself in history, and earlier philosophy, especially political philosophy (even if that grounding was simply to position itself in opposition to prior thought). This meant the necessity of examining not only the history and psychology of Man, but also re-examining essential questions about being and the flow of history (the question of *telos*). All of this allowed a vigorous engagement with the whole of Western philosophy from Socrates to Nietzsche, as can be seen in Heidegger, Jaspers, and Eric Voegelin's respective works.

All of these ideas flowed across the Atlantic and heavily influenced American thought, up till now trapped in romanticism, transcendentalism, or pragmatism.<sup>234</sup> From the immediate post-war years, the so-called Jazz Age, we get F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner, but also the remarkable musicians, novelists, and poets of the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>235</sup> However, later in the Inter-War period, we also see the European influence on

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<sup>234</sup> The first reflected in much of the poetry and literature of the late Nineteenth Century, the second by the major theological and philosophical currents emanating out of New England (figures such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman on the literary side and Orestes Brownson on the philosophical side), and the third by the James brothers, Peirce, and Dewey.

<sup>235</sup> Too numerous to list here, but those likely known to Dorothy Day include Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright.



American thinkers in phenomenological-type works by John Dos Passos, William Carlos Williams (whose 1946 work *Paterson* reflected a shift in phenomenological thought to a philosophy of place mirrored during the same time period by Martin Heidegger's work), and George Santayana.<sup>236</sup> This represented in large part a rejection of the till-then dominant ideas of romanticism, transcendentalism, and pragmatism, the last of these, however, enjoying a brief resurgence in the 1970's.<sup>237</sup>

### **The Transcendent in History: Derrida**

How specifically, though, does this intellectual milieu shape Dorothy Day and the development of the Catholic Worker? What is Dorothy Day ultimately searching for in immanent, historical events? That question is easy enough to answer by reference to her many books and articles: transcendence. But what form might this transcendence take, and how might it be experienced in the immanent? That becomes a more complicated question, as any encounter of the transcendent with the immanent is metaphysically explosive, but possibly physically subtle, perhaps going unnoticed by non-participants. Recall the event of Christ's birth, noticed only by a few scholars or scientists, and some in the immediate vicinity.<sup>238</sup>

The birth of Christ, the literal interfacing of the immanent with the transcendent, was an event by any definition of the term, perhaps THE event. Jacques Derrida introduces the idea of the "event" in his work *Rogues* and in his interview with Giovanna Borradori in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*.<sup>239</sup> In the vocabulary of many people, an "event" is any occurrence in one's life that has some significance. For Derrida, however, an "event" must be something unforeseen. It

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<sup>236</sup> William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1995).

<sup>237</sup> Chiefly via the works of W.V.O. Quine, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty.

<sup>238</sup> Wise men and shepherds according to *Luke 2* and *Matthew 2*.

<sup>239</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

must not simply be a "surprise," but an occurrence that is beyond the actual horizon of expectations.

Derrida specifically defines an event in Heideggerian terms. "The event is what comes and, in coming, comes to surprise me, to surprise and to suspend comprehension."<sup>240</sup> The event must, then, be something that is beyond our previous expectations. In other words, it must be an occurrence that in some way shatters our previous metaphysical horizons. It must emerge from beyond those horizons and thus shift them so that what was previously thought to be impossible is now possible. Importantly, Derrida notes that, "[T]he event is first of all *that which* I do not first of all comprehend. Better, the event is first of all *that* I do not comprehend."<sup>241</sup> The event initially makes us stupid, for we cannot grasp its significance. Here, Derrida might be introducing semiotic thinking, in particular the notion of signifiers in language (especially the way in which the term is used by Saussure). The event becomes a signifier to which we must attach some linguistic term, but how can we do this if, at least initially, we are left dumbstruck by the actual occurrence of the event. Only later, after our reason has allowed us to comprehend the event, can we begin to describe it linguistically. Here, however, Derrida would object in that we are choosing arbitrary language (signs) to describe an occurrence that has come from beyond our metaphysical horizon. This leads into his discussion of the idea of a "major" event. What makes an event "major" instead of only "minor" or not even an event at all? All of these questions are rooted in our use of language and in the very arbitrary nature of our use of signs in language.

So, even by Derrida's rather rigorous definition of "event," the birth of Christ was an event. It was an occurrence beyond the horizon of expectations, given that while many, perhaps

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<sup>240</sup> Borradori, 90.

<sup>241</sup> Borradori, 90.

most Jews anticipated the arrival of a Messiah, practically none understood the Messiah to be a divine being in human flesh.<sup>242</sup> Day would no doubt agree that those who personally dwelled in the presence of the Lord, Christ in the flesh, had experienced the transcendent within the boundaries of the immanent. Is there an event, or events other than Christ's birth, life, and death that meets this criterion though?

Perhaps we can resort to the idea that, slightly against Derrida's definition, any metaphysical experience is an event. This definition might well work, at least in part, for Day, who, though mentored by a personalist, Peter Maurin, was, in her method, much more of a phenomenologist.<sup>243</sup> In fact, while Heidegger's phenomenology was very influential on phenomenological thought during Day's lifetime, she, herself, was no Heideggerian. Examining her method, we see a much more Husserlian approach to lived experience, more closely matching the insights of Emmanuel Levinas than any other major phenomenologist. Problematically, however, the inclusion of the metaphysical into a definition of the event would run into serious opposition from some phenomenologists.

### **Phenomenological Critique of Metaphysics: Janicaud**

Why, though, ought phenomenology attempt to deal with metaphysics at all? Surely such a philosophy, grounded as it is in concrete human experience, must object to the introduction of the divine into history? This objection is essentially what is proposed by Dominique Janicaud, a phenomenological philosopher, advances the argument that phenomenology has been corrupted by the inclusion of non-phenomenon based notions such as metaphysics. Janicaud directs his criticism against Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion in his anti-

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<sup>242</sup> This was the chief source of tension between Christ and the Sanhedrin and Jewish leaders of his time.

<sup>243</sup> Day was certainly aware of Thomism, however her writings contain but little of Scholastic philosophy. Rather, she focuses on the actual, lived experience of individual human persons, the method of phenomenologists.

metaphysical essay, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology."<sup>244</sup> Janicaud begins his attack by objecting to these thinkers introducing metaphysical concepts such as the "Other" and transcendence to phenomenological works. For Janicaud, phenomenology should be restricted to observable phenomena. Anything beyond the realm of the observable should be considered metaphysics (literally beyond physics) and thus not a part of the understanding of human experience. Essentially, Janicaud is revisiting Kant by placing a restriction on human knowledge.<sup>245</sup> Janicaud then incorporates the ideas of the Eighteenth-Century empiricists into his understanding of phenomena. To a certain extent, Janicaud is also reviving the old logical positivism of the early 20th Century in that he rejects metaphysics and chooses to embrace only that which science can observe and analyze.

Certainly, Janicaud's opponents have given him much ammunition to work with. Levinas, a Talmudic scholar, frequently refers to the trace of the transcendent (or the Word of God) in the face of the Other. A strong argument might be made that Levinas' entire system of ethics is based on respect and responsibility for the Other human being who is created in God's image (*Imago Dei*) and, as such, contains a trace of the divine within him.<sup>246</sup> Heidegger, on the other hand, spoke of "the phenomenology of the unapparent" and the importance of place (which can be considered in a metaphysical sense).<sup>247</sup> Additionally, the later Heidegger discusses the fourfold which is loosely Buddhist in nature and certainly incorporates the metaphysical (earth and sky, divinities and mortals). Finally, Marion, known as a consultant to the Vatican, openly

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<sup>244</sup> Dominique Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," from *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

<sup>245</sup> Janicaud's horizon is quite different from Kant's, but both are convinced that they are in a position to place a hard limit on the reach of human knowledge.

<sup>246</sup> Especially in the series of interviews given by Levinas in *Entre-Nous: Thinking of the Other*, Michael Smith and Barbara Harshev (trans.), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>247</sup> This is from the controversial "Zahringen seminars" given in 1973.

introduces such notions as the gift, donation, and the experience of transcending the horizon of knowledge into his works.<sup>248</sup> If we take Kant to be correct, in that phenomena are those things which we can observe, know, and study, then presumably phenomenology, the uncovering of those things, should restrict itself to Kantian phenomena.

Against this view, Marion and others have argued that this restriction of knowledge is incorrect and that human experience includes the experience of the transcendent (or that which is not directly observable by sense data). Marion begins his counter-argument against Janicaud by noting that phenomena may appear without conditions. "Can we not envision a type of phenomenon that would reverse the condition of a horizon (by surpassing it, instead of being inscribed within it) and that would reverse the reduction (by leading the *I* back to itself, instead of being reduced to the *I*)?"<sup>249</sup> To this, Marion adds the idea that intuition is the first step in human understanding. He discusses Kant's view on this and notes that, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."<sup>250</sup> However, Kant has prized the concept over intuition, which Marion considers an error.

To be sure, the intuition remains empty, but blindness is worth more here than vacuity: for even blinded the intuition remains one that gives, whereas the concept, even if it alone can allow to be seen what would first be given to it, remains as such perfectly empty, and therefore just as well incapable of seeing anything at all... In the realm of the phenomenon, the intuition, rather than the concept, is king.<sup>251</sup>

This is to say that intuition must be our guide in understanding phenomena. To limit ourselves to mere philosophical or scientific concepts is to miss much of that which phenomenology is capable of examining. For Marion, phenomenology is the experience of exceeding the horizon

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<sup>248</sup> See, for example, Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward A Phenomenology of Givenness*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>249</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon" from *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, 184.

<sup>250</sup> Marion, 190.

<sup>251</sup> Marion, 190-191.

possibility. In a Derridian sense, this would be an "event" and thus Marion would be arguing here that phenomenology is the study of "events."

Further adding to the attack on Janicaud's very narrow interpretation of phenomenology is the fact that by his definitions of phenomenology and theology, theoretical physicists (quantum physicists, for example) are in fact theologians given that they are examining and commenting upon that which cannot be observed by sense-data. Also, Janicaud's understanding of phenomenology misses entire aspects of human existence that should, in theory, be critical to phenomenology - which, more broadly understood should include the study of all of human experience. For example, the experience of creation through the ecstasy of a man and a woman physically joining together is not something that is scientifically observable. It is metaphysical; indeed, one might argue that in this experience of creation by the physical manifestation of love, human beings experience a trace of the divine. Certainly, this is the very point which Tantra (a particular esoteric teaching of Hinduism and Buddhism) is meant to emphasize.

Moving somewhat further east, the practitioners of the East Asian martial arts frequently refer to *ch'i* or the life-force. This force can be channeled by the experienced martial artist to exert great force at a highly specific point. Although the results of this focus can be demonstrated, the actual experience of *ch'i* (or *qi*) is metaphysical; it cannot be reduced to a simple, empirically observable phenomenon. Yet despite the fact that our senses and concepts cannot explain *ch'i* or the experience of the divine through physical ecstasy, our intuition confirms that such things can and have occurred. In this sense, then, Marion is right, as the first time a human being experiences either of these phenomena, he can be said to have exceeded the horizon of what he thought possible; this is a very definite "event." As with all such events, the phenomenologist would do well to open himself to the study of these human experiences rather

than limit himself to a "pure," reductionist form of phenomenology of the type that Janicaud prefers.

### **Day, Levinas, and the Ethical-Metaphysical Critique of Phenomenology**

Day certainly never spells out any of this in her writing. Indeed, Day would likely have considered Levinas and Marion to be too ethereal or abstract in their thinking; there is very much something of the hardened Aristotelian in her, after all.<sup>252</sup> Yet, in *The Eleventh Virgin*, in particular, there is a profound sense that Day grasps much of what Levinas and Marion are arguing, at least instinctually.<sup>253</sup> She never shies away from the metaphysical, and refuses to reduce it to mere sentimentality or superstition. But where might we derive some sense of what a metaphysical experience is? Perhaps we can explain it in terms of ethics.

Here, it would appear that there is again some overlap between the thinking of Day and Levinas, in that both seek to restore a human dimension to the Other. Levinas emphasized the idea of ethics as the "first philosophy" throughout his many works. In many ways, Levinas' notions of ethics are intended as a direct criticism of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in which ethics was, if not completely lacking, then certainly not central to his understanding of "being" and "*Da-Sein*." One criticism of Heidegger's understanding of being-in-the-world-with-others is that it does not personalize *Da-Sein*'s relationship with the Other. Levinas attacks this point in his works discussing the Other and *Da-Sein*'s relationship to the Other. Specifically, Heidegger has incorporated the experience of being-with-the-other into the overall being-in-the-

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<sup>252</sup> And for all of the theorizing of Marx as merely a Neo-Platonist (chiefly due to his role as a disciple of Hegel), there is very much an aspect of Aristotelian common sense and empiricism in his works. This may have rubbed off on Day, or perhaps it was just instinctual for her.

<sup>253</sup> Although Day herself considered *The Eleventh Virgin* to be her worst work, nonetheless she grapples consistently with metaphysical themes such as love, loneliness, right and wrong, existentialism and meaning, and the context of authentic being (for a woman in the 1920's). Dorothy Day, *The Eleventh Virgin*, (Chicago: The Cottager Press, 2011).

world; the Other exists in *Da-Sein's* life, but Heidegger wants *Da-Sein* to overcome the Other and the implied estrangement from the Self. In other words, the Other is impersonal and our experience of the Other is simply one of any number of other experiences that revolve around the Self. The Self is still the center of Heidegger's understanding of the universe and, as such, Levinas accuses him of failing to abandon Cartesian "egology." For Levinas, the very embrace of the Other is not an estrangement, but an empowerment.

Central to Levinas' system of ethics is the concept of the "face" as the origin of ethics. Levinas discusses his idea of the "face" throughout *Entre-Nous*, a collection of articles and interviews explaining his views on philosophy and society. He refers to the face as, "...being the original locus of the meaningful."<sup>254</sup> Locating meaning itself in the face of the other is not only phenomenological, but also indicative of a quite profound humanism. A key to Levinas' ethics is that the understanding of *A* being consists in going beyond that being (this is the idea of openness) and perceiving it upon the horizon of being. The problem here, however, is that once we understand being (our own being), we are left only with the existential - letting our being alone (freely letting it be as a being). This is acceptable to Heidegger, but Levinas will build his critique around the notion that the Other is wholly different. We cannot simply let the Other be as a being; instead, we have a responsibility to him.<sup>255</sup> Levinas believes that Heidegger has skipped a step in his explanation of being with the other person. To understand a person is to let him be, according to Heidegger, but Levinas objects that this understanding can come only after you speak to him. A dialogue must occur with the Other before we can understand him.

Levinas is concerned here that in Heidegger, our speaking to the Other is merely a function of our understanding of him and this understanding is only possible by possessing and

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<sup>254</sup> Levinas, 145.

<sup>255</sup> Levinas, 5-6.



consuming, as we would with an object.<sup>256</sup> This is simply not possible with another person.

Man is the only being whom we cannot meet without having some dialogue, even if it is only the act of refusing dialogue. This relationship between two beings that MUST speak to each other cannot be understood in simple ontological terms. We may try to understand the Other's being, but this exercise comes only after we have spoken to them. Our relationship with the Other is actually based on a prayer, an invocation and is thus religious in nature. When we call out to the Other, we are making an invocation to them; this forms a bond with them that is quite different from our relationship with things.<sup>257</sup>

Levinas' understanding of the term religion is based on the idea that the relation between persons is not reducible to simple understanding (ontology) and the notion that this relation implies certain duties in the Kantian sense.<sup>258</sup> Beings can only exist in relationships with other beings when they are invoked, and they can only be invoked through the face (face to face contact). This seems to imply that making a being faceless is the key to dehumanizing him. Here, Levinas might well be attacking the Nazis who made every effort to make their victims "faceless" and thus dehumanized.<sup>259</sup>

Following this train of thought, Levinas indicates that to possess the Other, would be to commit an act of violence against him. This is perhaps the greatest violation of Levinas' ethics. We cannot partially possess him; we must either meet with him without possessing him, or we must negate him entirely by murder. Murder is defined here as the total negation of another being. The Other is the only being that I can want to kill. However, in exercising our power to

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<sup>256</sup> Levinas, 6.

<sup>257</sup> Levinas, 7.

<sup>258</sup> Levinas, 8.

<sup>259</sup> Levinas, 9.

kill the Other, we lose that power, for we will then never understand (possess) the Other.<sup>260</sup>

Levinas believes that to interact with the Other face to face is to be unable to kill, which again, is a comment on the fact that murderers must make their victims "faceless." To have a face is to be human and for another to see that face, to have dialogue with that face (a relationship to the being itself) is to humanize the Other and to remove the ability to kill that Other.<sup>261</sup> The face is naked and vulnerable, yet it is the source of our opposition to the will of another to murder us. To mask the face is make dialogue impossible and murder possible. Levinas returns to this point over and over. Rather than seeing the horizon of being as the key to understanding the Other which is Heidegger's argument, Levinas claims that the face and all that it signifies is the key to understanding.<sup>262</sup>

Levinas offers an additional critique of phenomenology and contemporary philosophy in this discussion. Phenomenology is limited; it explains only our own being, not our relationship and duty to others, because it does not, at least in Heidegger, include ethics. For Levinas, studying being and knowledge are important, but these things are secondary to ethics which he defines as our responsibility to others. Drifting slightly into what Dominique Janicaud would call theology, Levinas maintains that in the face of the Other, we see a trace of the presence of God (or the Word of God). In this, Levinas might be referring to the notion of *Imago Dei*, that we are created in God's image and that there is a spark of the divine in all of us. For Levinas, there is, in the Other, the real presence of God. He specifically calls out Matthew 25: 31-46.<sup>263</sup> Here Christ refers to the idea that whatsoever you do for the least of my brothers, you do for me. This statement defines ethics for Levinas and he insists that the beginning of philosophy is in the

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<sup>260</sup> Levinas, 9-10.

<sup>261</sup> Levinas, 10.

<sup>262</sup> Levinas, 10-11.

<sup>263</sup> Levinas, 110.

understanding by the human being that holiness is indisputable. By holiness, he means the notion that the only absolute value is our responsibility to the other; there exists the possibility of putting the Other's needs before our own. The face of the Other is the beginning of philosophy, or, in other words, ethics is the first philosophy.<sup>264</sup>

Another central notion in Levinas' philosophy (and part of his criticism of Heidegger) is the notion of a "humanism of the Other [person]." For an understanding of this notion, we must return to Levinas' emphasis on the face. Each face is unique in some way, signifying the uniqueness of each person; speaking more theologically, this would be the uniqueness of each soul. In Heidegger's philosophy, the self (or *Da-Sean*) is privileged over all other entities. The self is central and all other persons, things, and events revolve around the self as the planets revolve around the Sun. Levinas clearly has Heidegger's *Da-Sean* in mind in "Humanism and Anarchy."

The unburied dead of wars and death camps accredit the idea of a death with no future, making tragi-comic the care for one's self and illusory the pretensions of the *rational animal* to a privileged place in the cosmos, capable of dominating and integrating the totality of being in a consciousness of self.<sup>265</sup>

Additionally, *Da-Sean* should not and cannot be captive to the Other; this would be a loss of autonomy in the Kantian sense for Heidegger. Levinas disagrees, however, believing that true freedom and autonomy can only come from embracing the Other (or the "humanism of the Other [person]" and our responsibility to him.

### **Transcendence and the Encounter with God in the Other**

Levinas is not afraid to introduce metaphysical concepts such as the trace of God (or the trace of the transcendent Word of God) into his explanation of the "humanism of the Other."

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<sup>264</sup> Levinas, 11.

<sup>265</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel, "Humanism and Anarchy," from *Humanism of the Other*, Nidra Poller (trans.), (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 45.

Remembering that in the face of the Other is the likeness of God (*Imago Dei*), Levinas suggests that the encounter of each person with God comes in the face of the Other, "The face is, in and of itself, visitation and transcendence... To be in the image of God does not signify being the icon of God, but finding oneself in his trace."<sup>266</sup> This encounter with God both reminds us of our duty to the Other (and, through the Other to God) and of the implicit worth of the Other person given that they contain a trace of the transcendent Word of God within them (seen in their face). To re-incorporate Heidegger and *Da-Sein* here, we can say that acknowledging that others are also equally valuable *Da-Sein* and that we have a shared experience of being-in-the-world (the experience of being human) which unites us or allows us to form a bond or communion. This bond is humanism itself, the recognition of the Other as an equally valuable human person for whom we are responsible. A humanist phenomenology, then, would depend on Levinas' metaphysical ethics (the trace of God in the face and the face as ethics - the first philosophy) and on the recognition of a shared experience (the experience of being human). These two notions - the ethics of the face and the acknowledgement of shared experience and value - define the true "humanism of the Other."

This is a significant part of Day's project, in that she attempts to restore the humanism of the Other, be they poor, black, immigrants, the sick, the elderly, what have you. When the policeman's club strikes the head of the non-violent civil rights protester, there is the transcendent. When the bullets fired from the rifles of National Guardsmen strike the defenseless bodies of peaceful student anti-war protesters at Kent State, there is the transcendent. When the guards in prisons ignore the agony of sometimes starving, injured, and drug-addled prisoners crammed into over-crowded cells, there is the transcendent. Day sought to experience as much of

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<sup>266</sup> *Humanism of the Other*, 44.

this as she could, first-hand, in order to meet God on his own terms. To glimpse a passing trace of the divine, as Moses felt God pass over him in *Exodus*.<sup>267</sup>

In order to explain that experience, Day, the writer, turned to both novel and autobiography. The role of the novelist is, in essence, to capture human experience and commit it to prose that translates that experience into a form that the reader can understand. This involves either experiencing the event (the phenomenon) personally as participant or observer, or drawing on one's own experiences to create a new phenomenon (imagining how an event impacts participants). Dorothy Day draws heavily on both the lessons of novelists such as Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, and on her own experiences of transcendent events to compose her autobiographies and her writings on the central themes of the Catholic Worker movement. To a large extent, perhaps more so than has been recognized, Day was a product of the ideological conflict of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. This conflict informed her youth and early adulthood, and her proposed resolution to it informed the remainder of her life. This literary journey, this deeply intimate personal novel is very much the story of Day and her movement.

Connecting historical experience with pneumatic revelation (encounter with the transcendent) is at the heart of Eric Voegelin's corpus of works, and is relevant to my analysis of Dorothy Day. Day consistently repeats stories of the poor, civil rights crusaders, laborers on strike, and others encountering hatred and violence. She does not do this simply to grab the reader's attention, nor does she do it to affect social change à la Upton Sinclair. Indeed, although Day was influenced by Sinclair's work, she was disgusted by headline-grabbing journalists and

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<sup>267</sup> *Exodus* 33: 21 – 23.

their hyperbolic news stories. No, she herself is analyzing these experiences and demonstrating to the reader an actual lived experience of transcendence.

Day has moved beyond the Marxist dialectic and the Hegelian Phenomenology into the freedom offered by boundaries, by the order and the symbols of the Christian faith (in the institution of the Catholic Church). Voegelin's criticism of Hegel's science of consciousness is that it goes too far, assumes too much knowledge of the divine. Marx, building on Hegel, but reversing him, goes to the opposite extreme by placing an artificial horizon on knowledge (the limitation of questioning). Voegelin finds the Aristotelian mean in Anselm: we can embrace the erotic call of knowledge via *noesis* and we can find truth in pneumatic revelation (non-Christians can certainly philosophize, as Plato and Aristotle both demonstrate), but the ontological point made by Anselm in the *Proslogion* is that God is that beyond which we cannot imagine any greater.<sup>268</sup> We cannot obtain total knowledge of the transcendent divine, because to do so would, of necessity, to be divine, ourselves. The concept of God, in Anselm, is simply too great for a mortal, immanent creature to fully grasp. This is not to deny that humans can know something of God, as Aquinas argues, but simply to point out that we cannot know all of God, as Hegel would have it, or none of God as Marx would have it (there is no God to know, in his system).

As an example of this, Day, then working for *Commonweal* magazine, was assigned to cover the 1932 Hunger March on Washington, D.C., mostly led by the Communist Party and the far-left Farmers' Convention (the Farmers' Union).<sup>269</sup> As the marchers assembled, mostly peacefully, many of the major newspapers published sensationalist accounts of diabolical red revolutions raising armies of thugs to attack Washington. Day was disgusted by such coverage,

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<sup>268</sup> Ellis Sandoz, "The Spirit of Voegelin's Late Work," from *Republicanism, Religion, and the Soul of America*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 162 – 174.

<sup>269</sup> Although, as Day notes, most of the marchers were either unemployed or union members; the marchers did not belong to either the Communist Party or the Farmers' Convention.

noting that besides her own coverage, only the Scripps-Howard owned *Daily News* provided anything resembling a balanced story.<sup>270</sup> On their way to Washington, militias, veterans, police, and firefighters turned out to meet them armed with machine guns, sawed-off shotguns, revolvers, and rubber hoses. Desperate, starving protesters in close proximity to frightened, angry peacekeepers inevitably led to violence.

There was no trouble for the marchers in any of the cities on the way until they reached Wilmington. There they were holding a meeting in a church and Ben Gold, one of the leaders, was making a speech, when suddenly windows were broken simultaneously on either side of the hall and tear gas bombs were thrown in. The meeting was in an uproar and milled out into the street in anything but orderly fashion, as was natural. There the police took the opportunity to club and beat the marchers. Ben Gold, after being badly beaten, was jailed, and the march went on without him.<sup>271</sup>

Later, as the March concluded by parading through the streets of Washington:

I watched that ragged horde and thought to myself, “These are Christ’s poor. He was one of them. He was a man like other men, and He chose His friends amongst the ordinary workers. These men feel they have been betrayed by Christianity. Men are not Christian today. If they were, this sight would not be possible. Far dearer in the sight of God perhaps are these hungry ragged ones, than all those smug, well-fed Christians who sit in their homes, cowering in fear of the Communist menace.”

I felt that they were my people, that I was part of them. I had worked for them and with them in the past, and now I was a Catholic and so could not be a Communist. I could not join this united front of protest and I wanted to.<sup>272</sup>

Here is the encounter of the immanent with the transcendent: the politics of the marchers are irrelevant, as are those of the police, what matters is that in the moment there is sublime suffering of starving men being beaten by police. There is the world turning its back on the poorest, neediest, and sinless (for these are not criminals). Is not that the face of Christ? Does not Day comprehend, perfectly, the supreme moment of pneumatic revelation provided here to all those who witnessed it? Strip away the politics, the newspapermen and flashing cameras, the

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<sup>270</sup> Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality*, (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2015 edition), 6.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 – 6.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

police lights and sirens, the screams, the chants. Strip it all away and see only the essential: Christ-like suffering laid bare for the entire world to see. Day is riveted; perhaps she is the only one who perceives this, perhaps her soul is the only one open to divine revelation. Of course, she must later ask, “What did I see?” “How can I understand this event?” Here, *nous* plays its part in helping to inform the contemplative (for that is surely what Day has become at this point). She has experienced the divine, but must now understand this rupture in the ordinary flow of history, for that is what any encounter of human and divine must be: a rupture, a metaphysically explosive event that cannot be understood by the observer at the time. Here, I borrow from Derrida’s explanation of the phenomenon of the event discussed earlier.

### **Peter Maurin’s Influence on Day’s Thought**

Although Day’s own Marxist background certainly inclines her to something of a phenomenological inquiry into history (the Hegelian influence on Marxism demanding this attitude), there is also good reason to believe that her insistence on analyzing historical events phenomenologically was a result of Peter Maurin’s influence on her. Consider this passage explaining Maurin’s approach to philosophy:

“We must study history,” he says, “in order to find out why things are as they are. In the light of history we should so work today that things will be different in the future.” Journalists, he believes, should not merely report history, but make history by influencing the time in which they write. In other words they should be propagandists and agitators as he himself has always been. He started to write, he says, because he could not get enough people to listen to him, and his writing was influenced, technically at least, by the Works of Charles Peguy who also wrote in short phrased lines. St. Augustine had used this technique in writing his meditations, finding it a help to break up the sentences into phrases that catch the eye.

Peter always had sheaves of these writings in his pockets, and he began visiting the offices of Catholic papers and magazines trying to get them printed. At times he mimeographed copies of his work and distributed them himself. Always he emphasized voluntary poverty and the works of mercy as the techniques by which the masses could be reached, and he lived as he taught. He has the simplicity of a saint or a genius, believing



that everyone is interested in what he has to teach, believing that everyone will play his part in the lay apostolate.<sup>273</sup>

Is there not something here, though, of Marx, himself? Oh, perhaps not the institution Marx, the grand system-building Father of Communism, but the man Marx. This is the Marx who labored day after day to expose the hardship and extreme poverty of the workers, the Marx who published stunning indictments of the follies and injustice of the Liberal system, the Marx who was revolted by the so-called “Socialist Emperor” Napoleon III whose sickeningly sweet façade of Second Empire France concealed the rotting fruits of decay at its heart.<sup>274</sup>

Certainly, for a Catholic of Maurin’s age, one involved with a religious order (the De La Salle Brothers [the French Christian Brothers]), there would have been formal training in the Scholastic method and the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, Maurin’s time with the order coming so soon after the issuance of *Aeterni Patris* (1879).<sup>275</sup> So, of course, underlining any of Maurin’s teachings is the Thomistic and Scholastic approach to philosophy. This is seen even in the staccato dialectical method of argumentation and preaching that Maurin employed both in *Easy Essays* and in public exhortations to the masses. Consider:

People go to Washington,  
Asking the Federal Government  
to solve their economic problems.  
But the Federal Government  
was never meant  
to solve men’s economic problems.  
Thomas Jefferson says,  
‘The less government there is

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<sup>273</sup> Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality*, (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015), 9 – 10.

<sup>274</sup> For this characterization of Napoleon III, see Philippe Séguin, *Louis Napoléon Le Grand*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1990), Theodore Zeldin, *The political system of Napoleon III*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), and Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007). There is still much debate over this point, as leftist authors tend to see Napoleon III as merely an authoritarian bourgeoisie, while liberal and conservative authors view him as a forerunner of Twentieth Century mass-politics populist socialism.

<sup>275</sup> The Lasallian Brothers’ Louisiana holdings include Archbishop Rummel High School, De La Salle High School, Christian Brothers School, and St. Paul’s School. *Aeterni Patris* formally designated Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy and the Scholastic method as the official philosophy of the Catholic Church.

the better it is.’  
If the less government there is,  
the better it is,  
the best kind of government  
is self-government.  
If the best kind of government  
is self-government,  
then the best kind of organization  
is self-organization.  
When the organizers try  
to organize the unorganized,  
they often do it for the benefit  
of the organizers.  
The organizers don’t organize themselves.  
And when the organizers don’t organize themselves,  
nobody organizes himself.  
And when nobody organizes himself,  
nothing is organized.<sup>276</sup>

This was Peter Maurin, radical preacher, in magnificent form. He spoke of complex ideas in short, easily-digestible verses. This is a simple, but effective technique, in that it allows the listener (or reader) to understand the basics of any of Maurin’s arguments, and challenge either a term, a premise, or a conclusion if they wish. Of course, Maurin was very happy to engage with listeners in debate, provided they were prepared to listen.<sup>277</sup>

Another Maurin essay, “The Duty of Hospitality,” provides some similarity in conclusions, if not quite methods, to those of French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas:

People who are in need  
and are not afraid to beg  
give to people not in need  
the occasion to do good  
for goodness' sake.  
Modern society calls the beggar  
bum and panhandler

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<sup>276</sup> Peter Maurin, “Self-Organization,” from his *Easy Essays*, available in full online at <http://www.easyessays.org/> (accessed January 28, 2017). I have kept Maurin’s spacing, to more accurately reflect his delivery tempo.

<sup>277</sup> Maurin insisted that his interlocutors actually listen and focus on his words, rather than simply formulate a reply in their heads while he was speaking. Day discusses this throughout her works, remarking on the fact that this led to frequent frustration on both Maurin’s part and his opponent’s. See *From Union Square to Rome* and *The Long Loneliness* for some examples of this.

and gives him the bum's rush.  
 But the Greeks used to say  
     that people in need are  
     the ambassadors of the gods.  
 Although you may be called bums  
     and panhandlers  
 You are in fact the Ambassadors of God.  
 As God's Ambassadors  
     you should be given food, clothing and shelter  
     by those who are able to give it.  
 Mahometan teachers tell us  
     that God commands hospitality.  
 And hospitality is still practiced  
     in Mahometan countries.  
 But the duty of hospitality  
     is neither taught nor practiced  
     in Christian countries.<sup>278</sup>

Is there not something here of the absolute duty to the Other person that Levinas proposes in his works? This is not an I-Thou relationship as in Martin Buber, but a total acceptance of responsibility for the life of the Other person.<sup>279</sup> Maurin and Day sought to elevate the impoverished by restoring to them their rightful inheritance as children of God, or to use Levinas' language, to recognize the trace of the Word of God in the naked, vulnerable face of the Other person. Of course, Levinas makes the larger point that responsibility of this sort is freeing to the "I" or the Self, rather than limiting as in Heidegger's *Da-Sein*'s relationship to others.

Consider this passage:

The Desire for Others that we feel in the most common social experience is fundamental movement, pure transport, absolute orientation sense. All analysis of language in contemporary philosophy emphasizes, and rightfully so, its hermeneutic structure and the cultural effort of the embodied being who expresses himself... In other words before it is celebration of being, expression is a relation with the one to whom I express the expression and whose presence is already required so that my cultural gesture

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<sup>278</sup> Peter Maurin, "The Duty of Hospitality," from *Easy Essays*, available in full online at <http://www.easyessays.org/> (accessed June 16, 2016). Again, the spacing is Maurin's own.

<sup>279</sup> Levinas is notable for the remarkable inaccessibility of much of his work. Fortunately, he provided a very clear and frank explanation of his philosophy in a final interview given before his death in the above cited work, *Entre Nous*. Buber's work is discussed throughout *Entre Nous* as a counter-point to Levinas' own philosophy, see Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Walter Kaufmann (trans.), (New York: Touchstone Press, 1971).

of expression can be produced. The Other who faces me is not included in the totality of being that is impressed... He is neither a cultural signification nor a simple given. He is, primordially, *sense*.<sup>280</sup>

And for Levinas, critiquing the peculiarly atheistic Martin Heidegger, the conception of self and duty to the Other cannot occur in an atheistic framework in which God is dead, and *Da-Sean* or the being of beings (ontology of the Ego) replaces God.<sup>281</sup>

A god intervened in human history as a force, sovereign, of course, invisible to the eye and undemonstrable by reason, consequently supernatural, or transcendent, but his intervention took place in a system of reciprocities and exchanges. A system described on a basis of man preoccupied with himself... His effects ended up among the effects of all the other forces and mixed with them, in the *miracle*. God of miracles, even in an era when no one expects miracles anymore; a force in the world, magic despite all his morality, morality turning into magic, acquiring magical virtues; a god one comes to as a beggar.<sup>282</sup>

The poor are necessarily already beggars, but, following Christ (the transcendent Jewish God made immanent) requires that all become beggars (*Matthew 19:21*, repeated in *Mark 10:21*, and *Luke 18:22*). This God is greater than self-consciousness or ontology. It is a religion that Levinas believes is one that Man should want to belong to, not a religion that Man feels he is a necessary part of (as in Heidegger's ego cult). Only by recognition of this religion can sense (and the duty to the Other have meaning): "We do not think that what makes sense can do without God, nor that the idea of Being, or the Being [*l'être*] of Beings [*l'entrant*], can substitute for God to lead signification to the unity of sense without which there is no sense."<sup>283</sup> And in a universal religion (the Christianity of Day and Maurin), every person has access to this God. This is a

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<sup>280</sup> *Humanism of the Other*, 30. Importantly, the sense of Levinas' meaning when discussing the Other is lost in translation as the original French title of the work is *Humanisme de l'autre homme* which more properly translates as the humanism of the other man (or person). Levinas wants to talk about concrete human beings here, not conceptual constructs.

<sup>281</sup> For Heidegger, recall, referred to Friedrich Nietzsche as the last metaphysician. The issue of God and metaphysical speculation was simply no longer relevant for Heidegger. Self and self-realization (self-consciousness) is all for Heidegger, to the point that Levinas believes that he elevates this to the place formerly held by God.

<sup>282</sup> Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 24.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

freeing God, a God of sense and structure, a God of duty not to oneself (this would be solipsistic egology), but to the Other Man.

Returning to Day's approach, here are more examples that she gives of experiences of the transcendent:

One young woman came in this morning who said she had seen a copy [of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper] in the square and wanted to find out about the House of Hospitality. She had been living down on the Bowery, paying 25 cents a night for a bed and, now her money was all gone and she had no place to go. She was telling me about her friend, who was also down and out, who went to take a room, or a bed up in Harlem, was seduced by a young Spanish American, and threw herself under a subway train a week later.<sup>284</sup>

This is suffering to the point of hopelessness. In the face of the homeless woman, in the face of her friend, the suicide, in the face of all these desperately poor, there is Christ, the transcendent, made immanent. Again, from the same issue:

A few weeks ago I went over to St. Zita's to see a sister there and the woman who answered the door took it for granted that I came to beg for shelter... It just shows how many girls, and women, who to the average eye, look as though they came from comfortable surroundings are really homeless and destitute... You see them in the waiting rooms of all the department stores. To all appearances they are waiting to meet their friends, to go on a shopping tour – to a matinee, or to a nicely served lunch in the store restaurant. But in reality they are looking for work (you can see the worn newspapers they leave behind with the help wanted page well thumbed), and they have no place to go, no place to rest but in these public places – and no good hot lunch to look forward to. The stores are thronged with women buying dainty underwear which they could easily do without – compacts for a dollar, when the cosmetics in the five-and-ten are just as good – and mingling with these protected women and often indistinguishable from them, are these sad ones, these desolate ones, with no homes, no jobs, and never enough food in their stomachs.<sup>285</sup>

### **The Dialectic of Transcendence**

How is it that Day can see so plainly what others, even other Catholics, cannot (or will not)?

The eyes and the soul must be open to the experience of the transcendent. The mind must be

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<sup>284</sup> Dorothy Day, "Day by Day," from *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, Issue 7, June, 1934. Available at: <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/278.html> (accessed March 15, 2016). Brackets are mine.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

engaged in the dialectic of transcendence, or to use Augustine's conception of this, it must be fixed on the City of God, while dwelling in the City of Man. There is a pneumatic aspect to this, of course, in which the soul is open to the experience of divine revelation and reason (*nous*) prepared to interpret that experience.<sup>286</sup> This is a religious experience as understood by William James, although it is also a philosophic experience. The former simply under the, admittedly broad, terms that James sets down in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and the latter as the opening of the mind to truth, albeit via the path of the soul.<sup>287</sup> For Day, as for Levinas, there is an ethical dimension to this experience; this aspect, perhaps, being the gateway to the experience of the transcendent. Consider the response of Levinas to useless suffering: "[T]he suffering for the useless suffering of the other person, the just suffering in me for the unjustifiable suffering of the Other, opens upon the suffering the ethical perspective of the inter-human."<sup>288</sup> Too, there is something Heideggerian about the experience of the transcendent, in that it is phenomenological: it is a unique experience of being-in-the-world-with-others.

Of course, there is the temptation to simply reduce the experience to hallucination. This would be a serious error, however, as what is experienced here is not merely the wished-for made manifest, nor is it reason occluded by dogma or mysticism (and, on that point, there is a strong Kantian argument to be made in favor of actual experience of the transcendental).<sup>289</sup> The

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<sup>286</sup> And there is some neuropsychological research being done on transcendental experiences at universities across the world, marking the evolution, at least in some quarters, from consideration of these things as purely speculative philosophical or theological matters to observable scientific phenomenon that alter the brain-body dynamic. See, for example, Alberto Moreira-Almeida, "Implications of spiritual experiences to the understanding of mind-brain relationship," from the *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, December, 2013 edition, (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier Publishing).

<sup>287</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2012).

<sup>288</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, as cited in Richard J. Bernstein, "Evil and the Temptation of Theodicy," from *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 259.

<sup>289</sup> See John Sallis, *The Gathering of Reason*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 3 – 7.

hallucinatory character of the transcendental experience is almost immediately detectable, if not by the participant, then by those whom he relates it to. Even if reason fails, and the participant is carried away into full pneumatic ecstasy, an observer might very well note that what is seen is simply false. This is not an infallible method of verification, but certainly if the participant in the alleged transcendental experience can relate no *noetic* truth, then the observer is right to be suspect. This challenges the naïve Eighteenth Century notion of perception: to be is to be perceived, yet at the same time, it is of no use to offer another quite naïve notion: I do not wish to believe, therefore I hallucinate.<sup>290</sup> Neither will do if truth is sought. Still, healthy skepticism is necessary, else there is utter surrender to dogmatism which insists on the infallibility of any alleged transcendental experience.<sup>291</sup>

Returning to the verifiability or at least the reasoned analysis of the transcendental experience, there are at least some tools of analysis which can be used to understand what is related to the observer by the participant. First, of course, is the basic sketch of what is seen. Is it an experience of pure divine ecstasy (or rapture), in which the participant is actually carried away from the here and now into another place, either within or beyond the space-time continuum? If so, then we are asked to evaluate this as a miraculous event, such as one would have to view the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad (the first half of which, *al-'Isrā'*, was a trip from Mecca to Jerusalem in one night), the *Revelation of John* (spatio-temporal relocation [or, alternatively, absolute spatio-temporal removal]), or the visitation of Saint Alphonsus Liguori to Pope Clement XIV (bi-location).<sup>292</sup> When evaluating miraculous events, there is the

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<sup>290</sup> I refer to Anglo-Scots Empiricism of the Berkeleyan and Humean varieties.

<sup>291</sup> Here, of course, many examples abound, as false mystics and prophets are quite liberally scattered throughout human history.

<sup>292</sup> The *Revelation of John* might be seen as the transportation of John to an actual historical event far in the future, or the complete removal of John from space-time so that he might witness an event outside of the continuum. It is, thankfully, the task of theologians to settle this argument, not political scientists.

very real difficulty of making intelligible that which may not even be sensible (Alphonsus, for example, was not fully aware of his bi-location, saying that he had been in a trance). The difficulty is magnified by the fact that language, itself, might fail completely such that no coherent explanation of a genuine phenomenon can be provided.<sup>293</sup>

Even beyond this, of course, is the conceptual framework needed to understand that which, by definition, exceeds the limits of human understanding. Here, I do not mean to artificially limit the horizon of human knowledge, however, it is simply not correct to say that the human mind can fully grasp the transcendent. To fully know the transcendent (the divine), one would have to be divine. To put this another way, the human mind is powerful, but limited in that there is a finite storage and processing limitation that is hardwired into the genetic code of the human animal. Even agnostic and atheist futurists acknowledge this limitation.<sup>294</sup> Assume, then, that the mind of the divine is infinite (as, it would seem, by definition it would need to be); how can the finite contain, to say nothing of understand, the infinite? All of this to say that evaluating the truly miraculous experience of the transcendent is supremely difficult, at best. One need look no further than various competing interpretations of the *Revelation of John* to see evidence of this.

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<sup>293</sup> For the failure of language to describe phenomenon, see, among many others, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, reprint edition, (Mineola, New York: 1998) and J.M.E. McTaggart, “The Unreality of Time,” from the journal, *Mind*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press), Vol. 17, No. 68, October, 1908. Wittgenstein’s closing words in the *Tractatus* remind us of the limitations of language, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” McTaggart, of course, uses the same approach to argue that time, itself, does not exist.

<sup>294</sup> Stephen Hawking has addressed the idea of transferring consciousness to cloud storage. Even responsible scientific outlets such as Stanford University’s Computer Science Department and the journal *Scientific American*, note that while they believe human immortality of this sort is possible via the uploading of the human mind into a computer, there is a set amount of storage space needed for the mind (estimates include two and a half to nine petabytes for an average fifty-year-old; for comparison purposes, just one petabyte of MP3 songs would play for about 2,000 years). See “Downloading Consciousness” as the Stanford University Department of Computer Science, available at <https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs181/projects/2010-11/DownloadingConsciousness/tandr.html> (accessed May 17, 2016) and Jeneen Interlandi, “New Estimate Boosts the Human Brain’s Capacity 10-Fold” at *Scientific American*, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/new-estimate-boosts-the-human-brain-s-memory-capacity-10-fold/> (accessed May 17, 2016).



A second form of transcendent experience is the vision. This is different from the miraculous experience in that what is contemplated here is not an event that defies the explanation of physics, but rather a very personal and very spiritual encounter with the divine. I might add the qualifier that this event occurs within history, that is, it is an actual spatio-temporal event that takes place in the immanent realm, and involves contact with, but not transportation to or by the transcendent. The vision may be thought of as ecstasy, or divine rapture. Supernatural ecstasy may be defined as a state which, while it lasts, includes two elements:

- the one, interior and invisible, when the mind rivets its attention on a religious subject;
- the other, corporeal and visible, when the activity of the senses is suspended, so that not only are external sensations incapable of influencing the soul, but considerable difficulty is experienced in awakening such sensation, and this whether the ecstatic himself desires to do so, or others attempt to quicken the organs into action.

That many of the saints have been granted ecstasies is attested by hagiology; and nowadays even free-thinkers are slow to deny historical facts that rest on so solid a basis. They no longer endeavor, as did their predecessors of the Eighteenth Century, to explain them away as grounded on fraud; several, indeed, abandoning the pathological theory, current in the Nineteenth Century, have advocated the psychological explanation, though they exaggerate its force.<sup>295</sup> Thomas Aquinas discusses this in the *Summa Theologica* as a phenomenon of divine love. In the Second Part of the First Part, Question 28, he explains:

Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv), "the Divine love produces ecstasy," and that "God Himself suffered ecstasy through love." Since therefore according to the same author (Div. Nom. iv), every love is a participated likeness of the Divine Love, it seems that every love causes ecstasy. To suffer ecstasy means to be placed outside oneself. This happens as to the apprehensive power and as to the appetitive power. As to the apprehensive power, a man is said to be placed outside himself, when he is placed outside the knowledge proper to

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<sup>295</sup> "Ecstasy" from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, available online at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05277a.htm> (accessed May 03, 2016).

him. This may be due to his being raised to a higher knowledge; thus, a man is said to suffer ecstasy, inasmuch as he is placed outside the connatural apprehension of his sense and reason, when he is raised up so as to comprehend things that surpass sense and reason: or it may be due to his being cast down into a state of debasement; thus a man may be said to suffer ecstasy, when he is overcome by violent passion or madness. As to the appetitive power, a man is said to suffer ecstasy, when that power is borne towards something else, so that it goes forth out from itself, as it were.

The first of these ecstasies is caused by love dispositively in so far, namely, as love makes the lover dwell on the beloved, as stated above (Article 2), and to dwell intently on one thing draws the mind from other things. The second ecstasy is caused by love directly; by love of friendship, simply; by love of concupiscence not simply but in a restricted sense. Because in love of concupiscence, the lover is carried out of himself, in a certain sense; in so far, namely, as not being satisfied with enjoying the good that he has, he seeks to enjoy something outside himself. But since he seeks to have this extrinsic good for himself, he does not go out from himself simply, and this movement remains finally within him. On the other hand, in the love of friendship, a man's affection goes out from itself simply; because he wishes and does good to his friend, by caring and providing for him, for his sake.<sup>296</sup>

This is the experience described by known mystics such as Julian of Norwich, Theresa of Avila, and Catherine of Sienna. The vision is comparatively easier to analyze than the miraculous event, as there is a clearly defined truth claim, the content of the vision itself. No matter that the vision or the experience of the vision may be metaphysical in nature; the only matter of import is the truth that the visionary disseminates.

Here, it would seem, that both science (natural and social) and philosophy might play some role in the understanding of pneumatic revelation. The first through rigorous fact-driven evaluation, the second through equally rigorous examination of truth claims. If the visionary explains that such and such an event will happen on such and such a day, then the scientist may watch carefully for the occurrence or non-occurrence of the event. If the visionary offers some profound statement on the nature of Man or the World, then the philosopher may examine that statement to see if it is in accord with reality. The objectivity and rigorous methodology of

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<sup>296</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "The Effects of Love," from *Summa Theologica*, Question 28 of the First Part of the Second Part, available online at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/2028.htm> (accessed May 03, 2016).

philosophy is sufficient to evaluate claims of this sort, so long as the philosophical method chosen is appropriate to the type of truth posited. If one wishes to deal with a demand upon ethics, then evaluation might be made using Kant, for example. If the vision relates to metaphysics, then one may use Plato, for example. There are, of course, any number of evaluative approaches available in all of the fields of philosophical inquiry (for evaluation of consciousness, one could use any number of phenomenological approaches from Brentano to Husserl to Heidegger to Voegelin). The relevant point here being that no matter the nature of the truth claim, there are adequate philosophical tools to evaluate it.

And so, I suggest that Dorothy Day's experiences with labor activism, civil rights, anti-war demonstrations, and the Catholic Worker movement are part of the visionary tradition. What becomes interesting in Day's case is not that she attempts to function solely as conduit; indeed, passivity is the last word that anyone would ever apply to her. No, Day is an active seeker of visions, and an even more active interpreter of them. She wants, needs desperately to understand the disclosure of the transcendent in the immanent. All her life she sought God, not so much for the encounter with God, but for guidance from God. Consider her words to her brother on why she became a Catholic:

You ask me how did it all come about, this turning toward religion, and you speak of it as though I were turning away from life when all the while it was so much a part of my life.

“All my life I have been tormented by God,” a character in one of Dostoevsky's books says. And that is the way it was with me. You will notice that I quote the Russian author a good deal, but that is because we both have read him. And I quote him often because he had a profound influence on my life, on my way of thinking.<sup>297</sup>

Day wants to understand God's message to the world, and what God wants from Man. She understands some of the message from study of the Bible and the teachings of the Catholic

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<sup>297</sup> Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), chapter 2; available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/2.html> (accessed April 20, 2016).

Church, but this is theory, Day needs application. For that, she must, she felt, live the life of a saint, and see what only a saint could see: the transcendent, the trace of God in the immanent.

To explain how she intended to do this, I will offer Day's own words:

I shall meditate as I have been accustomed, in the little Italian Church on Twelfth Street, by the side of the open window, looking out at the plants growing on the roof, the sweet corn, the boxes of herbs, the geraniums in bright bloom, and I shall rest happy in the presence of Christ on the altar, and then I shall come home and I shall write as Pere Graty advises, and try to catch some of these things that happen to bring me nearer to God, to catch them and put them down on paper.

It is something I have wanted to do, which I have done sketchily for some years. Usually I have kept a notebook only when I am sad and need to work myself out of my sadness. Now I shall do it as a duty performed joyfully for God.<sup>298</sup>

Day is the most faithful of writers, recording her every observation of both the ordinary and the sublime transcendent – and they are often intermingled.

### **Day as Practical Phenomenologist**

What is the writer's method and goal, though? I have spoken above of Day's method, although to put that into context and add to it a goal, I note now the observations of Milan Kundera, who might help us to understand Day. "Every novelist's work contains an implicit vision of the history of the novel, an idea of what the novel is."<sup>299</sup> For Day, the novel (*The Eleventh Virgin*), and her autobiographies and journalism were a vision of how to convert the slumbering masses, the satisfied American middle-class that called itself Christian, but knew nothing of Christ.

The Western crisis of identity so clearly explained by Edmund Husserl in his final lectures has come; the triumph of anti-metaphysical philosophy and pure reason has occurred and with its victory, it brings crashing down the entire edifice of modern, secular Western

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<sup>298</sup> *From Union Square to Rome*, chapter 1.

<sup>299</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, Linda Asher (trans.), (New York: Grove Press, 1986), Preface.

society including itself.<sup>300</sup> The First World War was the suicide of the West, a West long past Christian, though that fact was hardly acknowledged by any save the desperate half-mad John the Baptists of the Age, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Now, the rejection of rationality is born: the alternate realities of National Socialism and Communism, and the false romanticism of fascism. As Nietzsche had predicted, with the passing away of religion came the birth of the cult of science and progress; the horrors of chemical warfare, aerial bombardment of civilians, and scientifically managed genocide unleashed by the First World War and the still-to-come horrors of the gas chambers, napalm, and atomic war birthed by the Second World War caused the scales to fall from the eyes of many of its cultists. With the fading of faith in God and in Science (or Progress) now all-too-obvious by the 1920's and 30's, the onward march of nihilism began. To combat this suicidal tendency (whether by degeneracy into the morass of drink, drugs, and sex or the cheerful bourgeois nihilism of materialism), the fascist sought spiritual regeneration by the creation of false myths of nationhood and identity (false romanticism), the Communist and Nazi created societal edifices built upon lies (the paradise of the proletariat in the case of the former, the "pure" Aryan empire of the latter), and the Distributist sought to repair the spiritual wounds of a fallen society by reminding it of its past and of the hard truths that it had rejected.

Returning to the Medieval and Renaissance periods has always been implicit in the works of Distributist authors, Day no less so than others. Her vision of society communicated in her novel was romantic, but in an authentic mode: she clearly and without shame displayed to all the spiritual wounds that modernity had inflicted upon her. *The Eleventh Virgin* is both cautionary tale and barely concealed autobiography (much like Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*). She tells the story of June Henreddy, a young woman in 1920's America, who volunteers as a nurse a

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<sup>300</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

local hospital, and endures through a painful love affair that ends in an abortion. Day spends little time on politics, focusing instead on the experience of a young woman living through the sometimes-challenging reality of 1920's America. June's love affair is very much Dorothy's, as is her abortion, and heartbreak. Day does not wish the reader to envision a false reality; on the contrary, she is very clear in depicting reality in all of her works. No, Day instead wants the reader to wake from his slumber and his foolish notions about modernity. The reader is called on to see the horror and utter failure of the modern project: poverty, spiritual death, and war being simply the most obvious signs. While there had been some technological innovation such as medical and engineering breakthroughs, still Man labored under a burden that was impossible to bear: his soul was dying because it had rejected its own transcendental nature in favor of the lies of materialism, rationalism, and secularism.

The soul of Man, divorced from his everyday existence, could not help but wither and die. Man, soulless, could not endure the reality of being-in-the-world.<sup>301</sup> He could not but embrace unreality (Communism, Nazism, or Fascism). Spiritual and physical unity needed to be restored and balanced as it had been in the Middle Ages, but with the recognition that returning to that time period was not a realistic possibility. No, the return had to be intellectual and spiritual reconversion (the post-Christian nihilist or pagan had to be reconverted) followed by politico-economic transformation. As noted elsewhere, this hardly meant a return to the Luddite riots and rejection of computers and space travel. It simply meant creating a sustainable society in which Man lived in harmony with God, Nature, and Others. This needn't be perfect; indeed the history of the Middle Ages is shot through with violence. It simply meant an end to environmental short-sightedness, total war, and the welfare-warfare State. The path to

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<sup>301</sup> This is appropriately Heideggerian, although I prefer not to have the term *Da-Sean* re-enter the work.

reconversion, for Day, was through literature and works of mercy (describing and experiencing the transcendent). And so, Day approaches all of her work as she approached the novel, with a view toward reconversion of Western Man and the restoration of society.

Day discusses the transcendental in both literary terms and in terms of everyday miracles. This literary analysis frequently focused on the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, such as this passage, “Who has not been moved to tears by the scene between Raskolnikov and Sonya, the murderer and the prostitute, when she read to him from the scriptures. There was the sense of the transcendent there, in this scene of squalor and despair.”<sup>302</sup> Her observations were not confined solely to the great Russian novelists, but also included Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*, John Dos Passos’ *USA Trilogy*, John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*, most of Thomas Merton’s works, and Charles Dickens’ entire oeuvre.<sup>303</sup> On à Kempis, Day repeatedly refers to reading and rereading his master work.<sup>304</sup> Merton caused her sleepless and fitful nights:

I stayed awake until 4 a.m. after reading too stimulating an article by Thomas Merton, “The Pasternak Affair in Perspective.” In it, Merton not only analyzes the Communist concept of man, but goes on to talk of the attitudes of the West. The concluding paragraphs of the article were what caused my happy sleeplessness.<sup>305</sup>

Day sought to practice what Merton (among others) preached. There was in all things a trace of the transcendent, a brush with the divine made manifest in the physical world. “The Catholic Worker has long maintained that if a value is subscribed to and is, in fact, to be truly enlivening, then an attempt to live it out through the grace of God must be made.”<sup>306</sup> If God is

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<sup>302</sup>Dorothy Day, “What Do the Simple Folk Do,” from *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, Robert Ellsberg (ed.), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 177.

<sup>303</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2015); John Dos Passos, *USA*, (New York: Library of America Press, 1996); John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2002).

<sup>304</sup> Noted in all three of Day’s autobiographical works and cited in several letters and articles. See, for example, *The Long Loneliness*, 114.

<sup>305</sup> Dorothy Day, “Fear of Our Enemies,” from *By Little and By Little*, 321.

<sup>306</sup> Angie O’Gorman and Patrick G. Coy, “Houses of Hospitality: A Pilgrimage into Nonviolence,” from *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, Patrick G. Coy (ed.), (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University

good and union with him is the ultimate goal of human life, then this belief (this value) must be actualized, must be lived out. One must seek out the experience of the divine, and the only way to have this experience is within the world of the immanent; of course, one can experience the divine in the afterlife, but Day is not concerned with the afterlife save in terms of seeking it via salvation within this life.<sup>307</sup>

Here, too, is a glimpse of Day's critique of the New Deal and the welfare state: a faceless corporate entity such as a government agency taking tax money from one person and redistributing it as welfare to another person is utterly lacking in personal responsibility or sacrifice. The taxed has no need to acknowledge the personhood, indeed even the existence of the Other (the beneficiary of the government welfare). If I remove the face of the Other, by simply ignoring him or pretending that he does not exist as a valuable, unique human person (he is noticed merely because he disrupts the otherwise uncluttered worldview; in Heideggerian terms, he becomes *Vorhandenheit*, merely present-at-hand and noticed in the way that one would notice a broken tool), then I remove any obligation that I may have to him. Day fought tooth-and-nail against such thinking: for her, the human person was everything and to hell with ideology.<sup>308</sup> Perhaps this is the great freedom granted by phenomenological inquiry when it is grounded in ethics and metaphysics: the rejection of political ideology.

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Press, 1988), 240. This citing Day's understanding of operationalizing the transcendental values of Catholicism expressed by Merton in his writing (among other authors).

<sup>307</sup> Day showed little to no interest in theology, and had no real grasp of the science as she makes clear in a number of places. Consider a passage from page 114 of *The Long Loneliness* in which Day discusses living across the street from Allen Tate, the Southern Agrarian and poet. She attended a meeting at Tate's house in which Malcolm Cowley (poet and literary critic), Kenneth Burke (literary theorist and philosopher of knowledge and symbols), and John Dos Passos (novelist) engaged in a lively philosophical and theological debate. "They reminded me of Samuel Johnson and his crowd... I can remember one conversation... which stood out especially in my memory because I could not understand a word of it."

<sup>308</sup> Day walked away from ideology when she rejected socialism. She never embraced a new political ideology after this, merely seeking to deal with the world as it actually exists by following the teachings of Christ, not trying to shape the world into an ideological framework.



## **From Radicalism to Radicalism: Day's Path from Socialism to Distributism**

With all of these ideas and philosophies of life in mind, Day's transition to Catholicism and Distributism may now take center stage. Recall that during the Nineteen Teens and Twenties, Day was a committed Communist, albeit not a formal member of the Party. As with any relatively orthodox Marxist, she understood structures of power (economic and political power) to be one of the keys to the systematic oppression of the poor.<sup>309</sup> These structures of power, including, in part, many of the liberal institutions upon which finance capitalism depends, in Catholic, Distributist terms may very easily be seen as structures of sin, instead.

This seems like a very large leap of logic: how, after all, can there be a connection between corporations and their activities and Christian theology (specifically soteriology, that branch concerned with sin, redemption, and salvation)? We turn here to a number of teachings of the Church concerning the accumulation of wealth and the treatment of the poor. First, there is the biblical discussion of salvation in Matthew's Gospel. When asked what he must do to be perfect, a rich young man is told to give up all his possessions and follow Christ.<sup>310</sup> There is the concern for worldly wealth shown by Judas in John's Gospel when he rebukes Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, for "wasting" perfume and oil anointing Christ.<sup>311</sup> Lastly, there is the example of the early Christian community in the *Acts of the Apostles*, in which we are told that many of the believers sold their possessions and gave them to those in need.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> See, for Marxist class and power structure analysis, Bob Jessup, "Marxist Approaches to Power," from the *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, Edwin Amenta, Kate Nash, and Alan Scott (eds.), (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

<sup>310</sup> *Matthew 19:16-22*.

<sup>311</sup> *John 12:1-8*.

<sup>312</sup> *Acts 4:32-37* and *Acts 5:1-11*, the latter detailing the greed of Ananias and Sapphira.

Moving along, there was, from early in the Church's history, the condemnation of usury, the lending of money with interest.<sup>313</sup> While much ink has been spilled on fighting and refighting the question of the sinfulness of usury, it is well worth noting that the present Pope, Francis, has restated the Church's condemnation of usury as a sin against justice and human dignity as recently as 2014.<sup>314</sup> This is a direct attack on the finance capitalist system, as it aims at the credit and lending foundations of corporations and state capitalist institutions.

Next, we have the encyclicals already discussed: *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. The very structure of the corporation and its "moral" and legal responsibilities necessitate that its operation be fundamentally anti-Christian. Consider two notable statements on the matter. Nobel laureate Milton Friedman summed up the so-called social responsibilities of a corporation succinctly and effectively in a famous *New York Times* editorial published on September 13, 1970:

In a free-enterprise, private-property system, a corporate executive is an employee of the owners of the business. He has direct responsibility to his employers. That responsibility is to conduct the business in accordance with their desires, which generally will be to make as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom.<sup>315</sup>

Without putting words in Friedman's mouth, it is fairly clear that he considers the corporation *qua* corporation to have existence solely to make a profit (saving for charitable corporations which he acknowledges operate under a different set of principles). The second consideration is the judicial history of legal cases involving the profit/loss decisions of corporate boards of

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<sup>313</sup> As early as Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and the Council of Nicaea, the Church condemned usury, see Dale Ahlquist, "Another Sin We Don't Want to Hear About," from the November, 2011 issue of *Crisis* magazine, available in full online at <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2011/another-sin-that-we-dont-want-to-hear-about> (accessed June 3, 2017).

<sup>314</sup> <http://visnews-en.blogspot.com/2014/01/pope-francis-usury-affront-to-dignity.html> (accessed June 3, 2017).

<sup>315</sup> The entire editorial is available online at <http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html> (accessed June 3, 2017).

directors. In a long line of cases dating back to 1945, the Delaware Supreme Court has held that a corporation's board of directors have a responsibility to the shareholders to maximize profit, albeit with an occasional nod toward corporate duty to employees (see *Unocal Corp. v. Mesa Petroleum Co.*, 493 A.2d 946 [Del. 1985]).<sup>316</sup>

In allowing the existence of such an entity, the legal fiction known as the corporation, a structure of power and a structure of sin is created. The first because a corporation depends for its existence upon making a profit; when profit is realized, no explanation is needed, when loss occurs, no explanation is acceptable (the firing of corporate officers and the replacement of directors). The second because the first necessitates an amorality that ignores the dignity of the human persons with whom the corporation deals, and destroys the souls of the corporation's officers and employees. It is not irrational to use the rather cliché expression "soulless corporation," for it is literally a person (albeit a juridical, non-natural person) that has no soul, as it is not a soul embodied into flesh (a natural person). Here, Day could see the operation of both structures quite clearly: as a former Marxist she sees the power structure designed to enrich the owner at the expense of the laborer, while as a Catholic she sees the systematic sin inherent in such an institution.

Consider that Day saw fairly soon after the establishment of the Catholic Worker that the values of Christianity and the Gospels were utterly reversed into an absurd parody of themselves by the American system. She noted that Distributism was radical, but a necessary reaction to the structures of sin (greed and abuse of the dignity of the human person) created by the finance

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<sup>316</sup> Due to the exceptionally high volume of corporate law cases before them, Delaware judges are noted as being experts in handling corporation law and, as a consequence, many, perhaps most American corporations are chartered in the State of Delaware, meaning that any legal cases against them are prosecuted in Delaware state courts. The most notable cases of this sort are the above cited *Unocal*, *Revlon, Inc. v. MacAndrews & Forbes Holdings, Inc.*, 506 A.2d 173 (Del. 1986) and the Paramount cases, 1990 and 1994.

capital system (here, I think it fair to use the term globalist neo-liberalism to describe the situation in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century America, although that term post-dates Day).<sup>317</sup>

Too long has idle talk made out of Distributism as something medieval and myopic, as if four modern popes were somehow talking nonsense when they said: the law should favor widespread ownership (Leo XIII); land is the most natural form of property (Leo XIII and Pius XII); wages should enable a man to purchase land (Leo XIII and Pius XI); the family is most perfect when rooted in its own holding (Pius XII); agriculture is the first and most important of all the arts and the tiller of the soil still represents the natural order of things willed by God (Pius XII).<sup>318</sup>

Day recognized that the system in place in the United States, from her early life until the post-war period necessitated neo-colonialism, proletarianization of the workers, and up-rootedness from the land and community.

We have been working on these problems at the Catholic Worker for the past fifteen years, and we can say with all sincerity, that things have never been so bad as they are now, even in the worst of depression. Now men may have work, but they lack homes. There may be odd jobs, poorly-paid jobs, something coming in the way of work, but the housing situation gets worse and worse. Everywhere it is the same. In every city and town the story is the same. There are no apartments, there are no houses...

We only know it is not human to live in a city of ten million. It is not only not human, it is not possible...

The essential is ownership which brings with it responsibility, and what is more essential than the earth on which we all spring, and from which comes our food, our clothes, our furniture, our homes.<sup>319</sup>

Should it not become clear at this point that Day insists on the radicalism of sustainable, human-oriented economics, there is the frequent reminder that Distributism is, in her opinion, the sole cure for the twin evils of finance capitalism and socialism.

Every month I shall have to explain the title to this series. We are not expecting utopia here on this earth. But God meant things to be much easier than we have made them. A man has

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<sup>317</sup> Pope Saint John Paul II used these terms (and condemned them) in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 56, given on January 22, 1999, and available online at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_22011999\\_ecclesia-in-america.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html) (accessed June 4, 2017).

<sup>318</sup> Dorothy Day, *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, July/August, 1948 edition, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/160.html> (accessed June 4, 2017).

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

a natural right to food, clothing, and shelter. A certain amount of goods is necessary to lead a good life. A family needs work as well as bread. Property is proper to man. We must keep repeating these things. Eternal life begins now. "All the way to heaven is heaven, because He said, 'I am the Way.'" The Cross is there of course, but "in the cross is joy of spirit." And love makes all things easy. If we are putting off the old man and putting on Christ, then we are walking in love, and love is what we all want. But it is hard to love, from the human standpoint and from the divine standpoint, in a two room apartment. We are eminently practical, realistic.<sup>320</sup>

Day focuses on the failings of the well-meaning, but clearly wrong Socialists and welfare-state

advocates in the same column:

In the psalms it says, "Lord, make me desire to walk in the way of thy commandments." Daniel was called a man of desires, and because he was a man of desires, the Lord heard him.

But how, are we going to get people to desire, and to hope, when men like Fr. Becker writing in America; Fr. Higgins, of the N.C.W.C. and Fr. FitzSimmons of Notre Dame, accept the status quo, endorse social security instead of pointing to the enormous dangers that go with it and in effect combat the desire of the people for land and for bread, and feed them on husks that the acceptance of the city and the factory result in...

It is as a woman, a mother, speaking for the family and the home, that I protest the work of "priest-sociologists," who in their desire to help the worker, are going along with him in his errors, and are accepting the easy way of capitalist industrialism which leads to collectivism and the totalitarian state.<sup>321</sup>

The false choice of the twin structures of sin, capitalism and socialism, are unacceptable to Day, who sees only the radicalism of Distributism as a cure to both the economic and the spiritual sicknesses of the nation. "The Vatican paper warned us recently of regarding Americanism or Communism as the only two alternatives. It is hard to see why our criticism of capitalism should have aroused such protest."<sup>322</sup> No, there could be no acceptance of either system, replete as both were with soul-destroying beliefs.

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> William Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 428.

The situation confronting Day was an America populated with Calvinist-inspired capitalists, even so-called Catholics. This was an America in which people were happy to give to the poor, but one in which they considered the poor to be failures, clearly rejected by God (not predestined for success and heaven). Even Catholics were not immune to this Calvinist spirit, as Francis, Cardinal George, pointed out in his speech to the 1997 Synod of Bishops for the Americas.<sup>323</sup> This America sees the rich as those to be envied, those clearly blessed and favored by God, and the poor to be God's cast-outs, worthy, perhaps, of charity, but little more. Day understood American society to be built around this anti-Gospel notion: in order to repair the damage, it was necessary to return to the Gospel, and that meant radicalism. Not radicalism of the Socialist variety; that could not fix the pneumopathology that had infected the American soul. Not mere political radicalism; reforms of finance capitalism to create a more just system as the New Dealers believed could also not repair the spiritual damage. No, radical economic, political, and spiritual change was needed. Sin and injustice must both be fought and defeated to build a new society out of the shell of the old. Day's early Socialist radicalism had taught her the value of dynamiting the system, now she embraced that radicalism, but from a Catholic, Distributist position. This was the beginning of a new, spiritual crusade. This was the beginning of the Catholic Worker movement.

It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed. The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is the conversion of its readers to Radicalism and Atheism.

Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?

Is it not possible to protest, to expose, to complain, to point out abuses and demand reforms without desiring the overthrow of religion?

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<sup>323</sup> "Americans are culturally Calvinist, even those who practice the Catholic faith," cited by Robert Mixa, "Cardinal George on Calvin and Hobbes in America," from the blog of Mundelein Seminary at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake, April 21, 2015, available online at: <https://usml.edu/cardinal-george-on-calvin-and-hobbes-in-america/> (accessed June 4, 2017).

In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the “reconstruction of the social order,” this news sheet, *The Catholic Worker*, is started.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Dorothy Day, “To Our Readers,” from the May, 1933 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/12.html> (accessed June 4, 2017).

## Chapter 4

### Day's Political Beliefs and the Catholic Worker

But what, at the heart of her political philosophy such as it is, is the essential form of government or societal order that Day prefers? This is not an easy question to answer, both because terminology and the traditional Right/Left spectrum have altered somewhat since Day wrote, but also because she, herself, was sometimes inscrutable or paradoxical in her political commitments. Authors from Murray Rothbard to Daniel Ellsberg to the editors of various Catholic magazines such as *America* have all attempted to site Day within one or another political movement, but all, I think, have failed to grasp the full patina that is Day.<sup>325</sup>

Day, from time to time in her writings, uses the term libertarian to describe herself; this is problematic from the point of view of Twenty-first Century analysis as much of her writing and nearly all of her work clearly puts her at odds with what would today be understood by the term “libertarian.” Rather, it would appear that Day uses the term to mean something closer to anarchism than libertarianism.<sup>326</sup> Certainly, there are a number of scholars who appear to class Day as an anarchist of one stripe or another, chiefly through her association with Catholic

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<sup>325</sup> Some examples of these efforts include Rothbard's peculiar history of political theories in *Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature and Other Essays*, (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2000), a number of articles discussing Day in *America* such as this one by Stephen Krupa, “Celebrating Dorothy Day,” August 27, 2001, available online at: <http://americamagazine.org/issue/323/article/celebrating-dorothy-day> (accessed June 04, 2016), and, of course, Ellsberg's understanding of Day as something very close to (if not actually in fact) a liberation theologian in his introductions to the collections of Day's works, *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*, (Milwaukee, MN: Marquette University Press, 2008) and *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day*, (Milwaukee, MN: Marquette University Press, 2010).

<sup>326</sup> Even in her private life, Day felt that rules were anathema, going so far as to rebuke Catholic Worker leaders for posting basic chore lists and requirements for residents to follow. John Cort, a Catholic Worker house leader, once posted three basic rules for the men living at the Mott Street house: to be out of bed by 9 AM, to make your own bed, and to sweep the area around your bed. Day insisted that these rules be taken down and that residents would learn good behavior simply by observing Cort's own actions. Although he obeyed Day, Cort clearly disagreed, and later reminisced that, “But in the real world of Mott Street, you could throw good example at some people forever and watch it bounce off them like peanuts off a tank,” from Cort's “My Life at the Catholic Worker,” reprinted in June O'Connor, *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day: A Feminist Perspective*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 76.



anarchist Ammon Hennacy.<sup>327</sup> This is not to ignore the fact that neither Distributism (Day's expressed socio-economic position) nor the Catholic Worker Movement ever attacked capitalism *qua* capitalism, but rather the monopolistic power structures created by state capitalism. In other words, capitalism as a free market system was not bad (if it were, Day and the Distributists would have condemned any sort of free trade, even that engaged in by small businesses, guilds, and workers' co-operatives), but rather finance capitalism, monopoly, and state capitalism were immoral.

What to make of these complex terms, however? To define these terms, necessarily oversimplistically, requires a brief segue into the world of politico-economic theory. I rely here on a number of sources, including the works of John Kenneth Galbraith, Ludwig von Mises, Greg Mankiw, and Alberto Piedra.<sup>328</sup> This is not to limit myself to these authors' works, but merely to point out that the definitions that I am providing to the reader are, at least to some small degree, drawn from their respective scholarship.

I begin with the somewhat polemical term finance capitalism. First used by Austrian Marxist Rudolf Hilferding in his 1910 book, *Das Finanzkapital* (*Finance Capital*), the term is meant as a contrast with industrial or production based capitalism.<sup>329</sup> In effect, what is theorized here is the transition from *laissez-faire* or at least liberal free market economic systems, chiefly those of the Nineteenth Century, into the bank and finance house controlled politico-economic systems that dominated the Twentieth. Hilferding's concern was the shift from a relatively broad

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<sup>327</sup> Examples include Gary Chartier, "The Way of Love: Dorothy Day and the American Right," appearing at the Center for a Stateless Society's website on September 28, 2015, available at <https://c4ss.org/content/40644> (accessed January 16, 2016) and Andrew Cornell, "The Pope, Dorothy Day, and the Anarchists," appearing at the University of California's American Studies Association website, available here: <http://www.ucpress.edu/blog/19315/the-pope-dorothy-day-and-the-anarchists/> (accessed February 6, 2016).

<sup>328</sup> The list of works is too numerous to conveniently list here. Please see the bibliography.

<sup>329</sup> Rudolf Hilferding, *Das Finanzkapital*, (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1910), Marxists.Org reprint edition, Tom Bottomore (ed.), Sam Gordon and Morris Watnick (trans.), available in full at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/hilferding/1910/finkap/index.htm> (accessed January 8, 2016).

power base of equal (or near equal) production-centered competitors vying chiefly for market share to a monopolistic narrow base of finance-centered competitors vying chiefly for political power. While the rise of these state-subsidized (in practice if not in law) capital-driven corporations worried Hilferding, he broke with Marx over the evolution of late capitalism.<sup>330</sup> Marx understood capitalism to be a self-defeating system that would eventually collapse on its own; Hilferding refuted that theory by demonstrating the gradual historical evolution of capitalism into a state (or finance) capital system.<sup>331</sup> This would, in a purely Marxist system, be considered a defeat for socialism, as capitalism would not have collapsed, but simply evolved. Hilferding denied this, however, and proposed that, instead, the centralizing of production under the control of a few large corporations would make the transition to socialism easier, there being only a few capitalist entities remaining, and those very easily controlled by the state upon which they were dependent. So, while a dogmatic Marxist might reject the rise of finance capitalism, a heterodox Marxist might welcome it. Of course, a free market capitalist, a distributist, or any kind of anarchist must also reject this transition, thus making criticism of it from many different points of the political spectrum understandable and predictable.<sup>332</sup>

Monopoly is a fairly easy and non-controversial term to define. Essentially, in economic terms, this is the capture of a large enough share of the market for a particular good or service

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<sup>330</sup> And as a recognition (albeit as essentially a rebuke) to the state-backed or state-run finance system, see Mankiw's "Nationalization, or Pre-privatization?", a response to Representative Maxine Waters, February 16, 2009, available at: <http://gregmankiw.blogspot.com/2009/02/nationalization-or-pre-privatization.html> (accessed March 7, 2016).

<sup>331</sup> Hilferding explains this evolution in chapters 11 – 17 and 21 of *Finance Capital*.

<sup>332</sup> Examples in contemporary times include neo-Keynesian Paul Krugman and anarcho-capitalist Walter Block agreeing that the finance capital system is bad. See Krugman praising President Barack Obama's proposed reforms to Wall Street, "Finance Capitalism," from the July 17, 2012 edition of *The New York Times*, available online at <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/17/finance-capitalism/> (accessed January 15, 2016). Block has a number of articles and books discussing this, the following list is illustrative not exhaustive: "Taxes and the Structure of Production," *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice*, vol. XVII, no. 2-3, 1998, (Barcelona, Spain: University of Barcelona Press, 1998); Block with Kenneth Garschina, "Hayek, Business Cycles, and Fractional Reserve Banking: Continuing the De-Homogenization Process," *Review of Austrian Economics*, No. 9, 77 – 94, (New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996); *Building Blocks for Liberty: Critical Essays by Walter Block*, (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010).

that the capturing entity is insulated from competition. In the Marxist and Schumpeterian theories of the business cycle, monopoly is inevitable either as a result of greed (Marx) or disruptive innovation (Schumpeter).<sup>333</sup> Schumpeterians might here argue that Schumpeter's monopoly is more market stagnation than monopoly as Marx means it, but the stagnation is caused by prior innovators saturating and capturing the market which I suggest may be functionally described as the same outcome as monopoly since there is no further room for additional market participants until the next wave of disruption occurs to break the depression phase of the business cycle.<sup>334</sup>

This leaves us with the final term to define here: state capitalism. This may be contrasted with finance capitalism which, though heavily dependent on the state, is not, of itself, a state capitalist system (though as Hilferding points out, it may very easily transition into one). Ernest Mandel, Marxist theorist, argued for the idea that Marx saw the transition to state capitalism as a possibility and as a potential final stage before either the proletariat revolution or the transition to Communism. This reading of Marx is at odds with Hilferding, but then Mandel (as pure to an orthodox Marxist as a Trotskyist could be) had the benefit of having read Hilferding and been able to effectively address his critique of Marx. Specifically, in his short chapter introducing Marx in the 1990 book, *Marxian Economics*, Mandel demonstrates exactly the cause of the

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<sup>333</sup> Karl Marx, *Theories of Productive and Unproductive Labor* from the collection *Economic Manuscripts*, Julio Huato (ed. and trans.), (Progress Publishers, reprint of 1863 original), available in full online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1863/theories-surplus-value/> (accessed August 14, 2015); Ernest Mandel, *Marxian Economics*, (John Eatwell, Murray Milgate & Peter Newman, eds.), (London, 1990), especially chapter 9, "Marx's Theory of Crisis;" Miguel D. Ramirez, "Keynes, Marx, and the Business Cycle," *Eastern Economic Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2, April – June, 1990, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Journals, 1990), 159 – 167; Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, (New, York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008).

<sup>334</sup> This may be an unorthodox reading of Schumpeter, but not one without scholarly support. See, for example, Edward S. Mason, "Schumpeter on Monopoly and the Large Firm," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 33, no. 2, May, 1951, (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1951), 139 – 144. Schumpeter is not at all averse to monopolies; Mason critiques Schumpeter's views of anti-trust regulations.

confused readings of Marx's predictions, and why he believes that Marx could see state capitalism as a possibility:

Marx visualised the business cycle as intimately intertwined with a *credit cycle*, which can acquire a *relative* autonomy in relation to what occurs in production properly speaking. An (over) expansion of credit can enable the capitalist system to sell temporarily more goods than the sum of real incomes created in current production plus past savings could buy. Likewise, credit (over) expansion can enable them to invest temporarily more capital than really accumulated surplus-value (plus depreciation allowances and recovered value of raw materials) would have enabled them to invest (the first part of the formula refers to net investments; the second to gross investment).

But all this is only true temporarily. In the longer run, debts must be paid; and they are not automatically paid through the results of expanded output and income made possible by credit expansion. Hence the risk of a *Krach*, of a credit or banking crisis, adding fuel to the mass of explosives which cause the crisis of overproduction.

Does Marx's theory of crisis imply a theory of an inevitable final collapse of capitalism through purely economic mechanisms? A controversy has raged around this issue, called the 'collapse' or 'breakdown' controversy. Marx's own remarks on the matter are supposed to be enigmatic. They are essentially contained in the famous chapter 32 of volume I of **Capital** entitled 'The historical tendency of capitalist accumulation', a section culminating in the battle cry: 'The expropriators are expropriated'. But the relevant paragraphs of that chapter describe in a clearly non-enigmatic way, an interplay of 'objective' and 'subjective' transformations to bring about a downfall of capitalism, and not a purely economic process. They list among the causes of the overthrow of capitalism not only economic crisis and growing centralisation of capital, but also the growth of exploitation of the workers and their indignation and revolt in the face of that exploitation, as well as the growing level of skill, organisation and unity of the working class. Beyond these general remarks, Marx, however, does not go.<sup>335</sup>

What is state capitalism? In essence, the direct participation of the state in the market either as competitor to private enterprise or as controller (directly or indirectly via credit) of private enterprise. As Mandel, Marx, and Hilferding correctly point out, state capitalism is made possible by the creation of monopolistic business structures in the market (either by monopolistic practices by private enterprises themselves as in Schumpeter or by state action), centralization of credit in the hands of a small number of lenders, and the political action of state

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<sup>335</sup> Ernest Mandel, "Karl Marx," Chapter 1 of *Marxian Economics*, John Eatwell, Murray Milgate, and Peter Newman (eds.), (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), 30 - 33.

intervention in the economy (again, this may be either direct or indirect). Of course, there are phases of state capitalism and it cannot be thought of as a static condition. Rather, it is a gradually erosion of the free market by both corporate entities and government agencies. This is to say that, in part, capitalism IS responsible for its own destruction as Marx theorized. The motivations behind this and actions taken to advance it are varied and complex, but it might fairly be said to include greed (desire for more market share), risk-aversion (corporate chiefs who want guaranteed profits without risk [destroy competition]), short-sightedness (stockholders who insist on consistent profits and no liability and the legal fiction of corporate “personhood”), and the unholy alliance and upset of the power balance between the state and private entities (the so-called revolving door between civil service and office holders and corporate jobs and the painfully corrupt lobbying system).<sup>336</sup> I acknowledge, in passing, some objections, chiefly though not exclusively, from libertarian thinkers to my characterizations in the previous paragraph; while there is no space to deal with these objections in this work, I think it fair to at least note them.<sup>337</sup>

### **Day’s Views on Agrarian Society**

Now, having defined the more technical terms used at the beginning of this section, I can say with confidence that they are all things that Dorothy Day stood in firm opposition to, although the particular approach taken to defeating them differed from Day to her mentor, Peter

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<sup>336</sup> This last because it was once felt by many, perhaps most Americans that the government existed to act as a neutral arbiter between workers and employers. Now, government seems to exist solely to advance the interests of employers, while offering lip-service to (or simply bribing) workers. See *The Transformation of U.S. Unions: Voices, Visions, and Strategies from the Grassroots*, Ray Tillman and Michael Cummings (eds.), (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner Publications, 1999).

<sup>337</sup> See, for example, libertarian author Nick Gillespie’s interview with Bill Moyers at <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/02052010/watch2.html> (accessed August 16, 2015), conservative scholar Roger Scruton’s defense of corporations, “The Good of Corporations,” available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/04/the-good-of-corporations> (accessed August 17, 2015), and law professor Brad Smith’s, “Corporations are People, Too,” available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112711410> (accessed August 17, 2015).

Maurin. Consider that, contra Maurin, Day supported unionization and the rights of workers to engage in collective bargaining, non-violent protest (strikes, for example), and organization of labor. Day understood that this drew more on Marxist doctrine than Catholic dogma, but her resort to this, apart from simple familiarity with it from her younger days, was pragmatic:

“With our attitude toward the machine and the land, people wonder why we bother about unions. But things being as they are, the system as it is, steps must be taken. We are not angels and we cannot fly, we must take one step at a time. In order to better conditions for the workers, unions are necessary.” All of which sounds like a Marxist statement – the necessity of a little strife to achieve justice. But Dorothy also had another objective in mind. Pope Leo XIII had said that the workers had been lost to the Church. She would try to give the workers an example of someone who, bespeaking the Church, stood alongside them.<sup>338</sup>

Herein, of course, lay the meat of the disagreement between herself and Maurin, and their respective visions for society. Maurin saw work as a gift, and the honest, hard-working laborer as the embodiment of Christ (as carpenter, hence laborer). In this sense, concern with wages and organization and working standards was not only pointless, but quite un-Christian.<sup>339</sup> For Maurin, labor was the highest form of culture, with each worker taking pride in his work as the offering of an artisan to God and his fellow man.

[S]ubsistence farming and crafts would direct the forces of production once again to need rather than profit, and so provide a basis for the recovery of the values of cooperation and the spiritual dimensions of human existence. With its emphasis on community and spirit, Maurin thought that farming and crafts would produce the highest culture possible, and later he equated the return to the land with the return to Christ.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> William Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 304.

<sup>339</sup> The commodification of labor, for Maurin, was a source of division and social tension in society, curiously similar to Marx’s theories of alienation and social conflict between classes. Maurin consistently stresses the voluntary poverty of Christ and his apostles (that they routinely live in a state of precarity having no place even to lay their heads); precarity and poverty are the preferred state of being for Maurin, although he does not condemn entirely private property, “My whole scheme is a utopian, Christian Communism. I am not afraid of the word communism. I am not saying that my program is for everyone. It is for those who choose to embrace it. I am not opposed to private property with responsibility. But those who own private property should never forget that it is a trust.” Marc H. Ellis, *Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 48.

<sup>340</sup> Ellis, 50.

Where Day and Maurin did not disagree, however, was the destruction of both finance capitalism and state capitalism. For example, Maurin considered finance capitalism, based, as it was and is, on the lending of money and the creation of surplus wealth via usury, to be both sinful and against the nature of Man and the natural condition of labor. Consider:

The mortgaging of everything from homes to government budgets was another result of lending at interest, and because of this the profit motive had been instilled into every aspect of life. Churches were mortgaged, too, and Maurin thought that such travesty decreased the ability of the faithful to do as Jesus had done in defense of the poor and the sacred: drive the moneylenders out of the Temple. In effect, being tied to a system of borrowing and repayment decreased the ability of the populace and the Church to challenge the social order. The result was a paralysis of economic and religious life... To garner wealth, people ceased to produce for use and began to produce for profit. Values changed because a society concerned with profit emphasized competition over cooperation and rewarded the “rugged individualist” rather than the “gentle personalist.” A society concerned with profit was an acquisitive society and the accumulation of goods was its hallmark. Citizens once interested in the public realm became consumers nurturing private consumption. The result was the that bank account had become the standard of values.

Though Maurin’s sketch might be broad, it contains an essential critique of modern society with its attempt, at least theoretically, to divorce culture from economy. In Maurin’s view, a society fulfilling an inner dynamic based on profit and materialism could lead only to its own consumption and ultimate destruction, for the religious and community values that helped shape tradition and the history of peoples were being split asunder by the pursuit of the material. Without an ethical and ultimately religious structure that could place economy in its proper perspective, the result would be the demise of culture, even of civilization itself.<sup>341</sup>

Day echoes these sentiments repeatedly in her own work, though, of course, frequently deferring to and quoting Maurin, as well.

[M]onetary interests look with disfavor on any diversion of productive energy into activities in which money plays only a small part and there is little interest to be earned.

[Also], there is a widespread popular opposition because the demand of the majority in every highly industrialized country is for more and more of the products of industrialism, mechanization and mass production for the sake of what is falsely called a higher standard of living.

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<sup>341</sup> Ellis, 56 – 57.

Bede Jarrett called “social organization and land system two of the perpetual problems of mankind.”<sup>342</sup>

Here is a theme that recurs throughout the works not only of Day and Maurin, but all of the Distributists, not to mention much of the Old Right in America (the Southern agrarians, Jeffersonians, Father Coughlin, the Vanderbilt “Fugitive” Poets, etc.): the idea that the state capitalist and finance capitalist systems had, of necessity, deprived the American worker of his natural bounty and place in the agrarian economy that America was built on.<sup>343</sup> Another quote from Day, summarizing their opinion and solution: “The Catholic Worker is opposed to the wage system but not for the same reason that the Communist is. We are opposed to it, because the more wage earners there are the less owners there are . . . how will they become owners if they do not get back to the land.”<sup>344</sup>

The agrarianism and localism so prized by Day featured heavily in much of her writing, and was referenced by correspondents and allies. Allen Tate, one of the Southern agrarians who was also one of the Fugitive Poets, noted this in a letter to another of the Fugitives, Donald Davidson:

I also enclose a copy of a remarkable monthly paper, *The Catholic Worker*. The editor, Dorothy Day, has been here, and is greatly excited by our whole program. Just three months ago she discovered *I'll Take My Stand*, and has been commenting on it editorially. She is ready to hammer away in behalf of the new book. Listen to this: *The Catholic Worker* now has a paid circulation of 100,000! [Tate neglects to say that the price is a penny a copy] . . . She offers her entire mailing list to Houghton-Mifflin; I've just written to Linscott about it. Miss Day may come by Nashville with us if the conference falls next weekend. She has been speaking all over the country in Catholic schools and colleges. A very remarkable

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<sup>342</sup> Dorothy Day, “Day by Day,” *The Catholic Worker*, January, 1936, 6.

<sup>343</sup> Examples of agrarianism and “back to the land” impulses are replete in the works of G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Vincent McNabb, the early works of John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren, Frank Owsley, numerous speeches and pamphlets by Father Charles Coughlin including his November 11, 1934 speech on the National Union for Social Justice, and Richard Weaver. See bibliography for specific references.

<sup>344</sup> Dorothy Day, “To Christ, to the Land,” from *The Catholic Worker*, January, 1936, available online at: <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/143.html> (accessed November 3, 2015).



woman. Terrific energy, much practical sense, and a fanatical devotion to the cause of the land!<sup>345</sup>

This association with the Right, at least the Old Right in American politics, produced a range of reactions by younger figures on the Right; William F. Buckley, Jr. viewed Day's ideas and movement with disgust in *National Review*:

[Buckley] referred casually to "the grotesqueries that go into making up the Catholic Worker movement"; of Miss Day, he chided "the slovenly, reckless, intellectually chaotic, anti-Catholic doctrines of this goodhearted woman — who, did she have her way in shaping national policy, would test the promise of Christ Himself, that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against us."<sup>346</sup>

On the other hand, other conservatives seemed to embrace Day:

The Catholic reactionary John Lukacs, after attending the lavish twenty-fifth anniversary bash for *National Review* in December 1980, held in the Plaza Hotel, hellward of the Catholic Worker House on Mott Street, wrote:

During the introduction of the celebrities a shower of applause greeted Henry Kissinger. I was sufficiently irritated to ejaculate a fairly loud Boo! A day or so before that evening Dorothy Day had died. She was the founder and saintly heroine of the Catholic Worker movement. During that glamorous evening I thought: who was a truer conservative, Dorothy Day or Henry Kissinger? Surely it was Dorothy Day, whose respect for what was old and valid, whose dedication to the plain decencies and duties of human life rested on the traditions of two millennia of Christianity, and who was a radical only in the truthful sense of attempting to get to the roots of the human predicament. Despite its pro-Catholic tendency, and despite its commendable custom of commemorating the passing of worthy people even when some of these did not belong to the conservatives, *National Review* paid neither respect nor attention to the passing of Dorothy Day, while around the same time it published a respectful R.I.P. column in honor of Oswald Mosley, the onetime leader of the British Fascist Party.<sup>347</sup>

Others, not wholly comfortable with associating with the post-War Right, but nevertheless very conservative in an Old Right sense, also seemed to follow Day's vision. Paul Murphy, providing a history, at times almost an autopsy, of the non-neoconservative Right,

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<sup>345</sup> Reproduced by Gary Chartier in his article on Day and conservatism, "The Way of Love: Dorothy Day and the American Right," available at <https://c4ss.org/content/40644> (accessed January 16, 2016). The bracketed comment is Chartier's. The correspondent that Tate mentions in his letter is R.N. Linscott, his editor.

<sup>346</sup> Buckley's opinions are reproduced in Chartier's "The Way of Love," *ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> Chartier, "The Way of Love," *ibid.*

noted that Day's influence after her death in 1980 spread to peculiar sources, more often than not associated with the Left than the Right, but at a fundamental level deeply conservative. Consider unlikely, but upon consideration quite obvious heirs: Wendell Berry, Mel Bradford, and Eugene Genovese.

Writing, in a sense, from within the neo-Agrarian viewpoint, Genovese reveals the extent to which Agrarianism is now seen as a moral and political position defined by its opposition to radical individualism. The South and southernness have become the symbolic touchstone for these thinkers, yet Genovese's work is a sharp reminder of the problematic role that race occupies in this body of conservative thought.

Genovese and Bradford, along with other neo-Agrarians, tend to place the Agrarians in a tradition of antistatist political thought. Yet the Agrarians were not political thinkers; they were cultural critics concerned above all with the ravages committed on communities by the forces of progress. In certain, limited ways, *I'll Take My Stand* resonates most clearly with contemporary communitarians or the late Christopher Lasch, an idiosyncratic critic of progress. The stubborn core of *I'll Take My Stand* was a call to resist progress, to remember the superiority of inherited ways of life and to prevent their destruction. The contemporary critic who best embodies this central aim is Berry, someone not closely identified with neo-Agrarian political thinkers, and someone who, despite being an Agrarian sympathizer, eschews any particular identification with the South or the southern past. Berry's cultural criticism retains the original Agrarian impulse to preserve and strengthen the inherited community, but he roots his effort in an ecological philosophy founded on ideals of harmony, marriage, and connection and not in an appeal to history. Berry is at once profoundly conservative in his views on marriage, sexuality, and community and radical in his condemnation of modern agribusiness, the military establishment, and global capitalism. Although he is certainly not devoid of a sense of history, Berry's ability to retain a radical conservatism even as it has faded in the conservative mainstream and in the Agrarian tradition is testimony, perhaps, to the limits of history in social and cultural analysis.<sup>348</sup>

The so-called New South epitomized the trends of community destruction and family dislocation that so angered men like Berry, Davidson, and Tate. As a particular example, the city of Nashville experienced nearly a quadrupling in population between 1880 and 1930, with the accompanying rise in industry and urban businesses and decline in agriculture and rural

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<sup>348</sup> Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), epilogue.

businesses.<sup>349</sup> Of course, this also meant a rapid drain of rural populations as more and more yeoman farmers and, in some cases, even wealthier gentry relocated to the city and its new economy. What the Agrarians and Day, albeit in a different context, recognized was the collapse of community, culture, and societal order attendant upon this demographic shift; the chief concern being the loss of identity and the consequent ease of association with new, sinister communities such as Communists and corporations.<sup>350</sup> This is a large part of the Agrarian and the Distributist plan for society: the working class and the middle class must work together on the land as part of a coherent community that is connected to the land and the soil, not to abstract concepts of freedom and profit (liberalism/libertarianism) or to a fetishized concept of labor for the good of the state proposed by Marxists and Socialists.

### **Philosophical Anthropology and Economics in Day's Thought**

Here, we see a key break for Day from the Communism of her youth: the role of work in the life of Man. Day borrowed heavily from Maurin who, in turn, borrowed from Aristotle and Aquinas. For Maurin, economics begins with the human person and his relationship to God and his community, not with material concerns (productivity and profit). Maurin understood that both profit-driven, unsustainable capitalism and Marxism were tragedies for Man,

Both ideologies were similar in that they saw the organization of the material world as the messianic element in history. Capitalism viewed the material world as an avenue to individual satisfaction; state socialism considered materialism the sole arena in which economic justice could be achieved. To reach their respective ends both sought the elimination of spiritual values. Their institutions were further evidence of the similarities between the two because, for all intents and purposes, capitalist and Socialist economics had the same structures of industry, wages, and bureaucracy.<sup>351</sup>

The only sustainable, humane economy must be based on community and personal sacrifice.

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<sup>349</sup> Murphy, chapter 3.

<sup>350</sup> Day, following Pope Pius XI, reminds us frequently that one of the greatest failures of Christianity in the Twentieth Century is the loss of the workers to Communism and socialism. See *From Union Square to Rome*.

<sup>351</sup> Ellis, 58 – 59.

He made much of distinguishing state socialism and Christian Communism, seeing the former built on the materialistic forces of historical determinism and class warfare, the latter on the spiritual dimensions of faith and service. If state socialism was another guise for the pursuit of affluence, Christian Communism emphasized sacrifice and renunciation. State socialism was characterized by polarization and coercion; Christian Communism by free choice and love... Socialism was diametrically opposed to Catholicism because it was essentially materialist in aims and left out entirely the beginning and the end of life, which was God.<sup>352</sup>

It is reasonable to demonstrate at this point the break in thinking between Day and Maurin, on the one hand, and the moderns, vis-à-vis theories of Man and economy. At the root of Distributist thinking is a philosophical anthropology centered on the human person. Peter Kreeft explains the centrality of this in his short discussion of Christian anthropology:

[Y]our ethics is always dependent on your anthropology, and on your metaphysics. For you can't know what is good for man until you know what man is. And metaphysics always comes in, because what man is depends on what is... Every thing and every enterprise in human life ... must serve man, rather than man serving things or enterprises. We eat to live, not live to eat. Even atheists can believe Kant's categorical imperative: Never merely use anyone as a means; always respect everyone as an end. And this can be the basis for a worldwide humanism that is genuine and profound, even though not explicitly religious.<sup>353</sup>

Of course, this may be simply pigeon-holed into the category of simple anti-Enlightenment reaction, but that is to accept that the ideals of the Enlightenment and modernity are correct (or are historically necessary to advance to a more enlightened age). The crux of much of Distributist thought is that the Enlightenment discarded much of value without considering the implications of that abandonment. Consider the implications of capitalism, for example:

[U]nder raw capitalism and in accordance with the basic rationalistic postulates of the French Enlightenment, man considers himself the final arbiter of what is right and what is wrong. The existence of an objective moral order, founded on Natural Law, is either ignored or rejected. The “natural ethics” of the eighteenth Century moral philosophers replaces the traditional Christian concept of Natural Law. Consequently, individualistic freedom becomes the sole “moral” standard under which banner the interests of the

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>353</sup> Peter Kreeft, “Why a Christian Anthropology Makes a Difference,” address to the Catholic Medical Association’s Seventy-Ninth Annual Conference, October 27 – 30, 2010, transcript available at <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/religion-and-philosophy/the-human-person/why-a-christian-anthropology-makes-a-difference.html> (accessed March 17, 2016).

individual are carried out. Self-interest becomes the only regulating principle in economic matters. All external – transcendental or otherwise – is rejected and denied the right to assert norms of conduct that oppose or contradict man’s “omnipotent” right to distinguish good from evil... Lacking a strong moral foundation based on Natural Law, freedom gradually turns into license and with it the most reprehensible excesses tend to follow. Sooner or later, chaos cries for order. Society cannot exist without it. From there, only a short step will lead to totalitarianism and the eventual loss of both economic and political freedoms.<sup>354</sup>

Thus, from an historical perspective, the rise of Locke, Smith, Kant, and the Enlighteners led to the creation of autonomous economic man (*homo economicus*). Amongst other problems with this view are the loss of any concept of community as necessary (whether for justice and political reasons or for the purpose of salvation). For this latter reason, we need look no further than Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Spe Salvi*:

de Lubac was able to demonstrate that salvation has always been considered a “social” reality. Indeed, the *Letter to the Hebrews* speaks of a “city” (cf. 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14) and therefore of communal salvation. Consistently with this view, sin is understood by the Fathers as the destruction of the unity of the human race, as fragmentation and division. Babel, the place where languages were confused, the place of separation, is seen to be an expression of what sin fundamentally is. Hence “redemption” appears as the reestablishment of unity, in which we come together once more in a union that begins to take shape in the world community of believers. We need not concern ourselves here with all the texts in which the social character of hope appears. Let us concentrate on the *Letter to Proba* in which Augustine tries to illustrate to some degree this “known unknown” that we seek. His point of departure is simply the expression “blessed life”. Then he quotes *Psalms* 144 [143]:15: “Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” And he continues: “In order to be numbered among this people and attain to ... everlasting life with God, ‘the end of the commandment is charity that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith’ (*I Tim* 1:5)”. This real life, towards which we try to reach out again and again, is linked to a lived union with a “people”, and for each individual it can only be attained within this “we”. It presupposes that we escape from the prison of our “I”, because only in the openness of this universal subject does our gaze open out to the source of joy, to love itself—to God.

While this community-oriented vision of the “blessed life” is certainly directed beyond the present world, as such it also has to do with the building up of this world—in very different

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<sup>354</sup> Piedra, *Natural Law*, 182 – 183.

ways, according to the historical context and the possibilities offered or excluded thereby.<sup>355</sup>

Salvation in the next world can thus be aided (or, by some interpretations only made possible) by creating a community-oriented, union of believers.<sup>356</sup> This is a key part of the Distributist program that is echoed time and time again in Day and Maurin's works: the workhouses and farms are meant to be a gathering of those who wish to actively learn about the good news of Jesus Christ while working together as a community. In this way, the Distributists seek to avoid the trap of Cartesian (and, for that matter, Kantian) solipsism explained so well by Martin Heidegger in 1927.<sup>357</sup> Distributism and the Catholic Worker movement are not focused on the individual, although they do acknowledge, to some extent, that the individual human person is at the heart of the movement and of Christianity.<sup>358</sup> The defeat of *homo economicus* is key for Maurin and Day, as the rejection of radical, profit-oriented, self-fulfillment (individualism mixed with self-interest, solipsism, and utilitarianism) is necessary for the creation of a new society (a Distributist society built within the shell of the old, failed society).

Both scripturally and theologically, they are on very safe and well-established, though not entirely uncontroversial territory here. The communal nature of the movement and of Christianity itself is vital for the salvation of each individual person, although his salvation

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<sup>355</sup> Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Spe Salvi* a papal encyclical given on November 30, 2007, sections 14 and 15, available online at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html) (accessed November 3, 2015).

<sup>356</sup> "Faith without works is dead," *James 2: 17*. This is a point of contention between Catholics and some Protestants, in particular Calvinists. What should be clear at this point is the communal nature of Catholicism; it is not a religion that preaches the idea of Man alone with God, but rather the worldwide community of people together with God.

<sup>357</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Joan Stambaugh (trans.), (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010). The entire work is, to some extent, a direct refutation of Cartesian solipsism; at the very least, Heidegger recognizes the trap that Western philosophy since the Enlightenment had fallen into, even if he does not provide an easy escape. Emmanuel Levinas, his contemporary, expands on Heidegger's solution to the trap.

<sup>358</sup> This is the Christian personalist aspect of Distributism. It is very pronounced in the writings of Day and Maurin, as will be discussed further on.

occurs only within the context of community. In other words, while the direct action of Christian prayer, ritual, and works is meant to save the soul of the individual, it is, simultaneously, meant to create the conditions necessary for the salvation of all. Patrick Coy and Angie O’Gorman, members of the Catholic Worker movement, express the focus on the individual in context to society that Day fostered, “Although the Catholic Worker has traditionally stressed the need for individual change in order that societal change might become possible, the truth of the situation is that many members first come to the movement emphasizing different sides of this two-edged revolution.”<sup>359</sup> Consider the opening words of the central Christian prayer, “Our Father who art in Heaven;” this is explicitly not “My Father.”

### **Salvation of Souls and Christian Community**

Despite this, there is some disagreement over the community versus the individual approach that arises chiefly in Calvinist Christianity, but also appears in Catholic thought, as well. As noted in the introductory chapter, Calvinism being the foundation upon which much of American capitalist society is built, resolving this key dispute is necessary for Day’s plan to rebuild society on a new, Catholic foundation. The problem is rooted in the free will versus predestination debate, and the possibility of Hell. Day discusses Hell very seriously in her writings, and sees damnation as a real possibility (as do most theologians). Consider the first chapter of *From Union Square to Rome*, as Day addresses her brother, a Communist activist, in terms that make clear that both salvation and truth are at stake.

While it is true that often horror for one’s sins turns one to God, what I want to bring out in this book is a succession of events that led me to His feet, glimpses of Him that I received through many years which made me feel the vital need of Him and of religion. I will try to trace for you the steps by which I came to accept the faith that I believe was always in my

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<sup>359</sup> Angie O’Gorman and Patrick G. Coy, “Houses of Hospitality: A Pilgrimage into Nonviolence,” from *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, Patrick G. Coy (ed.), (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988), 241.

heart. For this reason, most of the time I will speak of the good I encountered even amid surroundings and people who tried to reject God.

The mark of the atheist is the deliberate rejection of God. And since you do not reject God or deliberately embrace evil, then you are not an atheist. Because you doubt and deny in words what your heart and mind do not deny, you consider yourself an agnostic.

Though I felt the strong, irresistible attraction to good, yet there was also, at times, a deliberate choosing of evil. How far I was led to choose it, it is hard to say. How far professors, companions, and reading influenced my way of life does not matter now. The fact remains that there was much of deliberate choice in it. Most of the time it was “following the devices and desires of my own heart.” Sometimes it was perhaps the Baudelairean idea of choosing “the downward path which leads to salvation.” Sometimes it was of choice, of free will, though perhaps at the time I would have denied free will. And so, since it was deliberate, with recognition of its seriousness, it was grievous mortal sin and may the Lord forgive me. It was the arrogance and suffering of youth. It was pathetic, little, and mean in its very excuse for itself.

Was this desire to be with the poor and the mean and abandoned not unmixed with a distorted desire to be with the dissipated? Mauriac tells of this subtle pride and hypocrisy: “There is a kind of hypocrisy which is worse than that of the Pharisees; it is to hide behind Christ’s example in order to follow one’s own lustful desires and to seek out the company of the dissolute.”<sup>360</sup>

This is Day’s sincere worry for not only the salvation of her brother’s soul, but genuine concern for her own soul and the souls of those she worked with. Consider, too, that this is the more mature Day at work; she was forty years old when she wrote *From Union Square to Rome*, and had been a Catholic for over a decade. In taking this position, it would appear that Day is holding a middle ground of sorts, theologically, between the near-double predestination theology of Father Regis Scanlon, Capuchin friar and theologian, and the total salvation theology of Father Hans Urs Von Balthasar, former Jesuit and theologian of modernity.<sup>361</sup> To state the two

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<sup>360</sup> Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, chapter 1, available in full at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/201.html> (accessed March 26, 2015).

<sup>361</sup> Scanlon is well-known as a regular presenter of theological programs on the Catholic television network EWTN, and for his work in prison ministry, homeless shelters, and hospices for AIDS victims. Von Balthasar was a rising star in the Jesuit Order before his work with secular institutes led to his choice to leave the Order to become a diocesan priest. Although banned from teaching as a result of this choice, Von Balthasar’s reputation recovered significantly in the 1980’s, and he was nominated for promotion to cardinal by Pope Saint John Paul II; von Balthasar died two days before his consecration as cardinal.



positions clearly, Von Balthasar holds that the teaching of the Church on salvation is ultimately universal; that is, all can be saved including those who profane even that which is most sacred, such as men like Joseph Mengele.<sup>362</sup> On the other hand, Scanlon states the Augustinian position that universal salvation is an impossibility, because we know that at least one person is in Hell, Judas Iscariot.<sup>363</sup> So, this leaves open the question, does the Church support the idea of universal salvation (or *apokatastasis*, following the Greek) as taught by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and more recent philosophers and theologians such as Saint Theresa Benedicta (Edith Stein) and Pope Benedict XVI, or does it hold to the teaching of Saint Augustine (especially in *Civitate Dei* book XXI, chapter 17) and the Church Councils (in particular the Second Council of Constantinople, anathemas 14 and 15)?<sup>364</sup> The answer, it would seem, is both and neither: Pope Saint John Paul II expresses that Man may hope and pray for universal salvation, but cannot know for certain whether all are saved or that some are not saved, “The silence of the Church is, therefore, the only appropriate position for Christian faith.”<sup>365</sup> This is essentially Day’s position in *From Union Square to Rome*: hope that all can be saved, but recognition that some might not.

An example of this view in action, and one relevant to her vision of the ideal Christian community is her brief, but highly instructive friendship with Steve Hergenhan, a German

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<sup>362</sup> John C. Médaille, “The Daring Hope of Hans Urs Von Balthasar,” an unpublished reply to Father Regis Scanlon’s article, “The Inflated Reputation of Hans Urs Von Balthasar,” originally published in *The New Oxford Review*, March 2000 edition, (Berkeley, CA: New Oxford Review), 17 – 24. Médaille’s reply is available in full online at [http://www.academia.edu/6094884/The\\_Daring\\_Hope\\_of\\_Hans\\_Urs\\_Von\\_Balthasar](http://www.academia.edu/6094884/The_Daring_Hope_of_Hans_Urs_Von_Balthasar) (accessed June 17, 2016).

<sup>363</sup> Scanlon relies upon Saint Augustine’s interpretation of *John 17:12*; *ibid*.

<sup>364</sup> Augustine of Hippo explains and disputes Origen (and via Origen, Gregory of Nyssa who held Origen’s beliefs on salvation), in *Civitate Dei*, Marcus Dodds (trans.), (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006); the anathemas against the teachings of Origen pronounced by the Fifth Ecumenical Council (held in Constantinople in 553) may be reviewed online at: <http://www.comparativereligion.com/anathemas.html> (accessed June 3, 2017); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved”?*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2014), see, especially, the discussion of Edith Stein in the Foreword by Bishop Robert Barron; Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Spe Salvi*, available in full online at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html) (accessed June 3, 2017).

<sup>365</sup> Pope Saint John Paul the Great, from *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, cited by Médaille, *ibid*.

carpenter who emigrated to the United States and became a citizen.<sup>366</sup> Hergenhan initially lived in New York City, and worked as a laborer while slowly saving up the money and second-hand materials to afford to buy a small plot of land and build his own house in the countryside near Suffern, New York. Hergenhan did most of the building himself, and relied heavily on the abundant local resources (lumber, quarries, and natural rock formations) for his materials. Unfortunately, Hergenhan lost his property to the state, possibly because of inability or unwillingness to pay property taxes. With this loss, Hergenhan became deeply embittered and hopelessly impoverished, leading him to seek out shelter with the Catholic Worker bunkhouse in Union Square, New York City. Perhaps because of this or perhaps because of his own experiences as a manual laborer, Hergenhan had a natural affinity for labor politics and the working poor. Although divorced from religion, he was philosophically drawn to Distributism.

Believing in hard labor, frugal living, and a community of workers, Hergenhan had much in common with Peter Maurin and Eric Gill. Day described his attitude toward consumerism and workers: “He did not like cars and would not have one. He thought that cars were driving people to their ruin. Workers bought cars who should buy homes, he said, and they willingly sold themselves into slavery and indebtedness for the sake of the bright new shining cars that speeded along the super highways.”<sup>367</sup> This was a mindset that Maurin and Day could sympathize entirely with, although neither could ever change Hergenhan’s bitterness; as Day said, while she and Maurin emphasized the works of mercy and compassion for all, Hergenhan followed (albeit

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<sup>366</sup> Day tells Hergenhan’s story in *The Long Loneliness*, 193 – 200, but had also mentioned him in *The Catholic Worker*, December, 1941 edition. In the latter reference, Hergenhan is in the Roosevelt Hospital in New York, dying from cancer (although Day did not know that his condition was terminal at the time).

<sup>367</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 193.

subconsciously) the rather harsher words of Saint Paul, “He who does not work, neither let him eat.”<sup>368</sup>

On the points of faith and mercy, neither Day nor Maurin could budge the curmudgeonly German. “He heard just enough of the discussion about the sacrament of duty and the self-imposed obligation of daily Mass and communion to know which side to take. He was a carper and constant critic.”<sup>369</sup> Still, he proved useful as a debating partner for Maurin, who often asked him to play the role of fascist in public debates (Hergenhan was anything but, though he happily agreed if for no other reason than lively debate).

How they loved these audiences in the simplicity of their hearts. Steve the German, Peter the Frenchman, both with strong accents, with oratory, with facial gesture, with striking pose, put on a show, and when they evoked laughter, they laughed too, delighted at amusing their audience, hoping to arouse them... They were men of poverty, of hard work, of Europe and America; they were men of vision; and they were men, too, with the simplicity of children.<sup>370</sup>

Despite this, shortly before his death, Hergenhan was baptized into the Catholic faith, and, while suffering through the final stages of cancer in a Catholic hospital, received the last rites and many visits from Day and Catholic worker volunteers.<sup>371</sup>

If Hergenhan’s life serves as a lesson it must certainly be considered a multi-part lesson. First, it shows the institutional failures of the American system: despite working hard, living frugally, and investing wisely, Hergenhan lost his home and his land. The irony in this is that it was the State, the supposed protector of the working man against the evils of capitalism, that stole Hergenhan’s home and crushed his dream. Of course, no wealthy neo-liberal institution was on hand to rescue him from his desperate financial situation either. So, institutionalism, the

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<sup>368</sup> 2 *Thessalonians* 3:10.

<sup>369</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 194.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

foundation of both socialism and neo-liberal capitalism, failed the person that both ideologies so desperately claimed to champion. Next, Hergenhan's later life with the Catholic worker shows the effectiveness of true labor driven politics; not Socialist politics, for Hergenhan could never have achieved his dream under that system and, indeed, the bureaucratic State necessary to socialism was what destroyed that dream, but rather workingmen's politics. The problem, as Day frequently pointed out (and as is discussed in many encyclicals) is that neither socialism nor capitalism give real dignity to labor. Socialism prizes the worker as foundation of the political system and the natural enemy of the rich, but it says nothing about work. Capitalism requires work for the accumulation of wealth, but it does not dignify work *qua* work (that is, it simply sees work as a means to an end). Day saw that as Christ was a laborer, his life and example could appeal directly to the working man; Christ was, after all, one of them.

This explains much of Day's subsequent political thought and approach to political tactics: grassroot, almost populist activism amongst the working poor with an anti-institutional message. That could be most easily misunderstood, however. Consider how such a message could be tailored to serve the purposes of anarcho-syndicalists, autarchists, or isolationists.<sup>372</sup> What roots Day's beliefs into something more than simple ideology is both her faith and her ultimate reliance upon what might be considered the ultimate anti-institutional institution: the Catholic Church. Consider how its teachings helped her to emerge from a militant Marxist outlook on the world into a Distributist. Her summary of the three central beliefs of Marxism appear in the letter to her brother that frames much of *From Union Square to Rome*.

I did not believe in private property. I wanted to work for a state of society in which each should "work according to his ability and receive according to his need." That is Marx's

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<sup>372</sup> See, for example Noam Chomsky's definition and explanation of anarcho-syndicalism in *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, (New York: The New Press, 2006 edition). Too, this could be stretched to right-wing populist movements that include the broad campaign ideology of President Donald J. Trump.

definition of Communism. I did not believe that greedy and unjust men could be converted. I believed rather in the inevitability of revolution.

The three fundamentals of Communist belief are: 1. There is no other world than this; our last end is death and the grave, not God. 2. The ideal state is a Communist state in which there is no individual ownership but communal ownership. 3. Since there is no other way of achieving this except by violent means, then we must use those violent means. It is a cause worth dying for.<sup>373</sup>

Day eventually came to reject the first belief entirely. Her faith in the Resurrection and eternal life led her to abandon the anti-metaphysics of Communism. On the second, she rejected total state ownership of property in favor of Distributism, and the model of family and co-operative businesses. The third point, revolution, she still considered unavoidable, although she hoped that it might be a Catholic, non-violent revolution that remade society into a Christian fellowship.<sup>374</sup>

While Day was no stranger to controversy with Church leaders, particularly Francis, Cardinal Spellman, still she adhered to the discipline of the Church, even offering to end the publication of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper when it came under criticism from Church leaders.<sup>375</sup> Consider her direct opposition to Spellman's strike-breaking tactics in 1949 when a brief uprising by Catholic cemetery workers saw her marching alongside them against the archdiocese.

Naturally speaking we have been none too joyful this past two months, what with the cemetery strike going on. That is the reason we are so late in going to press. We couldn't bear to write about it until it was settled. So here it is, the middle of the month that I write this.

The story of the strike is told elsewhere; to me its terrible significance lay in the fact that at one end of the world Cardinal Mindszenty and Archbishop Stepinac are lying in jail suffering at the hands of the masses, and, here in our at present peaceful New York, a Cardinal, ill-advised, exercised so overwhelming a show of force against a handful of poor working men...

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<sup>373</sup> *Union Square*, chapter 12.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 428.

And in this struggle as in all the other varieties of war we have known, our job is to build up techniques of nonviolent resistance, using the force of love to overcome hatred, praying and suffering with our brothers in their conflicts. During all the picketing which went on at Fiftieth street, the pickets spent as much time in church as they did on the picket line.<sup>376</sup>

And, to Day, this was very much about the tendency toward conflict between the institutional Church and the personalist philosophy of so many of its members (Day and Maurin, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Mounier, and Karol Wojtyla, among but many).

In Christian personalist philosophy, what matters is the individual person: his physical needs such as clothing, food, and shelter, and his spiritual needs. When Spellman acted with heavy hand to crush workers who might not have actually had a fair complaint (Day looked into the specifics of their allegations and found that the cemetery management fund did not seem to have enough money to meet the workers' demands), he directly abandoned what Day felt was the Church's calling to help those most in need and pushed the workers further away from the Church and into the eager hands of the Communists.<sup>377</sup> Of course as Monsignor Gaffney, who was brought down to judge the *Catholic Worker* newspaper after a stinging rebuke from local Catholic leaders, found, Day actually took no formal positions that were in error theologically or openly defiant politically.<sup>378</sup> Gaffney noted this and the fact that Day had never disobeyed Spellman or the Church leadership, and had offered to close down the newspaper if so ordered by the Church.

This conflict between local, personal charity and solidarity, and institutions were much more marked in Day's interactions with institutions other than the Church. She spoke and wrote at length against the New Deal after briefly supporting it when the Roosevelt Administration first

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<sup>376</sup> Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, April, 1949 edition. Available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/493.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).

<sup>377</sup> Miller, 405.

<sup>378</sup> Miller, 428.

announced it.<sup>379</sup> In September of 1933, Day felt that there might be some common ground upon which workers and government might meet to improve labor relations in the United States. By November of the same year, Day felt utterly betrayed by the federal government, noting the inability of many liberal reformers to understand the actual needs of those they pledged to help.<sup>380</sup>

**Three striking cotton pickers in California were killed and a score injured, many seriously, by armed growers,** apparently abetted by police. The evidence is unanimous that the strikers employed only peaceful picketing along the highways. A score of strikers have been jailed on charges of criminal syndicalism, inciting to riot, etc., in an effort to break the strike. The Federated Press reports that, **12,000 school children in the strike area were forced to act as scabs and pick the crop, the schools closing for two days.** The cotton growers complained to Secretary Wallace that “the bountiful use of federal funds for welfare relief is making it more pleasant and desirable for labor to accept charity than to work,” and it is now reported that all federal relief to strikers has been withdrawn.

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“There is no place in this town for Russian anarchists, cutthroats, Reds and murderers. In some places, they take men like these out and hang them. \*\*Don’t be too sure they won’t do it yet, right here. \*\*\* These were the law-abiding phrases uttered from the bench by Judge J. H. Solkmore of Lodi, Cal., at a hearing of six organizers arrested during the grape pickers’ strike there. When the defendants asked for a jury trial the judge replied, “The jury system is a relic of mediaeval times, the recourse of guilty men who want to escape justice.”<sup>381</sup>

The vaunted liberal institutionalism was failing those it had pledged to protect. Day’s impatience with reformist politics showed in many of her writings as courts, legislatures, and police sided consistently with the wealthy against the poor. What most infuriated her was the

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<sup>379</sup> Miller, 305.

<sup>380</sup> Richard Wright was deeply frustrated with the same issue, although his frustrating turned against not only well-meaning liberals, but also enthusiastic young socialists and communists, as well. See both *Black Boy* and *Native Son*.

<sup>381</sup> Dorothy Day, “Nationwide Strikes Advance,” from the November, 1933 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/275.html> (accessed November 28, 2016). Bolding is Day’s.

use of violent, sometimes lethal, force against peaceful protesters. Day's concern was the continued desperation and radicalization of the workers.

For Day, the conflict between worker and institution represented a vicious cycle: the State promised justice to the worker, the worker turned to the State for relief from his plight, the State (corrupted by the influence of money and power) sided with the plutocrats against the worker, the worker went on strike, the State broke the strike using violence, the worker was utterly betrayed by the State, and the worker radicalized by becoming a Communist.

If our stories this month regarding the Weirton decision, the strike and riot wave, and the threats of approaching general strikes are ominous in tone; and if our friends would wish that we concentrated more on the joy of the love of God and less on the class strife which prevails in industry we remind them of the purpose of this paper *The Catholic Worker*.

It is addressed to the worker, and what is of interest to them is the condition of labor, and the attitude of the church in regard to it...

Is it to be left to the Communists to succor the oppressed, to fight for the unemployed, to collect funds for hungry women and children? ...

To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the shelterless – these corporal works of mercy are too often being done by the opposition, and to what purpose? To win to the banners of Communism the workers and their children.

These workers do not realize those words of St. Paul, “If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity (the love of God) it profiteth me nothing.”

Most Catholics speak of Communists with the bated breath of horror. And yet those poor unfortunate ones who have not the faith to guide them are apt to stand more chance in the eyes of God than those indifferent Catholics who stand by and do nothing for “the least of them” of whom Christ spoke.<sup>382</sup>

This was the great evil that Day (like Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI) feared: that in abandoning its roots in precarity and controversy, Christianity would lose the very people whom Christ had

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<sup>382</sup> Dorothy Day, “Why Write About Strife and Violence?”, from the June, 1934 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Available online at: <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/279.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).



come to save. American Christians had become the antithesis of the first Christians, rather than afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted, they were now “respectable, bourgeoisie” who had assimilated into American society and were now comforting the comfortable and afflicting the afflicted.<sup>383</sup>

For Day, Christianity started with a worker: an Orthodox Jewish carpenter, born into precarity in a stable. Christ, the manual laborer, called other workers to his side: the apostles Peter, Andrew, James, and John (fishermen) and Thomas (a construction worker). Five of the Twelve, and likely a few of the others, were workers.<sup>384</sup> The Franciscan example of a life of manual labor, connected to the Earth, and lived in poverty (or, if possible, precarity) was the ideal for Day, who felt that too many Christians were corrupted by bourgeois lifestyles and the attendant attitudes that accompanied them.

It is hard to write about poverty when a visitor tells you of how he and his family all lived in a basement room and did sweat shop work at night to make ends meet, and how the landlord came in and belabored them for not paying his exorbitant rent.

It is hard to write about poverty when the back yard at Chrystie street still has the stock of furniture piled to one side that was put out on the street in an eviction in a next-door tenement.

How can we say to these people, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,” when we are living comfortably in a warm house, sitting down to a good table, and are clothed decently. Maybe not so decently. I had occasion to visit the City Shelter last month where families are cared for, and I sat there for a couple of hours, contemplating poverty and destitution, a family of these same Puerto Ricans with two of the children asleep in the parents’ arms, and four others sprawling against them; a young couple, the mother pregnant; and elderly Negro who had a job she said but wasn’t to go on it till next night. I made myself known to a young man in charge (I did not want to appear to be spying on them when all I wanted to know was the latest in the apartment-finding situation for

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<sup>383</sup> And, frankly, there is good cause to use the term assimilated here. While more often a cause for alarm expressed by Jews (especially observant ones), Catholics, too, ought to have serious concern for the future of their Church when its members begin to identify more with being American than with being Catholic; the two are frequently, though certainly not always, incompatible.

<sup>384</sup> See the lineage, pre- and post-crucifixion biography, and date and place of death for each of the twelve at *Agape Catholic Bible Study*, available online at <http://agapebiblestudy.com/charts/The%20Apostles.htm> (accessed June 3, 2017); for those whose professions are not listed, we may make educated guesses based on certain clues: the prayer to St. Thomas associates him with builders as does one of his traditional symbols (the builder’s square).

homeless families) and he apologized for making me wait saying that he had thought I was one of the clients.<sup>385</sup>

Day could not abide the idea of a hypocritical approach to poverty: a sort of third-person view of it, completely ungrounded in the lived experience of a truly precarious existence.

We must talk about poverty because people lose sight of it, can scarcely believe that it exists. So many decent people come in to visit us and tell us how their families were brought up in poverty and how, through hard work and decent habits and cooperation, they managed to educate all the children and raise up priests and nuns to the Church. They concede that health and good habits, a good family, take them out of the poverty class, no matter how mean the slum they may have been forced to inhabit. No, they don't know about the poor. Their conception of poverty is something neat and well ordered as a nun's cell.

And maybe no one can be told, maybe they will have to experience it. Or maybe it is a grace which they must pray for. We usually get what we pray for, and maybe we are afraid to pray for it. And yet I am convinced that it is the grace we most need in this age of crisis, at this time when expenditures reach into the billions to defend "our American way of life." Maybe it is this defense which will bring down upon us this poverty which we do not pray for...

Over and over again in the history of the church the saints have emphasized poverty. Every community which has been started, has begun in poverty and in incredible hardships by the rank and file priest and brother and monk and nun who gave their youth and energy to good works. And the result has always been that the orders thrived, the foundations grew, property was extended till holdings and buildings were accumulated and although there was still individual poverty, there was corporate wealth. It is hard to keep poor...

"Voluntary poverty," Peter Maurin would say, "Is the answer. Through voluntary poverty others will be induced to help his brothers. We cannot see our brother in need without stripping ourselves. It is the only way we have of showing our love."<sup>386</sup>

### **Pacifism as Resistance**

Here, it would seem appropriate to add that in addition to seeing poverty as a means of resisting institutional politics and the destructive liberalism (capitalism) and socialism that so often accompany them, Day also saw pacifism as a highly effective tool and way of life.

Although she never stopped doubting that, as Marx had predicted, a revolution would eventually

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<sup>385</sup> Dorothy Day, "Poverty and Precarity," from the May, 1952 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/633.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

come to overthrow capitalism, Day sincerely hoped that that revolution would be a non-violent Catholic one. Although pacifism frequently created internal conflicts within the Catholic Worker movement (especially during World War Two), Day nevertheless insisted on it.

All throughout the years of preaching and working, Dorothy Day's Movement remained centered on pacifism, although there is much to suggest that her pacifism was, in fact, quite carefully constructed, at least following the release of Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and Pope Paul VI's pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*. Beginning in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, and continuing through the Second World War and the various regional conflicts of the post-War Twentieth Century, Day condemned, in no uncertain terms, arms races, conscription, imperialism, and nationalism. That her belief was centered on the universalism of Catholicism did not weaken her appeal to localists, it simply meant that she saw local communities as part of a wider world united by organic bonds of brotherhood and faith, not constructed institutions such as governments and non-governmental organizations.

Day's pacifism began as a quite rigid rejection of all violence, akin to Gandhi's *satyagraha*. "The failure of those who would teach love and non-violence in a world which has apostatized, which accepts no absolutes, has no standards other than utilitarian, is devoid of hope, persecutes the prophets, murders the saints, exhibits God to the people—torn, bleeding, dead."<sup>387</sup> This was not simply quietism, but rather deliberate confrontation with the forces of violence, be they government agents, corporate security guards, or private individuals engaging in or urging violence. Day thought, as did Levinas, that each man had a duty to the other, to preserve his life by non-violence and by the works of mercy. Indeed, so great was the duty of

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<sup>387</sup> Dorothy Day, "We Mourn the Death of Gandhi Non-Violent Revolutionary," from *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, February, 1948 edition, available in full online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/463.html> (accessed December 28, 2016).

pacifism and care for the Other that visitors, unfamiliar with the Catholic Worker's larger program, understood it to be chiefly a soup line!<sup>388</sup>

Day missed no opportunities to preach non-violence to all who came within earshot, as several members of the Catholic Worker and any number of visitors to the houses noticed. Even those in military uniform were treated to long discussions of pacifism such as the 1940's-era visit by then-Lieutenant John F. Kennedy and his older brother, Joseph.<sup>389</sup> How much influence Day had on the Kennedy administration is debatable, but certainly the President had discussed with Day, in detail, pacifism and charity, and former Catholic Worker-turned Socialist Michael Harrington's major work on charity, *The Other America*, was influential on the late-Kennedy and Johnson administrations.<sup>390</sup>

Day's reactions to the Spanish Civil War, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the draft, and the Cuban Revolution reveal much about the development of her pacifism from early uncompromising rigidity to later nuance and engagement with Just War Theory. The heart of Day's teachings on war did not alter over the course of her life as a Catholic; she believed that, at heart, Man was essentially a co-operative, peaceful creature meant to exist in an harmonious society. Contrast this with her earlier, Marxist views of the necessity of conflict prior to her conversion, when she believed, as a Communist, in the necessity of violent revolution.<sup>391</sup> This view of Man as essentially peaceful is in contrast to a number of political theorists of the modern age, Hobbes perhaps chief amongst them, who see humans as existing in conflict with each other.

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<sup>388</sup> Dorothy Day, *Loves and Fishes*, 159, recording Day's first meeting with Evelyn Waugh.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> Nancy Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 146 – 147.

<sup>391</sup> See for early Marxist Day, Dorothy Day, *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, Robert Ellsberg (ed.), New York: Alfred Knopf, 1983), 12 – 20; for later, Catholic Day, see *ibid.*, 224 – 228.

Of course, when you consider the root of her beliefs was a form of Franciscan Catholicism, then her pacifism becomes more understandable. Peter Maurin, her mentor, had been a member of Marc Sangnier's *Le Sillon* ("The Path") movement.<sup>392</sup> *Le Sillon* was an explicitly pacifist, democratic Socialist, Catholic political movement, initially embraced by Rome, but later condemned in Pope Saint Pius X's letter *Notre Apostolique Charge* ("Our Apostolic Mandate").<sup>393</sup> The Sillonists stressed Franciscan community, pacifism, and peace, all lessons that Maurin transmitted to Day, already a willing recipient of this message. For despite the message of revolutionary violence taught to Day as a Marxist, she never quite felt at home with it, given her experience of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

Day's pacifism extended beyond simple political resistance to anti-strike unrest and war: it extended also to violence in personal life. She wrote frequently of the institutional violence in the prison system that she spent much time in as a result of her protest activity.<sup>394</sup> Too, she was disheartened by the seeming problem of violence and mental instability amongst the poor.<sup>395</sup> And Day was very conscious of the threats to her and other workers or guests of the Catholic Worker houses because of their (sometimes accurate) links to Communism. Consider the case of Max and Ruth Bodenheim, both bohemians and both Socialists, of a sort. The Bodenheims had lived in Greenwich Village, where Max was a critically successful poet and Ruth a Socialist activist.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 177. Maurin's discussion of his early education with Day included a mention of having been at school with Charles Peguy, but Maurin claimed not to have known him nor been influenced by him.

<sup>393</sup> Pope Saint Pius X, *Notre Apostolique Charge*, available online here: <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=5456&CFID=3649535&CFTOKEN=23143625> (accessed January 15, 2017) and the apostolic letter *Vehementer Nos*, available online: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_11021906\\_vehementer-nos.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos.html) (accessed January 15, 2017).

<sup>394</sup> Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 163-168, as but one example.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 82 – 85, 153 – 155. Also, *By Little and By Little*, 16 – 18.

<sup>396</sup> Max Bodenheim had a string of highly praised publications including ten books of poetry and over a dozen novels. Despite this, his alcoholism and dissolute lifestyle led to chronic poverty and two divorces. At the time Day met him, he was working with Eugene O'Neill.

They spent some months as guests of the Catholic Worker, although neither was religious; Max was a cradle Catholic who had fallen away from the faith, while Ruth was an atheist Jew.<sup>397</sup> Shortly after leaving the Catholic Worker house, the Bodenheims were murdered by Charlie Weinberg, their roommate, who argued in court that he should not be convicted for murder, but instead, be given a medal for killing two Communists.<sup>398</sup>

Still, Day's pacifism was not of a quietistic sort. She did not follow Voltaire's advice given in *Candide*, to simply cultivate her garden.<sup>399</sup> Rather, she sought active non-violent resistance to injustice along the same lines as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Here there was something a disagreement between Day and Maurin: Day consistently sought practical changes in what she felt was an unjust system (industrial, finance capitalism and the welfare/warfare state). Maurin, on the other hand, clearly had no interest in pushing for better working conditions, higher wages, and other policy changes meant to directly help the worker; for him reforming a deeply corrupt system simply meant continuing to prop it up. Summing up Maurin's approach, "Strikes don't strike me!"<sup>400</sup> Maurin was ever the radical, seeking to create a new society, not simply reform or repair an old one. "Work, not wages – work is not a commodity to be bought and sold," as Maurin explained to Day on numerous occasions.<sup>401</sup> Maurin believed in a philosophy of work and community built on what might, in correct context, be called Christian Communism. Indeed, Maurin himself explained this in an editorial in *The Catholic Worker*:

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 152; Day notes that Ruth never attended prayer services, and that Day apologized to her for any discomfort that she might experience, but also noted that because of the limited space at Catholic Worker facilities, the common areas were the only areas available for group prayer.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 155. Weinberg was later found to be mentally incompetent, although his statement, made during the McCarthy Era, might well have gotten him acquitted in some courts. See Robert M. Lichtman, *The Supreme Court and McCarthy-Era Repression: One Hundred Decisions*, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

<sup>399</sup> Ironically, Day actually taught Voltaire's works to immigrants seeking to learn English, for example the Bulgakoff family who were friends of Day's, *The Long Loneliness*, 115.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

People will have to go back to the land. The machine has displaced labor. The cities are overcrowded. The land will have to take care of them. My whole scheme is a Utopian, Christian Communism. I am not afraid of the word Communism. I am not saying that my program is for everyone. It is for those who choose to embrace it. I am not opposed to private property with responsibility. But those who own private property should never forget that it is a trust.<sup>402</sup>

For Peter, the concepts of war and violence grew out of greed and poverty. To solve the problem of violence, one need address the problem of need. Day disagreed, of course, seeing the need to address immediate problems of precarity, racism, and unrest. Still, both were committed to pacifism, albeit for slightly different reasons, and Maurin was never harshly critical of her, only ever criticizing her for a lack of Catholic education.<sup>403</sup>

Day's early pacifism came under fire soon after her conversion to Catholicism and launch of the Catholic Worker movement: the Spanish Civil War. While Americans of all political stripes flocked to the banners of either Nationalists or Republicans, Catholics, as a rule, supported the Nationalists because of the direct attacks on clergy by Republican and Republican-allied Soviet and Communist forces. The Republicans made anti-clericalism a key to their struggle for a new Spain, and this meant, at least at times, committing outrageous acts of violence against clergy; over six thousand clergy at least were murdered by Republicans during the Red Terror (chiefly in 1936).<sup>404</sup> Many American Catholics spoke out against the Republicans and, while having no love for the Nationalists, donated to the cause or joined up to serve in Spain. Even local and senior Church leaders spoke out against the Republican cause.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Peter Maurin, *The Catholic Worker*, June-July, 1933, 4, available in full online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/266.html> (accessed January 15, 2017).

<sup>403</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 170.

<sup>404</sup> Julio de la Cueva, "Religious Persecution, Anticlerical Tradition and Revolution: On Atrocities against the Clergy during the Spanish Civil War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXXIII (3) 1988.

<sup>405</sup> Victor Gaetan, "The Spanish Civil War: 75 Years Later," from *The National Catholic Register*, July 24, 2011, available online at <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/spanish-civil-war-75-years-later> (accessed January 15, 2017).

Day, on the other hand, spoke openly against siding with the Nationalists, arguing that Catholics had a duty to refrain from war. In response to evidence of clergy massacres, Day countered that martyrdom was preferable to war.

Christians when they are seeking to defend their faith by arms, by force and violence, are like those who said to our Lord, "Come down from the Cross. If you are the Son of God, save Yourself."

But Christ did not come down from the Cross. He drank to the last drop the agony of His suffering and was not part of the agony the hopelessness, the unbelief of His own disciples?

Christ is being crucified today, every day. Shall we ask Him with the unbelieving world to come down from the cross? Or shall we joyfully, as His brothers, "Complete the sufferings of Christ"?

And are the people to stand by and see their priests killed? That is the question that will be asked. Let them defend them with their lives, but not by taking up the sword.

At a meeting of the opposition last week, when a Spanish delegate of the Loyalists told of unarmed men flinging themselves, not from principle but because they had no arms, into the teeth of the enemy to hold them back, the twenty thousand present cheered as one.

In their small way, the unarmed masses, those "littlest ones" of Christ, have known what it was to lay down their lives for principle, for their fellows. In the history of the world there have been untold numbers who have laid down their lives for our Lord and His Brothers. And now the Communist is teaching that only by the use of force, only by killing our enemies, not by loving them and giving ourselves up to death, giving ourselves up to the Cross, will we conquer.<sup>406</sup>

As might be expected, this attitude was met by condemnation not only from Church authorities, but also from *Catholic Worker* volunteers; indeed, the Spanish Civil War nearly destroyed the movement, as its circulation dropped by more than half and many of the houses and farms across the country closed.<sup>407</sup> Even die-hard volunteers and personal friends of Day like Mike Gold broke with her entirely over the question of the War. This trend would continue into the Second

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<sup>406</sup> Dorothy Day, "The Use of Force," from *The Catholic Worker*, November, 1936, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/306.html> (accessed January 15, 2017).

<sup>407</sup> Nancy Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 118 – 121.



World War, when the Chicago and Los Angeles branches of the Catholic Worker went almost entirely independent of Day and the New York headquarters.<sup>408</sup>

This radicalism in part explained Day's desire to operate independently of the Church.

We never felt it was necessary to ask permission to perform the works of mercy. Our houses and farms were always started on our own responsibility, as a lay activity and not what is generally termed, "Catholic Action." We could not ask diocesan authorities to be responsible for opinions expressed in *The Catholic Worker*, and they would have been held responsible, had we come under their formal auspices.<sup>409</sup>

Of course, some churchmen supported Day consistently, while others changed their opinions of her over time, or supported her covertly while maintaining public silence. Consider Cardinal Hayes of New York, who approved of Day's work, but felt that he could not support so radical a group publicly, so communicated with her through Monsignor Chidwick, pastor of St. Agnes church in New York.<sup>410</sup> Or consider Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati who forbade circulation of *The Catholic Worker* in his diocese during the Spanish Civil War, but later encouraged Day's pacifism and objection to conscription during the Second World War, and donated \$300 to her cause.<sup>411</sup> Of course, there were die-hards who saw Communism in every strike and every article urging pacifism and conscientious objection: Father Charles Coughlin suspected that perhaps the Catholic Worker was, at heart, simply a band of Communists attempting to lure in left-leaning Catholics.<sup>412</sup> Ironically, left-wing Catholics also seemed irate because of Day's stance, complaining long and loudly that the Catholic Worker was a

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid, 133 – 135. The Chicago branch eventually closed, while the Seattle and Los Angeles houses refused to publish copies of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, the Los Angeles workers going so far as to burn the monthly issues upon arrival.

<sup>409</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 119.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>412</sup> Roberts, 120.

reactionary group that sought to lure unsuspecting Communists into the arms of the corrupt Catholic Church.<sup>413</sup>

Throughout this time, Day maintained a staunch, uncompromising pacifism, which shifted to encouraging conscientious objection during the Second World War. Maurin worried that this would distract from advancing their social philosophy, but Day insisted on aggressively promoting pacifism, and there is no evidence that Maurin actively opposed her.<sup>414</sup> Day did not let up on her philosophy of pacifism, refusing to compromise over the issue until the late 1940's or early 1950's, when the Church began the difficult process of formulating a position on war in the nuclear age.

Pope Pius XII and his successor John XXIII, both issued works dealing with the problems of war and just war in the post-war world, at times leaving open the possibility of conscientious objection. In particular, Pius XII addressed numerous letters on prayers for peace, condemnations of war, and outrage at Soviet actions taken to oppress citizens of a sovereign nation seeking freedom (Hungary in 1956).<sup>415</sup> Pius stressed the need for a unity of worldwide communities praying and working for peace. John XXIII, despite his reputation as something of an iconoclast concerning traditional teachings of the Church, issued the letter *Ad Petri Cathedram* in 1959 and his "Easter gift" to the world in the form of the 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. Both of these works evoked the language and themes used by Leo XIII seventy years earlier in his three major encyclicals dealing with civil society and political authority (including the authority to make war): *Diuturnum* (1881), *Immortale Dei* (1885), and *Libertas* (1888).

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<sup>413</sup> Roberts, 119.

<sup>414</sup> Roberts, 121 referring to scholarship on Peter Maurin by Marc Ellis and Arthur Sheehan.

<sup>415</sup> Representative examples of the first include *Optatissima Pax* (1947), *Summi Maeroris* (1950), and *Mirabile Illud* (1950). The second is best shown by his inaugural encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* (1939). The last by works including *Luctuosissimi Eventus*, *Laetamur Admodum*, and *Datis Nuperrime*, all of these issued in 1956.

*Pacem* explicitly addressed the use of nuclear weaponry, and called for total nuclear disarmament, condemning even nuclear testing as little more than saber-rattling and brinksmanship:

110. There is a common belief that under modern conditions peace cannot be assured except on the basis of an equal balance of armaments and that this factor is the probable cause of this stockpiling of armaments. Thus, if one country increases its military strength, others are immediately roused by a competitive spirit to augment their own supply of armaments. And if one country is equipped with atomic weapons, others consider themselves justified in producing such weapons themselves, equal in destructive force.

111. Consequently people are living in the grip of constant fear. They are afraid that at any moment the impending storm may break upon them with horrific violence. And they have good reasons for their fear, for there is certainly no lack of such weapons. While it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance. Moreover, even though the monstrous power of modern weapons does indeed act as a deterrent, there is reason to fear that the very testing of nuclear devices for war purposes can, if continued, lead to serious danger for various forms of life on earth.<sup>416</sup>

Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Bikini Atoll all demonstrated the capacity for the nuclear annihilation of humanity. The Vatican was as keenly aware as any secular government that during the Cuban Missile Crisis, only months before the issuance of *Pacem*, the world stood very close to the dawn of nuclear holocaust and near total destruction of the developed world. Indeed, John XXIII delivered an address in French on the dangers of nuclear war and the need for peace just hours after President Kennedy took the penultimate step toward war by raising the US military's readiness status to DEFCON 2.<sup>417</sup> The Church had relied on Just War Theory for centuries, but the Twentieth Century's technological advances meant that a stronger stance needed to be taken,

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<sup>416</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, issued in Rome, April 11, 1963, sections 110 – 111, available in full online at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html) (accessed January 15, 2017).

<sup>417</sup> Russell Hittinger, “*Quinquagesimo Ante: Reflections on Pacem in Terris Fifty Years Later*,” Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Acta 18, 2013, (Rome: The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2013), available in full online at: <http://www.pass.va/content/dam/scienze-sociali/pdf/acta18/acta18-hittinger.pdf>

as reflected not only in the documents above, but in later works such as Paul VI's *Gaudium et Spes*, John Paul II's *Sapientia Christiana*, and the updated *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which addressed issue of conscientious objection, peace, and war in articles 2242- 2246 and 2302 – 2330.<sup>418</sup> After Days' time, but still very relevant to her ideals is Pope Benedict XVI's "In Truth Is Peace," issued in 2006.<sup>419</sup>

The new concept of Just War Theory that emerged over the course of the decades following 1945 placed more emphasis on limitations of war-fighting methods. For example, as noted above, total war weaponry such as nuclear, biological, and chemical weaponry was condemned, but so, too, was deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian population centers, a reference not only to the atomic bombings, but also to the Blitz on England, saturation bombing of German cities, and the fire bombings of Dresden, Tokyo, and other cities.<sup>420</sup> Too, the Church condemned arms sales and the business of profiting from dealing in death, a direct attack on what is referred to in the United States as the military-industrial complex.<sup>421</sup> The overall approach is best summed up by this:

2312 The Church and human reason both assert the permanent validity of the *moral law during armed conflict*. "The mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the warring parties."

2313 Non-combatants, wounded soldiers, and prisoners must be respected and treated humanely. Actions deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes, as are the orders that command such actions. Blind obedience does not suffice to excuse those who carry them out. Thus, the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> All of these are available in full online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) (accessed January 15, 2017).

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> CCC article 2314.

<sup>421</sup> CCC article 2316.

<sup>422</sup> CCC articles 2312 and 2313.

This is a changing of emphasis, somewhat, from theorizing chiefly about *jus ad bellum* to also incorporating *jus in bello*. Day, too, recognized this and shifted subtly from her pre-1945 stance of diehard pacifism, to not only an embrace of Just War Theory, albeit a very dovish interpretation, but also to an acknowledgement that if war was going to happen, then steps needed to be taken to minimize the suffering and violence.<sup>423</sup> Day saw war and violence not in political terms, but in economic and social terms. The contemporary school of thought sweeping through history departments across America since the late 1990's emphasizing the study of "war and society," would have pleased Day.<sup>424</sup> On this point, consider, for example, that part of her reaction to the unveiling of new nuclear weapons (the hydrogen bombs of the 1950's), was to note the effect that their manufacturing plants would have on the health of impoverished, the land around them, and the economic precarity of workers: "Then there are those who live under outwardly decent economic circumstances, but are forever on the fearful brink of financial disaster. During a visit to Georgia and South Carolina, I saw the trailer camps around Augusta, near the hydrogen bomb plant."<sup>425</sup> No matter how high the wages, Day argued, the utter failure of humanity apparent in the makers of such weapons was too great a sin to be absolved merely by arguing that well-paying jobs were created.

This formed another part of Day's critique of the modern State, that it depended for its existence upon war. Day quotes radical author Randolph Bourne, "War is the Health of the State" in *The Long Loneliness*, and then proceeds to point out that the American economy has fallen prey to this trap. The entire system of warfare and welfare had been incorporated into

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<sup>423</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 263 – 273.

<sup>424</sup> Any number of larger universities now offer courses on War and Society, and some dedicated research centers or units of history departments have been christened to follow this paradigm in their historical analysis, see, for example, the Dale Center for the Study of War and Society, a research unit at the University of Southern Mississippi: <https://www.usm.edu/war-society> (accessed January 22, 2017).

<sup>425</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 68.

every aspect of American life during the Second World War, and did not disappear when that war ended:

Raising food, building houses, baking bread – whatever you did you kept the wheels of industrial capitalism moving, and industrial capitalism kept the wheels moving on war orders. You could not live without compromise. Teachers sold war stamps and bonds. Children were asked to bring aluminum pots and scrap metal to school. The Pope asked that war be kept out of the schoolroom, but there it was.<sup>426</sup>

This raised questions of what a Catholic could do to stay true to the teachings of the Church, while also having to deal with the reality of the welfare-warfare State, that never-ending conflict machine whose hunger for blood and souls could not be slaked.

Can there be just war? Can the conditions laid down by St. Thomas ever be fulfilled? What about the morality of the use of the atom bomb? What does God want me to do? And what am I capable of doing? Can I stand out against state and Church? Is it pride, presumption, to think that I have the spiritual capacity to use spiritual weapons in the face of the most gigantic tyranny the world has ever seen? Am I capable of enduring suffering, facing martyrdom? And alone?

Again, the long loneliness to be faced.<sup>427</sup>

Day grappled with these issues near-constantly, especially after Peter Maurin's death in 1947. Others that came into the Catholic Worker movement as volunteers provided good ideas and stimulating debate for Day, including Ammon Henecy, the radical pacifist, and Tom Sullivan, a veteran of the Pacific War. The latter, in particular, helped Day to form a more nuanced concept of pacifism and Just War Theory, by explaining the history of the Church, his own experiences of modern, total war, and noting the idea of using spiritual and material weapons to wage war.

I can only explain his attitude toward war on mystical grounds. He agrees with the condemnation of the means used in modern war. He probably would never lift a hand to injure another man, but his attitude is that if other men have to suffer in the war, he will suffer with them. . . "I do not consider myself strong enough to court martyrdom," he says, "and that is what it means if atheistic Communism wins out. Since nobody seems to be

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<sup>426</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 264.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 272 – 273.

using the spiritual weapons you are always talking about, we may have to use the material ones.”<sup>428</sup>

Another who challenged Day’s original hard-line pacifism was Stanley Vishnewski, a Lithuanian immigrant, who saved Day from being crushed by a policeman’s horse during a labor protest at the National Biscuit Company. Vishnewski, like Day, began as a dedicated pacifist, but came, after the Second World War began, to see that, in line with elements of Church teaching on just war, that wars, “[S]hould be fought to defend the injured and to resist injustice.”<sup>429</sup> This attitude is somewhat reflected in the Catechism articles 2308 – 2310.

In short, Day’s thinking on pacifism had evolved. She certainly had not abandoned it, still referring to herself as a pacifist all throughout her later life in the 1960’s and 1970’s.<sup>430</sup> Her concept of pacifism had changed, however, to accepting, under however narrow the circumstances, that there could exist something called a just war, although there must always be allowed the right to conscientious objection (and the draft was always a grave moral evil for her, as evidenced by her anti-draft activism throughout the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War).<sup>431</sup>

Although she rarely, if ever, quoted Pope Benedict XV, the great pacifist pope of the Great War, Day still relied heavily on the teachings of the Church to support her views.

The Catholic Worker is sincerely a *pacifist* paper.

We oppose class war and class hatred, even while we stand opposed to injustice and greed. Our fight is not “with flesh and blood but principalities and powers.”

We oppose also imperialist war.

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>429</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 140.

<sup>430</sup> As her correspondence with Thomas Merton, Daniel Berrigan, and, of all people, Abbie Hoffman shows, see Roberts, 165. Hoffman referred to Day as the first hippie, much to her amusement.

<sup>431</sup> Dorothy Day, “In Peace is My Bitterness Most Bitter,” from the January, 1967 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, (New York, 1967), available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/250.html> (accessed January 22, 2017).

We oppose, moreover, preparedness for war, a preparedness which is going on now on an unprecedented scale and which will undoubtedly lead to war. The Holy Father Pope Pius XI said, in a pastoral letter in 1929:

“And since the unbridled race for armaments is on the one hand the effect of the rivalry among nations and on the other cause of the withdrawal of enormous sums from the public wealth and hence not the smallest of contributors to the current extraordinary crisis. We cannot refrain from renewing on this subject the wise admonitions of our predecessors which thus far have not been heard.

“We exhort you all, Venerable Brethren, that by all the means at your disposal, both by preaching and by the press, you seek to illumine minds and open hearts on this matter, according to the solid dictates of right reason and of the Christian law.”

“Why not prepare for peace?”

1. Let us think now what it means to be neutral in fact as well as in name.
2. American bankers must not lend money to nations at war.
3. We must renounce neutral rights at sea.<sup>432</sup>

Day considered the idea of Christians taking up arms to create world peace to be entirely self-contradictory; one could not serve the Prince of Peace by going to war. Importantly, Day felt, somewhat in line with Mohandas Gandhi, that even to defend the Church when confronted with annihilation was wrong. Consider her attitude to those Catholics who volunteered to serve in the Nationalist armies during the Spanish Civil War:

Our Lord said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” And do not His words apply not only to Him as Head of his Church but to His members? How can the Head be separated from the members? The Catholic Church cannot be destroyed in Spain or in Mexico. But we do not believe that force of arms can save it. We believe that if Our Lord were alive today he would say as He said to St. Peter, “Put up thy sword.”

Christians when they are seeking to defend their faith by arms, by force and violence, are like those who said to our Lord, “Come down from the Cross. If you are the Son of God, save Yourself.”

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<sup>432</sup> Dorothy Day, “Pacifism,” from the May, 1936 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/215.html>.



But Christ did not come down from the Cross. He drank to the last drop the agony of His suffering and was not part of the agony the hopelessness, the unbelief of His own disciples?

Christ is being crucified today, every day. Shall we ask Him with the unbelieving world to come down from the cross? Or shall we joyfully, as His brothers, “Complete the sufferings of Christ”?<sup>433</sup>

No matter the force brought against the faithful of Christ: they would overcome it by love and non-violent resistance. Note, that like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, pacifism, for Day, is not passivity, but rather direct confrontation with injustice. To face an armed opponent, ready to do violence, when one is, himself, unarmed and unwilling to do violence takes enormous courage and, in Day’s view, supreme faith.

### **Community versus State: Day’s Anarchism**

Shifting slightly here, it is very easy to see how Day’s anti-war activism led to her anti-State attitude. Day believed, as did many other anti-war activists from both sides of the political spectrum, that much of what the State did centered around conflict, be it conflict with other States or between various groups within the State (worker versus employer, city versus country, rich versus poor, black versus white). Certainly, the direct military-industrial aspects of the State would earn Day’s ire, such as the Pentagon or the nuclear production sites, but even the courts frustrated her. Consider her view, from long experience of both civil and criminal courts: “I learned something as I sat in courts, overheated and stifling, and saw the crowded dockets, the masses of documents relating to a million minor offenses. I saw that the system is all too big, too ponderous, too unwieldy. Everything needs to be decentralized.”<sup>434</sup> Only the massive, bureaucratic-technological State could wage modern war and administer the massively

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<sup>433</sup> Dorothy Day, “The Use of Force,” from the November, 1936 edition of *The Catholic Worker*. Available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/306.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).

<sup>434</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 184 – 185.

overcrowded court and prison system.<sup>435</sup> This was not justice, nor order, nor peace. This was managed tyranny of a sort intolerable to a community activist such as Day. Frankly, some of the bureaucratic regulation of volunteers working to alleviate poverty boggled Day. For example, state inspectors threatened to fine and possibly shut down the Peter Maurin Farm on Staten Island. Day described the inspectors as cold, indifferent to the poverty around them, and forever suspicious about what they saw:

- a. Why have a large table? To host large meetings in which visitors came down to the farm for the day to hear speakers. Permit needed.
- b. What was the meaning of the word “worker” in Catholic Worker? Was it political or connected to union activity? Yes. Permit needed.
- c. Was the farm under the auspices of the Catholic archdiocese? No, it was a private establishment that was part of a charity organization. Permit needed.
- d. Was the farmhouse a multi-family dwelling? No, but several people not related by blood did live there. Permit and renovations needed.
- e. Is the farmland in use producing food? Yes, it was meant to feed those who lived there and occasional guests. Permit needed.<sup>436</sup>

When the inspectors finally finished, Day having agreed to move out all permanent residents except the farmer, himself, she expressed much frustration with the legal system that created this bureaucratic nightmare that stood in the way of volunteers helping the poor.

It is a strange and terrifying business, this all-encompassing state, when it interferes to such a degree in the personal practice of the works of mercy. How terrible a thing it is when the state takes over the poor! “State ownership of the indigent,” one of the bishops called it. The authorities want us to live according to certain standards, or not at all. We are forced to raise our standard of living, regardless of the debts involved. We are forced to be institutional, which is not what we want.

How to escape from the letter of the law that killeth! Our lawyer says that there is nothing we can do in the end but move to Vermont or to one of the Southern states. But there in the

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<sup>435</sup> Speaking from personal experience as a former special assistant district attorney, even in the present day, it is not unusual for a defendant in a criminal court to face up to eighteen months wait before his case is called to trial because of the massive backlog. The city-parish of Baton Rouge, population slightly over 800,000, has ten criminal court judges, all of whom hold court five days a week, over forty weeks per year (holidays excepted). Yet with some of those judges working dockets that extend almost without break from eight in the morning until four or five in the evening, there are still so many defendants that courtrooms are frequently standing-room only.

<sup>436</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 196 – 198.

South we would get into great trouble because of our stand on the racial issue. There is no easy living for a Christian in this world!<sup>437</sup>

Returning to the idea of feeding the poor and giving them a chance to work, learn basic skills, and reconnect with the land, Peter Maurin frequently addressed the large kitchen table gatherings, recommending a hearty dose of manual labor and education via the many books donated to the farm and house libraries.<sup>438</sup> Day credits Maurin with introducing to the guests and residents books and ideas from Don Luigi Sturzo, Eric Fromm, Martin Buber, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakahs Narayan, and Danilo Dolci, all of whom proposed some form of what would today be called communitarian, decentralized, agricultural societies.<sup>439</sup> Despite Maurin's insistence on communal living, however, they both learned, rather quickly, that many of the things kept in common for all to use soon disappeared or became run-down and damaged.

As Peter used to say when he found an animal neglected, or the engine of a car frozen because someone had forgotten to drain the water out of it, 'Everyone's property is no one's property.' Neglect and abuse – these are the failings common to all classes of society, particularly in this most prosperous land of ours, where we have built an economy on waste.<sup>440</sup>

This is not to say that they re-shaped the entire idea of community living to take into account a tragedy of the commons scenario; on the contrary, Day and Maurin simply took this to be another good argument FOR communal living. “[It] was an argument not against communal ownership of the means of production but for a better understanding of the doctrine of the common good and a need for the growth in co-operatives - manageable ones of proper size, so that each could have a sense of personal responsibility.”<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 199.

<sup>438</sup> As noted elsewhere, Maurin was from a rural peasant family; working on the land seemed to be the natural condition for Man.

<sup>439</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 45. Maurin was also fascinated by Israeli *kibbutzim*, the first of which was founded in 1909.

<sup>440</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 202.

<sup>441</sup> *Loaves and Fishes*, 203.

How could the vast, corporate dominated State with its obsession with efficiency tolerate the existence of such anarchic, medieval communities as this? Day was convinced that it could not, which was why she sometimes referred to herself as a libertarian, although the sense of the word as she used it had more in common with anarchist than with the post-War revival of classical liberalism represented by thinkers such as Henry Hazlitt, Murray Rothbard, and Ralph Raico. Having earlier in life rejected ideology when she walked away from socialism, Day came to adhere to the program of Distributism, but a Distributism less formalized in its relationship between Church, Man, and State than was found in European thinkers such as Chesterton or McNabb.<sup>442</sup> “Socialism was too doctrinaire; I could not understand Marx.”<sup>443</sup> At the same time, Day could quote Lenin and Trotsky with ease, noting, in passing, Trotsky’ critiques of various Socialist movements.<sup>444</sup> But this was still not an operational program that could be put into effect without massive government intervention.<sup>445</sup> The IWW platform offered some hope, but still dwelled too much on top-down reform of an essentially unjust system. Anyway, Day’s personalist philosophy and natural charisma with crowds (Day was, after all, praised as both journalist and speech-writer even by her opponents) led her naturally toward movement-style politics rather than organized political action.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Indeed, it is likely that Day’s anarchistic leanings would not have appealed to the more Order-oriented Chesterton and McNabb. See, for example, Mark and Louise Zwick, “G. K. Chesterton and Dorothy Day on Economics: Neither Socialism nor Capitalism,” available at the Houston Catholic Worker’s website: <http://cjd.org/2001/10/01/g-k-chesterton-and-dorothy-day-on-economicsneither-socialism-nor-capitalism-Distributism/> (accessed June 3, 2017).

<sup>443</sup> Although Day inclined more toward Trotskyism than dogmatic Marxist-Leninist thought (or Stalinism), still she always seemed to prefer, even in her most die-hard communist days, something more akin to anarcho-syndicalism. See *The Long Loneliness*, 62- 65.

<sup>444</sup> As noted elsewhere, this likely came from having known Trotsky personally and having interviewed him and attended many of his lectures, see *The Long Loneliness*, 64 -65. Day notes that Trotsky’s Communism had entered a bitter phase, in which he dismissed American socialists as ineffective and laughably bourgeoisie (liberal institutionalist) in their outlook; because of his comments, *The Call*, the socialist newspaper which employed Day at the time of her interviews with Trotsky, refused to publish all but one of the interviews.

<sup>445</sup> *The Long Loneliness*, 62- 65.

<sup>446</sup> Roberts, 169.

Of course, the State and its institutions are natural opponents to such a worldview, anarchistic as it necessarily is. Law, as far too few seem to understand, is violence. It is a feature of the natural relation between the ruled and the rulers: the subject gives his consent to the State to hold a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. The State exercises that monopoly by using coercive force (violence) to enforce the law. Thus, whenever a law is passed, it MUST be understood that what has happened is that the State has determined that it will use violence to ensure that a person (and I use this term to refer to both human and corporate persons) will either do something, not do something, or give something.<sup>447</sup> Here, Day, the anarchist, is most present, as she frequently quotes Chekhov, Kropotkin, and Proudhon in support of her views. Consider this example:

Kropotkin wanted much the same type of social order as Eric Gill, the artist, Vincent McNabb, the Dominican street preacher, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and other Distributists advocated, though they would have revolted at the word anarchist, thinking it synonymous with chaos, not “self-government” as Proudhon defined it. Distributism is the English term for that society whereby man has sufficient of this world’s goods to enable him to lead a good life.<sup>448</sup>

Note the difference here between Day’s formulation of the just economy and Marx’s: this is not from each according to his ability, to each according to his need. Rather, Day has more in common with Aristotle and Aquinas, in that she seeks the proper end for society, the *telos*. For her, the good society allows Man to live without want only to the point that he can be truly good, but no more. There is nothing of envy or greed, no need to violently take from others that which they do not wish to voluntarily give; if the rich man wants his riches, then he may keep them, knowing that he will pay the price in the world to come. The State, even with the most noble of motives, would, in Communist or Socialist form, break down doors and take from the wealthy to

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<sup>447</sup> These are the three essential functions of law: it creates an obligation to do, not to do, or to give.

<sup>448</sup> Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), 56.

give to the poor. In Liberal form, it would take from the poor and rich disinterestedly, although the rich might have the means to seize control of the State.<sup>449</sup> The State, for Day, is dedicated to welfare and warfare (although even the welfare aspect is compromised because of the critiques noted above and the necessarily accompanying violence).

On this point, Day begins to sound somewhat libertarian or at least Old Right in her politics. She frequently laments the idea of the State as little more than an institution of organized violence. She notes the ineffectiveness of welfare programs, not the least of which is the problem of destroying any personal responsibility to care for others that a vast, federalized welfare system creates (recall here Peter Maurin's essay "Passing the Buck" which Day often cited).

1. In the first centuries of Christianity  
the poor were fed, clothed, and sheltered  
at a personal sacrifice  
and the Pagans  
said about the Christians:  
"See how they love each other."
2. Today the poor are fed, clothed, and sheltered  
by the politicians  
at the expense  
of the taxpayers.
3. And because the poor  
are no longer  
fed, clothed, and sheltered  
at a personal sacrifice  
but at the expense

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<sup>449</sup> On this point, consider the ease with which liberal democracy slips into plutocracy (agency capture, bought elections, bribes) and the actually existing state of the justice system in America (what amounts to debtors' prisons for people who cannot afford fines or back child support payments, poor people indicted and convicted at a hugely disproportionate rate to rich people, oligarchical non-term limited state judges, and plutocratic, unaccountable, appointed federal judges who serve for life). See, among many other social science analyses of this topic, Jeffrey Reiman and Paul Leighton's classic text on this issue, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Routledge, 2015) and Jeffrey Mokhiber's 2007 speech by dealing with corporate and "wealthy people's crimes" here: [http://www.alternet.org/story/54093/twenty\\_things\\_you\\_should\\_know\\_about\\_corporate\\_crime](http://www.alternet.org/story/54093/twenty_things_you_should_know_about_corporate_crime) (accessed December 5, 2015).

of taxpayers  
Pagans say about Christians:  
"See how they pass the buck."<sup>450</sup>

Maurin, like Day, also saw that the problem of poverty and the lack of an effective solution, lay in the structure of society that both believed needed to be restored to its natural order. Consider this essay from Maurin (supported in deed and word by Day, the suffragette anti-feminist):

1. In seventeenth-Century France  
there was a priest  
by the name of Vincent.
2. Father Vincent realized  
that the country  
was going to the dogs.
3. When something goes wrong  
they say in France:  
"Cherchez la femme-  
look for the woman."
4. Looking for the woman  
Father Vincent found out  
that many woman  
were trying to be  
the mistresses of the rich.
5. St. Vincent of Paul  
gathered several women  
and told them:  
"If you want  
to put the country on its feet  
refuse to be  
the mistress of the rich  
and choose to be  
the servants of the poor."<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Peter Maurin, "Passing the Buck," from *Easy Essays*, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/petermaurin/easy-essays.html#<strong>Rich And Poor</strong>> (accessed November 28, 2016); as elsewhere in this work, I use Maurin's own spacing.

<sup>451</sup> Peter Maurin, "Servants of the Poor," from *Easy Essays*, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/petermaurin/easy-essays.html#<strong>Rich And Poor</strong>> (accessed November 28, 2016).

The Golden Age of Catholicism (the High Middle Ages), to which Day looked for inspiration as did all Distributists, saw Catholics join together to run hospitals, poor houses, and schools. This was the age of guilds, of religious orders, of the papacy frequently (though certainly not always) condemning wars not fought to defend Christendom. Here, Day believed lay a solution: instead of the vast, centralized State, which even then mostly existed for warfare, there was an effective non-institutional, decentralized, local solution to many of life's problems.

Today's paper with its columns of description of the new era, the atomic era, which this colossal slaughter of the innocents has ushered in, is filled with stories covering every conceivable phase of the new discovery... We can only suggest one thing – destroy the two billion dollars' worth of equipment that was built to make the atomic bomb; destroy all the formulas; put on sackcloth and ashes, weep and repent. And God will not forget to show mercy. If others go to work to build again and prepare, let them. It is given to man but once to die... One of the saints, when asked what he would do if he were told he was to die within the next day, replied that he would go on doing what he was doing. That is the state of mind we must cultivate. It is the only answer.<sup>452</sup>

This is the spirit of medieval Christianity: there is obedience, there is humility, there is repentance, there is the recognition of Man's place in the world, there is the recognition of invincible ignorance (sin), and there is faith: absolute, perfect trust in God. To express this sentiment, Day counseled the same commandment that Christ gave:

There is plenty to do, for each one of us, working on our own hearts, changing our own attitudes, in our own neighborhoods. If the just man falls seven times daily, we each one of us fall more than that in thought, word and deed. Prayer and fasting, taking up our own cross daily and following Him, doing penance, these are the hard words of the Gospel.

As to the Church, where else shall we go, except to the Bride of Christ, one flesh with Christ? Though she is a harlot at times, she is our Mother. We should read the book of Hosea, which is a picture of God's steadfast love not only for the Jews, His chosen people, but for His Church, of which we are every one of us members or potential members. Since there is no time with God, we are all one, all one body, Chinese, Russians, Vietnamese, and He has commanded us to love another.

“A new commandment I give, that you love others \*\*as I have loved you,\*\* not to the defending of your life, but to the laying down of your life.

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<sup>452</sup>Dorothy Day, *By Little and Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1983), 268, 270.



A hard saying. “Love is indeed a harsh and dreadful thing” to ask of us, of each one of us, but it is the only answer.<sup>453</sup>

So, while there is some truth to the accusation that Day is an anarchist, for her, anarchism meant not lawless chaos, but self-government according to divine and natural law.

To restate the Catholic Worker’s program:

How can we love God and kill our brother? How can we love our brother and kill him? How can we fulfill the Gospel precept to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect; how can we follow the precept to love God when we kill our fellow man? How can war be compatible with such love?

To kill, to destroy, to starve, to inflict all these sufferings with love—that is sadism of the most hideous kind. That is perversity. It has long been said that religion is the opiate of the people. Pope Pius XI said that the workers of the world are lost to the church. If that is true, if the poor of the world are turned from the Bride of Christ, it is because there is no relation between the spiritual and material. We are not trying to put into effect our Christianity, our Christian principles. They are not animating our lives.

Why do we write about cooperatives, credit unions, mutual aid? Because when we see what Christianity is, when we see the beauty of our faith—when we have gone through something analogous to a conversion, we see all things new, as St. Paul says. We look upon our work, our lives, and we say, “How do these things square with Christian teaching? Can we go on making money at the expense of our brother? Can we be profiteers, can we work on Wall Street? Can we go in for advertising which sets up false standards, which perverts the people, which fills their minds with meretricious desires, making the good sweet life of the Christian unpalatable?” If we wish to follow Christ, we will be workers like Jesus, like St. Joseph, like St. Paul. We will think of the dignity of labor, we will respect the worker, will bear our share of responsibility toward making that new social order wherein justice dwelleth, where people will have that certain amount of goods which St. Thomas says is necessary to lead a good life.

Why do we talk about houses of hospitality, bread lines, and farming communes and the necessity of taking care of our poorer brother? Because the greatest hypocrisy is this, to say to our brother in need, “Go, be now filled,” and give him no bread.

How can we show our love for God except through our love for our brothers?

How can we cease to cry out against injustice and human misery?<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Dorothy Day, “In Peace is My Bitterness Most Bitter,” from the January, 1967 edition of *The Catholic Worker*, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/250.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).

<sup>454</sup> Dorothy Day, “Aims and Purposes,” from the May, 1943 edition of *The Catholic Worker*, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/919.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).

Love of Man moved God to physically incarnate, suffer, and die for Man's sake. Love of God could move men to suffer and die for their brothers. Love is the foundation of natural law. Love is the foundation of Christianity. Love would save society.

### **Immanence and the World to Come**

Day's program was not utopian, despite criticism of it as such. It was not, like Communism, meant to create Paradise on Earth. Neither was it dedicated to the gradual "all boats are lifted" approach of capitalist thinkers.<sup>455</sup> No, Day and the Distributists meant to restore what they viewed as an utterly destroyed society, one that saw the devaluation of everything they held dear. As St. Vincent de Paul said (summarized by Peter Maurin above), a society cannot be great until its women cease being whores to the rich, and become instead slaves to the poor.<sup>456</sup> This would not come via a series of small political victories, but rather a centuries long battle conducted outside the realm of the political. Indeed, many of the most enthusiastic volunteers at the Catholic Worker left it in despair after only a short time when they realized that its tactics were not those of Socialism, or Union politics.<sup>457</sup> What Day might have said to politicians regarding the Catholic Worker was that they could never understand it: it sought no worldly power, indeed it was a revolt against such, it sought no riches (the staff took no salaries and the paper was published entirely from donated money), and it cared little for national boundaries or

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<sup>455</sup> Here, I have in mind essentially humanist thinkers of the old Classical Liberal school such as Hayek or Hazlitt.

<sup>456</sup> My rather coarser, albeit I think more effective, formulation of Maurin's take on St. Vincent. The Twenty-First Century is nothing if not the coarsest Era of Mankind (observe the election of Donald J. Trump as President).

<sup>457</sup> Michael Harrington, author of *The Other America* and a great influence over 1960's era Democrats such as John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Bernie Sanders, being but one of those despairing youths who quit the Catholic Worker after just two years. He claimed that he lost faith in God, but his own writings at the time seem to indicate that he lost faith in Catholic solutions to worldly problems and preferred Socialism, instead. See Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), 172 – 178. As Piehl points out, the Catholic Worker had almost no interest whatsoever in successful strikes, key Congressional elections, or Supreme Court victories; Harrington could not abide such otherworldly attitudes.

international treaties. Instead, the Catholic Worker sought to create small, sustainable communities of traditional families dedicated to the ideal of Christian agrarianism. This is not to say that Day did not believe in the necessity of some industry (unlike, say, Vincent McNabb who was practically a Luddite), but she felt that industry should not be the BASIS of society.

Chesterton used to start off writing in answer to things he had been reading, or because he was stimulated by what he was reading, and I am sure that all of us on the Catholic Worker this month, are doing just that. One of the books I have been reading by a non-Catholic, Richard Gregg, about the work of Gandhi along economic lines, led me to think of just how The Catholic Worker movement is distinguished from all these other movements, just what it is we emphasize, just what position we take, which is not taken by them. Not that we wish to be different. God forbid. We wish that they all felt as we do, that we had that basic unity which would make us agree on *pacifism* and *distributism*.<sup>458</sup>

Unlike Alfred Nobel, Day did not believe that more advanced technology would lead to an end to war. Rather, she felt that great industrial societies were little more than the breeding grounds for war and arms races and pollution and social unrest and all of the other disasters of modernity. Rather than seeking solutions to the failures of modernity in the all-powerful invisible hand of the market driven by enlightened self-interest (classical liberalism), the power of institutions to overcome societal failures (neo-liberalism), or the omniscient State's ability to engineer solutions to poverty and social problems (Communism and Socialism), Day felt that Man, himself, could create a society in which these problems did not exist. Historically, of course, she was absolutely right, as any cursory review of the pre-modern Ages show. This is not to say that the Renaissance or the High Middle Ages were perfect, but they came closer to perfection than did the Modern or Post-Modern Ages.

Distributism is built on the idea of the small, the local, the harmony of Man with Nature and his fellows. Day's vision was a return to this, a not altogether impossible one, as many

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<sup>458</sup> Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," from the May, 1948 edition of *The Catholic Worker*, available online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/158.html> (accessed November 28, 2016).

American authors urged such a thing (Wendell Berry is but one contemporary author to do so). The path toward that vision involved penance, personal sacrifice, and prayer, lived in community with others who shared that vision. Day's call to America is the same as Christ's to Israel: Come, leave behind your things, and follow Me.<sup>459</sup>

### **The Catholic Worker defined**

Near the end of her life, Day wrote a short column in *The Catholic Newspaper* that offered a reply to the question, "What is it all about, this Catholic Worker movement?"<sup>460</sup> She could reflect, at this point, on nearly forty years of activism within the movement, of daily appeals, of journalism, of strikes, of arrests and nights in prison, and on constant searching for community. Day always considered the long loneliness, to use her phrase, to be the search by Man for God through the experience of community and self-sacrifice. The alienation of Man from his fellows and of his own spiritual self from his worldly self were themes that Day addressed throughout all of her works, but which she now discussed in simple, but nuanced terms. What was the Catholic Worker, where had it gone, what had it done, and, most importantly, why had it done these things?

Day flavored her reply with literary references, as she was wont to do, but they were carefully chosen. At first, she speaks of George Orwell, and his desire to see small communes with farms and hospitals for the poor dotting the landscape of England.<sup>461</sup> She reminisces about the many poor who have come through the houses of hospitality and the Catholic Worker farms, fondly discussing her grandchildren's early introduction to the movement's work with bread

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<sup>459</sup> Although she might have also paired this with another biblical injunction: Put not your faith in princes, nor in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation. *Psalm 146:3*.

<sup>460</sup> Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage – Our Spring Appeal," from the May, 1970 edition of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, available in full online at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/500.html> (accessed January 23, 2017).

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* She makes specific references to *Road to Wigan Pier* and *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

lines (“bread-lions”) and the holy poor (“honeybums”).<sup>462</sup> By this point, the Catholic Worker had become a multi-generational movement.

From this, she moves on to more obscure references such as Nobel-prize winner Knut Hamsun’s early novel *Hunger*, an anonymous Chicano journalist discussing Che Guevara in *El Grito del Norte* newspaper, French Communist Roger Garaudy’s article about Christianity in the French Franciscan magazine *Evangile Aujourd’hui*, and the Chinese classic *All Men are Brothers*.<sup>463</sup> Here, there is a bit less order to Day’s thoughts, as she wanders from theme to theme, discussing at times the need for the revolutionary to embrace love, at others the need to die to self and be fools for Christ as Don Quixote was.<sup>464</sup> Wandering down this long path of, at times, direct self-examination, Day slowly turns toward more definitive answers as to what the Catholic Worker’s foundational beliefs are.

She begins by quoting newspaper profiles of the Catholic Worker, an unsurprising step for a journalist. She notes, humorously, that *The New York Times* never quite understood the Catholic Worker movement, referring to them as, “[P]eople who run some kind of a mission on the Bowery.”<sup>465</sup> On the other hand, the frequently critical New York *Daily News* referred to the Catholic Worker as, “[A] group of pacifist-anarchists.”<sup>466</sup> Day, hewing more closely to this latter description, answered the question of what the Catholic Worker is in this way:

“What is it all about, this Catholic Worker movement?”—so many ask us this question by mail or in person; there are so many people beating a path to our door, I usually try to explain it in simple terms. “We are a school not only for the students, the young, who come

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. The *El Grito* piece may have been written by Elizabeth Martinez, the Chicana feminist activist who edited the paper during its short run, although Day does not identify the author of the piece that she references by name. Roger Garaudy was a controversial figure, first subscribing to Catholicism, then Communism, then Catholicism again, then finally converting to Islam and being convicted in French courts of Holocaust denial.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid. Ironically, current *New York Times* executive editor Dean Baquet stated in a late 2016 National Public Radio interview that the paper still “doesn’t get religion.” See <http://www.npr.org/2016/12/08/504806512/new-york-times-executive-editor-on-the-new-terrain-of-covering-trump> (accessed January 23, 2017).

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

to us, but for all of us. We are also a house of hospitality, for worker, for scholar, for young and for old. There are racists, patriots in both the good and the bad sense, nihilists, anarchists and Socialists. There are alcoholics. An agency nearby tried to send one over to us for care and when we explained that personal responsibility also meant that each one of us should take on the burdens encountered, the worker replied, “I thought you specialized in that sort of thing.”<sup>467</sup>

Although her answer is both accurate and humorous, it is also instructive in some ways.

Day and Maurin always taught personal responsibility, not just for oneself, but also for others.

They challenged Cain’s attitude directly by offering the opposite of his answer to God, “I am my brother’s keeper.” They were there to take in the miserable, the poor, and the wretched, all at great personal sacrifice. Day was a talented writer and well-known journalist; her novel, *The Eleventh Virgin*, was purchased by a major movie studio which intended to make it into a movie (it never materialized, likely because of the perceived complexity of the book and because of worries about the MPAA’s censors). She could have enjoyed a lucrative career with any major newspaper, or as a screenwriter or novelist. Instead, she lived in poverty, amongst God’s poor, by choice, to serve them for over four decades. In some ways, Day’s own life story is her answer to the question, “What is the Catholic Worker?”

Falling back on a more technical answer to the question, Day fills in gaps in her answer by explaining the condition of American society.

But what we really are, and try to be in all the Catholic Worker houses around the country, is a family—and gentleness and loving kindness is the prevailing mood. The other day Chris was on hand in the basement room where the “bread-lions” were waiting for soup and one pulled a knife on another. “Put it away!” Chris’s voice was strong enough so that we could hear it upstairs. “All the men have knives,” Mary Galligan, who sits behind the desk from eight to four every day, said calmly. There is liquor and there are drugs. The young ones are generally under the influence, in a leaping, laughing state as they come in to eat. But they are all hungry, black and white together, young and old, and the soup is good.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

More than that, though, Day saw the helplessness and the hopelessness, the despair and nihilism that haunted America, the richest, most economically and militarily powerful country in the world after 1945.

One must write about these things now when in these last weeks three young people were blown to bits in a house on Eleventh Street, just off of Fifth Avenue, reportedly in an attempt to make bombs to blow up banks, department stores, the offices of giant corporations, all those impregnable homes of high finance in this affluent society. One can only use clichés to express these things it seems. That is one reason perhaps for the use of those four-letter words which shock by their contempt and hatred almost for life itself, for the ecstatic act which is part of the beginning of new life on earth.

Anarchism and nihilism are two words familiar to the young and now attractive to them. They do not believe in building a new society within the shell of the old. They believe that the old must be destroyed first. That is nihilism. In a way it is the denial of the “here and now.” Perhaps St. Paul defined The Catholic Worker’s idea of anarchism, the positive word, by saying of the followers of Jesus, “For such there is no law.” For those who have given up all ideas of domination and power and the manipulation of others are “not under the law.” (Galatians 5). For those who live in Christ Jesus, for “those who have put on Christ,” for those who have washed the feet of others, there is no law. They have the liberty of the children of God.<sup>469</sup>

This is a particularly rich section of Day’s column, one that is thick with ideas that need to be examined to understand what she understood her mission to be and why it arose in the context of mid-Twentieth Century America. Writing in 1970, Day was keenly aware of the activities of the Students for a Democratic Society, the Weathermen, the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, and other radical, frequently violent groups. In her mind, there was little difference in the methods, if not the underlying intentions of these groups from those of the 1920’s and 30’s such as the Galleanists and the various Bolshevik-influenced groups that had informed her early life. Violent revolutionary activity by nihilists or radical ideologues was simply a symptom of a collapsing society. Perhaps the weight of injustice had hung too heavily around the nation’s neck. Perhaps it was the maddeningly amoral bureaucracy that cared more

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

for process than people. Perhaps it was simply too much waste and extravagance. Or, and perhaps this most sinister: the measured, comfortable pace of bourgeois life that most Americans enjoyed corroded the soul so much that the afflicted could only escape from the “perfect life” by bacchanalian orgies of drugs, sex, and violence.<sup>470</sup>

Here, we see Day coming full circle to re-examination of the things that had driven her into the waiting arms of the Catholic Church in the first place, nearly fifty years before. Day understood, from personal experience, the lure of nihilism, the emptiness of revolutionary ideology, and the ultimate abandonment of spirit for flesh that accompanied these things. All throughout the early chapters of *The Long Loneliness* and, in fictional biographic form, through *The Eleventh Virgin*, Day speaks of spiritual longing, of a failure of communal bonds between human beings, partly as a result of the rise of industrial society, but partly as a result of an untethering from the social order and religion of earlier ages. True, Man freed from hierarchical society and traditional belief systems was free to define himself, especially in a democratic liberal society. However, this required an enormous commitment to introspection, to learning, and to uncertainty that the vast majority of human beings simply lacked the willpower to succeed at.<sup>471</sup> When the soul is tethered to nothing, and Man becomes alienated from himself, he cannot help but turn to either radical ideology (certain untruth) or nihilism (devaluation of all value) simply as a psychological defense mechanism. This is the anguished cry of the modern soul, which recognizes that it has neither meaning nor value since it stands alone in a lonely universe.

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<sup>470</sup> The US suicide rate has, historically, been fairly high for a developed nation, with a sustained suicide rate in the Twentieth Century outpacing Norway and the Netherlands, for example, though not nearly as high as Japan, see OECD Health Data report from 2011, available online at <http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/49105858.pdf> (accessed January 23, 2017). Even in 2016, when, despite economic downturns, the US still had the highest GDP and one of the highest per capita incomes, there were approximately 121 suicides per day, every single day of the year. See the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s website at: <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/> (accessed January 23, 2017).

<sup>471</sup> Shades here of Eric Voegelin’s warning that most people would rather accept a certain untruth, than an uncertain truth.



It cannot bear the haunting emptiness of the wilderness into which it is thrown.<sup>472</sup> The heroic hermit or platform saint could endure this by his supreme faith. The ordinary New Yorker could not.

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<sup>472</sup> Here, I reference Martin Heidegger's notions of thrown-ness and *Da-Sein*.

## Chapter 5

### Distributism and the Catholic Worker Movement after Dorothy Day

The crisis of Marxism does not rid the world of the situations of injustice and oppression which Marxism itself exploited and on which it fed. To those who are searching today for a new and authentic theory and praxis of liberation, the church offers not only her social doctrine and, in general, her teaching about the human person redeemed in Christ, but also her concrete commitment and material assistance in the struggle against marginalization and suffering. - Pope John Paul II<sup>473</sup>

### *Centesimus Annus* and the Post-Cold War Era

Perhaps no other pope confronted Communism more forcefully than Karol Jozef Wojtyla, known to the world as John Paul II. Elected to the papacy in 1978, only two years before Dorothy Day's death, John Paul faced the daunting task of confronting the growing menace of Communism throughout both the Western and non-Western world. Hailing from Poland, a nation held under Soviet Communist control at the beginning of his papacy, John Paul moved quickly to establish the Catholic Church as a leader of the anti-communist West. Beginning with his outreach to Polish union leader Lech Walesa, John Paul rapidly became a thorn in the side of worldwide Communism; in fact, he is even now, after his death, attacked by communists.<sup>474</sup> His firmest statement against the evils of Communism, John Paul's 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, celebrated not only the wisdom of *Rerum Novarum*, on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but also condemned the continued oppression of worldwide Communism and warned of the dangers of *laissez-faire* capitalism.

John Paul begins *Centesimus* with a heart-felt thanks to his predecessor Leo XIII.

I wish first and foremost to satisfy the debt of gratitude which the whole church owes to this great pope and his 'immortal document.' I also mean to show that the vital

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<sup>473</sup> John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus" from *Catholic Social Thought*, 458.

<sup>474</sup> In the initial discussion of his beatification, John Paul II's opponents on the Left (mostly apologists for Liberation theology) spoke out against him. <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/new.php?n=5583> (accessed January 25, 2009).

energies rising from that root have not been spent with the passing of the years, but rather have increased even more.<sup>475</sup>

He notes the Gospel teachings underlying Leo's great project and its continuing relevance in the post-Cold War world. The transformative nature of *Rerum* does not go unnoticed, either.

Pope Leo XIII, in the footsteps of his predecessors, created a lasting paradigm for the church. The church, in fact, has something to say about specific human situations, both individual and communal, national and international... In Pope Leo XIII's time such a concept of the church's right and duty was far from being commonly admitted.<sup>476</sup>

This last point is significant, as Leo recognized that in issuing an encyclical so far-reaching into what was previously secular territory, the entire role of the Church in modern society would change. John Paul is here acknowledging Leo's prescience and challenging the Church to go even further: to challenge tyranny and injustice on its own doorstep (he is referring to the recent success in Poland). Before moving on to introduce his vision of the social teaching of the Church, John Paul pays a last thanks to Leo and confirms the central teaching of *Rerum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, and subsequent encyclicals addressing socio-economic matters.

From this point forward it will be necessary to keep in mind that the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle of Pope Leo's encyclical, and of all of the church's social doctrine, is a correct view of the human person and of his unique value, inasmuch as 'man... is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself.'<sup>477</sup>

John Paul might be offering a summary of some of the better-known encyclicals since 1891. The concepts of the human person, "social doctrine," and *imago Dei* recur throughout *Rerum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Casti Conubii*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et*

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<sup>475</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 439.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

*Spes*, and *Humanae Vitae*.<sup>478</sup> *Centesimus* might well be considered both a summary of the teachings of the previous hundred years and a continuation of their dominant themes, including an update on the nature of Communism in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Returning to the role of the State, John Paul comments (echoing Archbishop Fulton Sheen) that although the State should defend the poor, it must not attempt to solve every existing socio-economic problem. Rather, the State must allow autonomy to each sector of society, serving only to protect the rights of individuals, families, and society as a whole.<sup>479</sup> Additionally, commenting on the flawed vision of both the capitalist and the Socialist, "[F]rom the Christian vision of the human person there necessarily follows a correct picture of society... the social nature of man is not completely fulfilled in the state, but is realized in various intermediary groups, beginning with the family."<sup>480</sup> John Paul continues, "If we then inquire as to the source of this mistaken concept of the nature of the person and the 'subjectivity' of society, we must reply that its first cause is atheism."<sup>481</sup>

The fatal flaw of both socialism and capitalism, then, may be traced back to Enlightenment rationalism, "which views human and social reality in a mechanistic

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<sup>478</sup> These last four are not documents that I have addressed at length. The first was a 1930 Papal Encyclical issued by Pius XI affirming the moral authority of the Church and formally condemning artificial contraception and abortion while praising the holy institution of marriage and the traditional family. The second a 1964 Papal Encyclical issued by Paul VI recognizing the value of those baptized in Christ's name, but not in communion with Rome (Protestants and Eastern Orthodox Christians) and those who had not yet received the Gospels (explicitly Jews and Muslims, but it is implied that this refers to all non-Christians). The third a 1965 Pastoral Constitution issued by Paul VI praising the nobility of marriage and the family, combating atheism, urging world peace, and promoting the dignity of all human life. The last was the 1968 Papal Encyclical issued by Paul VI affirming the teachings of *Casti Conubii*. *Humanae Vitae* is the Church's strongest statement on the sacred character of married, heterosexual love and procreation. It links the institution of marriage between one man and one woman directly to God's love. It additionally condemns certain forms of artificial creation of life.

<sup>479</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 447.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>481</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 449.

way."<sup>482</sup> The mechanistic, reductionist charge is usually leveled at both idealists (Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza) and empiricists (Hume, Locke, Berkeley), although it is also commonly used against Kant. This is a very serious charge and certainly it holds merit; any reading of the above-mentioned philosophers shows, at times, an atomized view of mankind and nature.

Moving forward from this point, John Paul examines what he calls the "socio-economic consequences" of an error that consists in:

[A]n understanding of human freedom which detaches it from obedience to the truth, and consequently from the duty to respect the rights of others. The essence of freedom then becomes self-love carried to the point of contempt for God and neighbor, a self-love which leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest and which refuses to be limited by any demand of justice.<sup>483</sup>

This is a swipe at liberalism and radical anti-clerical republican nationalism.<sup>484</sup> John Paul places the blame for World War I on the shoulders of liberalism and nationalism, which he considers systematic embraces of hatred and war against God.<sup>485</sup> "This very error [referring to the above cited quote] had extreme consequences in the tragic series of wars which ravaged Europe and the world between 1914 and 1915."<sup>486</sup>

He next references the Holocaust as yet another result of the excesses of nationalism, although he may also be referencing Fascism and Nazism. "Here we recall the Jewish people in particular, whose terrible fate has become a symbol of the aberration of which man is capable when he turns against God."<sup>487</sup> The situation

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<sup>482</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 449.

<sup>483</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 451.

<sup>484</sup> The Church has a very long history of conflict with republican leaders. As an example, see the treatment meted out to Girolamo Savonarola in 1498 - noted in Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*.

<sup>485</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 451-452.

<sup>486</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 451-452.

<sup>487</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 452.

of the Cold War is also an error of the kind described above, though, in this case, John Paul blames Marxism.

For many years, there has been in Europe and the world a situation of non-war rather than a genuine peace. Half of the continent fell under the domination of a communist dictatorship, while the other half organized itself in defense against this threat.<sup>488</sup>

After this condemnation of destructive political ideologies, John Paul returns to the central message of Distributism, inserting the Distributist defense of the local and traditional against the imperial and modern. Specifically speaking of the division of Europe during the Cold War, he notes the freedom that was lost.

Many peoples lost the ability to control their own destiny and were enclosed within the suffocating boundaries of an empire in which efforts were made to destroy their historical memory and the centuries-old roots of their culture. As a result of this violent division of Europe, enormous masses of people were compelled to leave their homeland or were forcibly departed.<sup>489</sup>

Further, the tools of political economy, science, and philosophy were turned to the needs of imperialism and warfare.

An insane arms race swallowed up the resources needed for the development of national economies and for assistance to the less developed nations. Scientific and technological progress, which should have contributed to man's well-being, was transformed into an instrument of war... Meanwhile, an ideology, a perversion of authentic philosophy, was called upon to provide doctrinal justification for the new war... The logic of power blocs or empires, denounced in various church documents... led to a situation in which controversies and disagreements among Third World countries were systematically aggravated and exploited in order to create difficulties for the adversary.<sup>490</sup>

Ultimately, this mode of thinking must lead to a repudiation of itself, as John Paul points out.

But if war can end without winners or losers in a suicide of humanity, then we must repudiate the logic which leads to it: the idea that the effort to destroy the enemy, confrontation and war itself are factors of progress and historical advancement.

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 452.

When the need for this repudiation is understood, the concepts of 'total war' and 'class struggle' must necessarily be called into question.<sup>491</sup>

And the problem becomes very much one of the ends not justifying the means.

Then there are the social forces and ideological movements which oppose Marxism by setting up systems of 'national security,' aimed at controlling the whole of society in a systematic way, in order to make Marxist infiltration impossible. By emphasizing and increasing the power of the state, they wish to protect their people from Communism, but in doing so they run the grave risk of destroying the freedom and values of the person, the very thing for whose sake it is necessary to oppose Communism.<sup>492</sup>

The problem here, of course, is that a repressive society is set-up to halt the advance of an ideology that seeks to impose a repressive society; in other words, freedom must be curtailed or destroyed in order to prevent freedom from being curtailed or destroyed, an obviously self-contradicting solution. While this response is characteristic of many right-leaning Latin American and Asian nations, a wholly opposite approach, equally devoid of merit, is the norm in North America and Europe.

Another kind of response, practical in nature, is represented by the affluent society or the consumer society. It seeks to defeat Marxism on the level of pure materialism by showing how a free market society can achieve greater satisfaction of material human needs than Communism, while equally excluding spiritual values. In reality, while on the one hand it is true that this social model shows the failure of Marxism to contribute to a humane and better society, on the other hand, insofar as it denies an autonomous existence and value to morality, law, culture and religion, it agrees with Marxism, in the sense that it totally reduces man to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs.<sup>493</sup>

We see here the recurring Distributist critique of both the Marxist system and the liberal capitalist system; John Paul points out the obvious fact that Marxism and liberal capitalism are simply two sides of the same coin. The underlying philosophical

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<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 453.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 453.

<sup>493</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 454.

assumption of both systems is that Man is merely an economic creature; neither system allows for the spiritual or familial/communal nature of humanity. Unfortunately, John Paul notes that Marxism and its variants, along with ideologies such as militarism and nationalism, are too-often taken as short cuts for national development, especially in the former colonies of the Western nations-and this would apply to much of Africa and the Middle East, as well as Southeast Asia. “Part of the solution to the twin problems of capitalism and Marxism is the rediscovery by workers of the need for recognition of the dignity of human work.”<sup>494</sup> This, of course, echoes the Distributist emphasis on the workers' associations and the desire to create an economy of small businesses in which high quality products are produced and then sold at moderate prices. Certainly, it is a phrase that Peter Maurin or Dorothy Day could have written. Each worker, taking pride in his work (and here, I believe Marx's concept of alienation is exactly right) and earning a just wage, is able to contribute meaningfully to society.<sup>495</sup>

The Distributist, then, sees the existing economic systems as follows:

	<u>Marxism</u>	<u>Capitalism</u>	<u>Distributism</u>
Quality of products	Low	Moderate	High
Cost of products	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Workers' wages	Low	Moderate	Moderate

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 458.

<sup>495</sup> Alienation is a central concept in Marxist philosophy; Marx discusses it at some length in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and, in further detail, throughout *Das Kapital*.



In this view, then, Marxist economies produce low quality products that are sold for a moderate price, but workers are generally poorly compensated. Capitalist systems offer better wages for workers and generally lower cost products compared to Marxist systems, but the quality of products is significantly lower than those of the artisans in a Distributist system. Finally, in the Distributist economic system, with its emphasis on just wages, artistry and craftsmanship, and a balanced economy, high quality products may be produced and sold for a reasonable price, insuring that craftsmen earn a moderate wage. Ideally, in fact, the Distributist would like each person to own the means of production for his chosen product. For example, a farmer would own (debt-free) his tractor, plough, etc., while a more technical craftsman, say a software designer, would own his own computer systems and proprietary software.<sup>496</sup> Large-scale enterprises, a shipping yard, for example, would be owned by a worker co-operative; real world successes of this type of system do exist- Spain's Mondragon Co-operative Corporation being one of the more high-profile examples.<sup>497</sup>

### **Response to Criticism of Distributism**

Fully aware of the criticism of this approach by liberal capitalists, John Paul directly addresses the caricature of Distributism often used by its critics.

Finally, development must not be understood solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human. It is not only a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of building up a more decent life through united labor, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God's call.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> One of the objections leveled against Distributism is its failure to account for tech jobs; this is manifestly incorrect, as the basic principles of debt-free, individual ownership apply equally to plumbers' tools or Javascript programming packages.

<sup>497</sup> Mondragon's history and statement of corporate values may be reviewed at <http://www.mcc.es/>

<sup>498</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 460.

This seems a direct response to charges that Distributism is little more than Marxism-lite. In fact, this is often a smear directed at Distributists by their opponents on the political right, such as the more fanatical disciples of Austrian economics.<sup>499</sup> While it is certainly fair to say that the Church and the Distributists have no love for laissez-faire capitalism, it is quite wrong to say that the Distributist ideal is little more than a socially conservative, nostalgic Communism. Arguing along this line, in fact, may lead to a counter-criticism of the right-leaning critic; even die-hard free-market advocates will admit that a serious danger in capitalist systems is the creeping advance of fascism - that is, the alliance of large corporate interests with a powerful, central government.<sup>500</sup>

In this way, the position of the Distributist is superior, as the emphasis on the small, the local, and the principle of subsidiarity helps to reduce the accumulation of power by both government and corporations. The laissez-faire capitalist's best response to the threat of fascism is to offer two objections- neither of which has been successful. First, he may object that the "invisible hand of the market" will work against monopolistic accumulations of power by private corporations (perhaps Microsoft has not heard of this theory).<sup>501</sup> Second, he may advocate for something like anarcho-capitalism in order to prevent the rise of a strong, central government power; unfortunately for the anarcho-capitalists, this theory has never

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<sup>499</sup> See, for example, Walter Block's *The U.S. Bishops and their Critics: An Economic and Ethical Perspective*, (Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 1986).

<sup>500</sup> Paul, Ron, *The Revolution: A Manifesto*, (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2008), 1-5, 162- 167.

<sup>501</sup> Fascism has never been defeated by the invisible hand of the market. In fact, some scholars believe that it is alive and well today in the United States, among other places. The alliance of big government and big business (which Microsoft along with practically every other major corporation pursues) is a fascist system according to definitions and analyses of fascism in the works of Stanley Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) and Antonio Pinto, *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, Antonio Pinto (ed.), (New York: Routledge, 2017).

been implemented on a large-scale by any modern nation and few outside of the disciples of Austrian economics take it seriously. In fact, Hans- Hermann Hoppe, Murray Rothbard, Tibor Machan, and Roderick Long, along with many other American libertarians and Libertarians have promoted the anarcho-capitalist system as a solution to the growing power of the state, although their argument continues to be chiefly theoretical.<sup>502</sup>

Distributism also removes itself from the Marxist - liberal capitalist debate by reminding critics on both sides that its economics are centered on the concept of *Imago Dei* - that Man is made in the image of God, and is not simply an economic creature as both capitalists and Marxists would have us believe.<sup>503</sup> John Paul's response here also anticipates left-wing critics who argue that Distributism is either unfeasible, some form of crypto-fascism, or merely theocracy in disguise. The first objection is serious, but ample evidence exists that the socio-economic system in place, for example, in England prior to the Eighteenth Century, demonstrated the ability of the Distributist system to work on a large- scale.<sup>504</sup> Additionally, the idea of the co-operative venture has become popular again in recent years, with some American states offering tax incentives and small business loans to those interested in such an investment. Finally, the electoral success of the Christian Democrat parties around the world show that the populations of

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<sup>502</sup> Rothbard's *Man, Economy, and State with Power and Market* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2004) and *For A New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*, (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2006), are two of his better known works advocating anarcho-capitalism, while Hoppe's *The Economics and Ethics of Private Property*, (Boston, MA: Wolters Kluwer, 1993), Machan's Randian works including *The Promise of Liberty: A Non-Utopian Vision*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), and Roderick Long's *Anarchism/Minarchism: Is a Government Part of A Free Country?*, Roderick Long and Tibor Machan (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2016), argue the same position from slightly different points of view.

<sup>503</sup> Distributists are not the only thinkers to see Man as made in the Image of God, but far too many economists ignore this notion to focus solely on economic efficiency.

<sup>504</sup> Belloc, *The Servile State*, 57-66.

many nations still hold faith with the ideals of Distributism, although they may not know either its proper name or its history.

The second objection, that Distributism is merely a crypto-fascist system is equally serious, but is rooted in the arguments of the 1930's. A fundamental misunderstanding of Distributism lies at the root of this objection. The critic would like us to believe that the Distributist favors a strong, central, paternalistic government that marries the power of that government to the power of corporate bodies (guilds, trade unions, or actual legal corporations). While this may be a reasonably fair definition of fascism or corporatism, it is not the position of the Distributist.

First, one may look to the teachings of many Distributist authors such as Fulton Sheen, the Popes, and Alberto Piedra.<sup>505</sup> Three quotes admirably demonstrate this: "The State must *guarantee* the social security of its citizens, but it must not *supply* that security. Freedom from want must not be purchased by freedom from freedom."<sup>506</sup> "So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies."<sup>507</sup> "Likewise, it is to be expected that nations endowed with an ancient culture should be proud of the patrimony which their history has bequeathed them, but ... Nationalism isolates people from their true good."<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Piedra, Alberto, *Natural Law: The Foundation of an Orderly Economic System*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).

<sup>506</sup> Sheen, Fulton J. *Seven Pillars of Peace*, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1944), 54-55, cited in Thomas C. Reeves. *America's Bishop: The Life and Times of Fulton J. Sheen*, (San Francisco: Encounter Books), 92.

<sup>507</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 60.

<sup>508</sup> *Populorum Progressio*, papal encyclical of Pope Paul VI issued in 1967, from *Catholic Social Thought*, 255.

Further, if the Distributists were authentic supporters of fascism, why then did many of them denounce Europe's most visible fascist leader, Adolf Hitler?<sup>509</sup> The crypto-fascist charge recalls more the bitterness still felt by many on both sides of the Spanish Civil War. Any supporter of the Nationalist forces (or opponent of the Republicans) is assumed by many on the political left to be a fascist; this is a harshly Manichean position, allowing no room for nuance. This is not to say that a similar attitude does not exist amongst pro-Nationalists. Neither position reflects the subtleties of the real world; it is entirely within the realm of the possible to be an anti-Republican without being a pro-Franco Nationalist - an example of just such a person is Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno.<sup>510</sup>

Finally, the charge that Distributism, with its connection to the Catholic Church, is little more than a cover for theocracy is a patent absurdity that represents an understanding of religion in line with that of Niccolo Machiavelli, Karl Marx, or Ayn Rand.<sup>511</sup> Few, if any, Distributists embrace religious fundamentalism - on the contrary, most of the major thinkers are renowned as philosophers and champions of *Fides et Ratio* (faith and reason). Additionally, the Church has warned against the dangers of fundamentalism since at least the era of Aquinas.

In some countries, new forms of religious fundamentalism are emerging which covertly, or even openly, deny to citizens of other faiths other than the majority the full exercise of their civil and religious rights... No authentic progress is

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<sup>509</sup> Chesterton and Belloc were both fierce critics of Hitler and "Hitlerism," as they referred to Nazism. See Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence*, 449-450.

<sup>510</sup> A noted philosopher and author. He opposed Franco's vision for Spain in both print and via sometimes well received speeches. Unamuno's theology occasionally put him at odds with Church teachings because of its unorthodox approach to faith which owed more to Kierkegaard than Rome.

<sup>511</sup> All three of whom saw religion merely as a tool for social control.

possible without respect for the natural and fundamental right to know the truth and live according to that truth.<sup>512</sup>

Distributism, with its emphasis on personalism and Thomism, embraces faith and reason and stands opposed to the twin dangers of dogmatism and skepticism. The dogmatist (or fundamentalist) accepts that truth exists, but that we are fully in possession of it and no further searching is required. The skeptic, on the other hand, does not accept that truth exists, therefore any search for truth is pointless.

Additionally, nothing in any of the Distributist encyclicals calls for the merger of Church and State necessary in a theocracy; Caesaropapism has ever been the Achilles' Heel of Eastern Orthodoxy, not Catholicism.<sup>513</sup> In this sense, then, the critic who cries "theocrat" does so out of palpable ignorance of Distributism's foundations.

John Paul concludes *Centesimus Annus* with a re-affirmation of the Leonine doctrines of *Rerum Novarum* and with a further injunction to the leaders of the world to respect the right to private property, but also to recognize the existence of social injustice in the world, and to combat that injustice.

As far as the church is concerned, the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action. Inspired by this message, some of the first Christians distributed their goods to the poor, bearing witness to the fact that, despite different social origins, it was possible for people to live together in peace and harmony.<sup>514</sup>

For by the time of *Centesimus'* publication, the Distributist movement was confronting not only Marxism, Fascism, liberal capitalism, and poverty, but also the dangers of nuclear annihilation.

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<sup>512</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 460 – 461. The term fundamentalism is often used to refer to certain Protestant faiths that hold to an extreme form of biblical inerrancy and a *Sola Scriptura* approach to faith. In this context, it seems not unreasonable to believe that the term also refers to Islamic fundamentalism.

<sup>513</sup> See the Letter of Pope Gelasius to Emperor Anastasius I of the Byzantine Empire dated 494 AD; the concept of *Duo Sunt* and a separation of the powers of Pope and secular leader are laid down at this very early date in the history of the Catholic Church. See Robert E. Bjork, "Gelasian Doctrine," from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>514</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 481.

Clearly then, the movement and its theological support given via the encyclicals, had taken on not only a role as champion of economic justice, but also as a supporter of world peace and nuclear disarmament.<sup>515</sup>

### **The Catholic Worker near the end of Dorothy Day's life**

Day had already embraced much of what *Centesimus* teaches well before its publication eleven years after her death. The Catholic Worker movement had been strongly in favor of nuclear disarmament as early as the first atomic bombings and nuclear tests of the late 1940's. Its foundation in Distributism would see it stay strong long after the death of its two charismatic leaders, Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. As many authors have noted, while the force of personality that Dorothy Day exerted over the movement that she founded was profound, the movement, itself, was not dependent upon her.<sup>516</sup> While the canonization process for Day has been formally opened, Catholic Worker volunteers are not obsessive about it. There was never, as is evidenced by the break with Day over pacifism during World War Two, any sort of European *Führerprinzip* or Maoist cult of personality centered around Day. She was the guide star of the Catholic Worker, but at the heart of the movement was the teaching of Christ. Instead of collapsing upon her death, the movement decentralized and each house of hospitality and farm evolved independently of the others, albeit always keeping true to the basic ideals that Day taught to the early volunteers.

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<sup>515</sup> *Catholic Social Thought*, 478, 481-483, and, more clearly Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). It must also be remembered that both Dorothy Day and the Southern Agrarians opposed the nuclear arms race.

<sup>516</sup> See various memoirs and oral histories by Catholic Worker volunteers, especially Marc Ellis, *A Year at the Catholic Worker*, (New York: The Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle, 1978), Francis J. Sicius, *The Word Made Flesh: The Chicago Catholic Worker and the Emergence of Lay Activism in the Church*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), and *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, Rosemarie Riegle Troester (ed.), (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

This emphasis on decentralization and a form of, if not anarchy, then at least Christian subsidiarity (leaning toward libertarianism in practical policy if not in philosophy) meant that even if one house or farm closed or abandoned its original mission, the rest would continue. There is as much variance between houses as one would expect in such an individualistic movement – consider that the Houston Catholic Worker, formerly run by Mark and Louise Zwick (he recently passed away and she is mostly retired now), was dedicated to helping impoverished immigrants and took on the name *Casa Juan Diego*. The Chicago Catholic Worker is centered on the uptown St. Francis house, and devotes itself to sustainability and environmental justice for the urban poor. Finally, the Atlanta Catholic Worker house is a partnership community with local Protestant charitable groups to provide food, counseling, and shelter to indigent addicts. All of these, while varying somewhat from Day’s original vision, continue her mission of providing for the poor without resort to government aid and the bureaucratic hierarchy that attaches to it.

Far more than being simply another charity, the Catholic Worker emphasizes teaching a philosophy of life that reflects its founding principles. The concept of Distributism that Dorothy Day embraced and embedded within the movement that she founded is rooted in building a new society within the wreckage of the old. Day, more than anything else, sought to create a truly Christ-centric vision of how human society should exist. The Catholic Worker was her dream given form, and evidence of how that dream could work in a world hostile to its existence and ideals.

Has the movement been as successful as Day hoped? Possibly, depending on the metrics one uses to measure it. If one evaluates solely based on number of farms, houses, and volunteers, then perhaps it has failed as there are fewer now than when Day was alive. Of course, that metric



is likely not a sound one, as Day herself saw those numbers change drastically during her life, and it did little to upset her. Would a better metric be the impact of the movement on elections and political policy? No, most assuredly not, as Day wanted to steer well clear of party politics and policy battles.

How then, to measure the success of the Catholic Worker? This question might be best answered by the continuing relevance of its mission, and the profile that it maintains in order to advance that mission. Consider that during his 2015 visit to the United States, Pope Francis mentioned Dorothy Day and her mission in his address to the Congress. The cause for the canonization of Day, as noted above, has been formally opened by the Vatican. Numerous Distributist journals and magazines now exist, promoting the ideals that Day taught; consider, for example, the G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith and Culture, a research unit at Seton Hall University, the Distributist Review, a journal of culture and philosophy published by the American Chesterton Society, and the influence of Distributism on British politics (Red Toryism, specifically).<sup>517</sup>

Another metric that might be used is to evaluate the persistence of Day's hard-learned lessons in Catholicism and political ideas, shaped chiefly during the Nineteen Teens and Twenties. Consider the central concept of the Catholic Worker's approach to politics (and one that took Day much time and frustration to grasp): the need to acknowledge the "little way" to build a new society. Day, reared in the Communism of the Bolshevik Revolution Era, initially viewed political movements as necessarily top-down, centralized, disciplined, and directly

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<sup>517</sup> See the presentation given by Philip Blond, leader of the think tank *ResPublica* and a major influence on David Cameron and, to a lesser extent, Teresa May, <https://www13.shu.edu/catholic-mission/upload/07112009ConferenceSchedule.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2017).

confrontational. She fought against the idea of embracing a Catholic, personalist revolution during her early years of Catholic activism.

During her instruction for Confirmation, Day's confessor, Father Zachary, an Augustinian priest, presented her with *The Little White Flower: The Story of a Soul*, the autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux. Therese was the most recently canonized saint at the time of Dorothy's conversion to Catholicism, and the Catholic world was much taken with her. Day, however, was not, and she frankly saw little of interest. "I dutifully read *The Story of a Soul* and am ashamed to confess that I found it colorless, monotonous, too small in fact for my notice."<sup>518</sup> Therese's vanity and irritation at even the smallest things frustrated Day to no end, used, as she was, to reading the heroic lives of martyred saints and great spiritual leaders. "A splash of dirty water from the careless washing of a nun next to her in the laundry was mentioned as a 'mortification,' when the very root of the word meant death. And I was reading in my Daily Missal of saints stretched on the rack, burnt by flames, starving themselves in the desert, and so on."<sup>519</sup>

This was hardly the life of saint! Indeed, Day spent much time arguing with Father Zachary about the incorporation of revolutionary Socialist ideals into Catholic social action.

I was working at the time for the Anti-Imperialist League, a Communist Party affiliate with offices on Union Square... My companions were two women, both of them former Catholics, who looked on me indulgently and felt that my "faith" was a neurotic aspect of my character and something quite divorced from my daily life... I talked to Father Zachary about the work. "I am in agreement with it," I told him... "I am in agreement with many of the social aims of Communism... Father Zachary could only quote Lenin to me, saying, "Atheism is basic to Marxism." He was the gentlest of confessors with me, who, at

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<sup>518</sup> Dorothy Day, "Therese," from *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, Robert Ellsberg (ed.), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 189. The version of St. Therese's autobiography that Day read in 1927 may be out of print; for a current version of the work, see Therese of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux*, Michael Day (trans.), (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 2010).

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

that time, was a female counterpart of Graham Greene's Quiet American, wanting to do good by violence.<sup>520</sup>

What on Earth could Day learn from a cloistered nun who died only a few years into her twenties? She wanted Joan of Arc, not a neurotic teenager. "Living as we were in a time of world revolution, when, as I felt, the people of the world were rising to make a better world for themselves, I wondered what this new saint had to offer."<sup>521</sup>

With time, though, and much study, Day gradually began to see why Therese was a necessary, perhaps THE necessary saint of modernity. For modernity was the centralized, the large, the powerful, and Therese was none of these things. "What did she do? She practiced the presence of God and she did all things – all the little things that make up our daily life and contact with others – for His honor and glory... She wrote her story, and God did the rest."<sup>522</sup> Therese was no great revolutionary, no Joan of Arc, no Lenin, just a simple nun with a childlike devotion to God and others. "What stands out in her life? Her holiness, of course, and the holiness of her entire family. That is not an ordinary thing in this day of post-war materialism, delinquency, and all those other words which indicate how dissatisfied the West is with its economy of abundance while the East sits like Lazarus at the gate of Dives."<sup>523</sup> This last an important point, because the perceived poverty of the East (Asia and the Middle East [or at least the ordinary people, not the House of Saud and its peers across the Gulf States]) and its spiritual purity reflected the path to salvation for Day and the Evangelists, three of whom comment on wealth as a risk to the soul.<sup>524</sup>

The path toward the new society envisioned by Day is built on the foundation of individuals living Christ-like lives. There is no explicit political revolution, no "regime change,"

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid. The reference to Lazarus is from *Luke 16: 19 – 31*.

<sup>524</sup> Consider the parable of the rich young man in *Matthew 19: 16 – 24*, *Mark 10: 17 – 25*, and *Luke 18: 18 – 30*.

or other such top-down action. Rather there is a slow, but steady process of converting the world to Christ, one soul at a time. Day recognized during her study of St. Therese the value of the encounter with the Transcendent and the power such an encounter could have on the soul. This is so overwhelmingly powerful an experience because modern Man feels his own insignificance. He intuits (though perhaps cannot grasp why) what the existentialists have told us: that he is small and weak, that his life has little meaning against the vast backdrop of an unimaginably large universe, that he lives an atomized existence disconnected from everything in a cold, unfeeling world.<sup>525</sup> Nihilism and self-destruction become the dominant mode of thought, although some hold to false hope in the form of ideology.<sup>526</sup> Against this, St. Therese offers spiritual dynamite:

With governments becoming stronger and more centralized, the common man feels his ineffectiveness. When the whole world seems given over to preparedness for war and the show of force, the message of St. Therese is quite a different one.

She speaks to our condition. Is the atom a little thing? And yet what havoc it has wrought. Is her little way a small contribution to the life of the spirit? It has all the power of the spirit of Christianity behind it. It is an explosive force that can transform our lives and the life of the world once put into effect.<sup>527</sup>

St. Therese's little way, her spiritual path to experiencing the transcendent, provided a blueprint for Day. The Catholic Worker could exercise more power by saving souls, by prizing the small and the local over the large, by saving the land and the soil, by living Christ-like lives than any government or political ideology could ever hope to. "We know that one impulse of grace is of infinitely more power than a cobalt bomb. Therese has said, 'All is grace.' She

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<sup>525</sup> This is the curse of modernity: material wealth and prosperity, political freedom, and the ability to define oneself free of the ties of tradition, but cultural and spiritual up-rootedness. This feeling of abandonment is well described in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, Lloyd Alexander (trans.), (New York: New Directions, 2007).

<sup>526</sup> Two excellent analyses of this phenomenon are Eric Voegelin's *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*, (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2004) and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club: A Novel*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).

<sup>527</sup> Day, "Therese," 202.

declared, ‘I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth.’ ‘I will raise up a mighty host of little saints.’”<sup>528</sup> And, returning to the Bible, Day notes that Abraham once begged God not to destroy the city of Sodom, a request which God granted so long as Abraham could find at least ten righteous people within its walls.<sup>529</sup> Day hopes that the same will be true of the modern world:

Now St. Paul teaches that we can fill up the sufferings of Christ, that we must share in the sufferings of the world to lessen them, to show our love for our brothers. But God does not change, so we can trust with Abraham that for even ten just men, He will not destroy the city. We can look with faith and hope to that *mighty army of little ones* that St. Therese has promised us and which is present now among us.<sup>530</sup>

Day’s way of spreading Therese’s teachings was by teaching love and charity on a small, personal scale. “We have repeated so many times that those who have two cloaks should follow the early Fathers who said, ‘The coat that hangs in your closet belongs to the poor.’”<sup>531</sup>

Voluntary giving at personal sacrifice and the living of a life in tune with God and nature were the hallmarks of a life lived in the “little way,” the small, childlike spirituality of St. Therese and her army of “little saints.”

### **The Catholic Worker’s fidelity to Dorothy Day’s vision after her death**

Despite some differences of focus or tactics with Day, many of the Catholic Worker farms and houses are still in operation today, and remarkably faithful to her ideals. As noted above, the Atlanta, Chicago, and Houston houses are still very active, engaging in missionary work to targeted sections of the urban poor. Even though each house might have a slightly different approach, all of the Workers, themselves, are committed to Day’s ideals, “One thing the Catholic Worker offers: if you get somebody from the Catholic Worker in California to come to

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

<sup>529</sup> *Genesis 18: 16 -33*. Only four just people could be found: Lot, his wife, and his two daughters, all of whom were allowed to flee Sodom in *Genesis 19: 1 – 29*.

<sup>530</sup> “Therese,” 203. The italics are Day’s.

<sup>531</sup> Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” from *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 227.

your house to help, you know pretty much the kind of person you're getting. You know their values."<sup>532</sup>

There was and is a profound sense that Day still lives through the Catholic Worker and its volunteers. There is a genuine sense of community and shared struggles for the benefit of humanity.

I believe that we are ... we *can* be in communion with Gandhi and Jesus and Joan of Arc and the other people that we admire in history. As Oscar Romero said, "If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people. I will live in them." The saints live in us, too, maybe more than other people do. Maybe that's what saints are – people whose vitality was such that it carries on in the memory of the coming generation and we appeal to them. They are still living, moving us. A. J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Ammon Hennacy – they are still very alive to me because of what I learned from them.<sup>533</sup>

The Worker has become a home for families, both volunteers and indigent living at the homes.

The San Diego house run by Terry Bennett-Cauchon and her husband Leo focuses on the need to shelter homeless women and children. They live with those whom they serve, and their four children work and play with the children staying at the house.<sup>534</sup> Tom and Monica Cornell met while working with Dorothy Day at the New York Catholic Worker in 1963; they have two children who currently live and work with them at Guadalupe House in Connecticut. Tom Cornell commented on the fact that many of his friends from childhood, all red-diaper babies including himself, had become complacent bourgeoisie by the 1990's. Catholic Worker families were somehow different, though: Deidre Cornell evangelized for the Catholic Worker throughout her four years at Smith College before returning to Guadalupe House, and Tom, Jr. runs the

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<sup>532</sup> Father Richard McSorley of the Catholic Worker house in Washington, D.C., from *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, Rosemary Riegler Troester (ed.), (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993), 289.

<sup>533</sup> Karl Meyer of the Catholic Worker house in Chicago, from *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, 290.

<sup>534</sup> Terry Bennett-Couchon of the San Diego Catholic Worker, from *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, 294 – 295.

soup-lines and speaks at local churches to raise money.<sup>535</sup> “A lot of Catholic Worker families have had success in keeping their kids, in transmitting ... much more so than Old Left families, or our Quaker friends.”<sup>536</sup>

Too, the presence of the Catholic Worker houses has spread some hope, sustainability, and vision for a new tomorrow to communities of desperation. Consider the Davenport, Iowa house which worked mostly with alcoholics (and one of whose members, Bob Chaps, helped to found the Dorothy Day house in Detroit).<sup>537</sup> Although originally caring for hobos and recovering alcoholics, when the state began to close mental institutions, the Catholic Worker house opened its doors to the mentally-ill indigent. “[P]eople in the extended community were bringing down meals and were very visible. We had a lot of help, a really good operation.”<sup>538</sup> Chaps’ experience in Detroit was similar:

I lived [close to] Day House, the Detroit Worker. On Trumbull and Butternut. There’s a lot of single parents [in the neighborhood] and I loved to be involved with the neighborhood kids. We’d play sports. And you know what? I think me wearing a suit to work every day was important to the people. It was saying that I was there because I wanted to be. There wasn’t the “suits” and the “not suits.”

In the neighborhood where we lived in Detroit, no one gets out of there who isn’t an addict or a prostitute. They don’t see an alternative, don’t see anyone getting up and going to work at eight-thirty in the morning... Why was I at the Catholic Worker? [Long pause] ... I think it probably made my faith make sense. It made the Gospel make sense to me, the crucifixion story.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Tom Cornell of Guadalupe House in Waterbury, Connecticut, from *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, 298 – 300. While Cornell’s daughter Deidre is a typical Catholic worker volunteer, Tom, Jr. has embraced the classic look and attitude of the 1960’s workers, being described as a “hippie from 1968.”

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>537</sup> Or as Bob Chaps describes the guests, “When I first came, most of our guests were alcoholics, with lots of hobos. When I left in ’77, it was probably fifty-fifty, half alcoholic and half mentally ill.” Bob Chaps of the Dorothy Day house in Detroit, from *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, 366 -367.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*

Lastly, the Catholic Worker continues to embody Day's essentially libertarian or anarchist view of politics. Although many of the Catholic Worker volunteers are, unsurprisingly, pro-life, they hesitate to involve the Catholic Worker, itself, in pro-life politics. Father Frank Cordaro, founder of the Des Moines Catholic Worker house, commented on this peculiar attitude:

It's a tough issue. It's a tough issue. But I think the Catholic Worker has a unique thing to offer in the whole dialogue. Because the abortion issue shows how the institutional church has bought into the whole idea that you can legislate Gospel values. That you can use the law to bring about ... to force people. You don't legislate these kind of values, you live them by example.... The Catholic Worker's anarchistic position ought to tell us right off the bat that we don't want to make the possession of a nuclear weapon a criminal act, but to get rid of the weapons. And I don't want to make an abortionist criminal; I want to get rid of the need for abortion.

You know, reasonable people and good people are choosing abortion in this culture. That means we live in a most unreasonable culture, a sick and wicked culture.<sup>540</sup>

The act of engaging with traditional political power structures would be a betrayal of the Catholic Worker (and Day)'s values. Dorothy Day and her heirs at the Catholic Worker believe that Distributism, pacifism, the birth of a truly pro-life culture, and sustainability cannot be advanced by winning elections, seizing political power, and forcing morality on others. Like St. Therese, they believe that living their values in a small way, blessed by grace, will slowly, but surely, convert the world.

In all of these stories of the Catholic Worker houses, there is a sense of community. There is in all of this a deeply Christian moment. A sharing of bread, fellowship, and, yes, suffering in the real presence of Christ. Day uses this imagery at the very end of *The Long Loneliness*.

I found myself, a barren woman, the joyful mother of children. It is not easy always to be joyful, to keep in mind the duty of delight. The most significant thing about *The Catholic*

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<sup>540</sup> Father Frank Cordaro of the Des Moines Catholic Worker, from *Voices from the Catholic Worker*, 548 – 549.



*Worker* is poverty, some say. The most significant thing is community, others say. We are not alone any more. But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.<sup>541</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Distributism and the Catholic Worker are very much alive and well in today's world. The message of decentralization, personal charity and responsibility, and sustainable communities is resonating with the masses in a way not seen since the 1960's. Day's vision is rooted in individual people and their actions, not abject ideology. From that standpoint, there is much hope that it will continue to advance, perhaps finding fertile soil amongst those who feel rejected by mainstream, party-driven politics. Her unique blend of economic radicalism and social conservatism represents a unique strain in American political life, one not seen in the major political parties since before the Second World War. To call her a member of the Old Right would not be accurate, even though her views most closely align with theirs, being utterly incompatible with the New Left or Neo-Conservatism. There is still a strong sympathy toward socialism in Day's works, and, while consciously rejecting the Socialist political philosophy, Day, nevertheless, identified with the Old Left during her lifetime.

What she would make of Twenty-first Century politics is a mystery, although one cannot help but think that she would reject much of what Democrats and Republicans currently stand for. The past fifteen years of non-stop war, including over 3,000 deaths as a result of American

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<sup>541</sup> Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 285 – 286.

drone strikes since 2009, would be considered a massive failure of civic ideals and politics by Day and like-minded thinkers.<sup>542</sup> Not being a fan of the welfare state, Day would also likely criticize the multi-billion dollar expansions of Medicare (Part D, the so-called drug benefit), the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and the huge arms sales recently approved by the US government (not only corporate welfare, but also contributing directly to arms races and war).<sup>543</sup> Day was disgusted by Planned Parenthood and the theories on sexuality proposed by its founder Margaret Sanger and her colleague and fellow birth controller Emma Goldman. Day's sister, Della, had worked for Planned Parenthood, and urged Day's daughter, Tamar Teresa, to have an abortion since she had so many children already (Tamar had five daughters and two sons with her husband William Hennessey). Day objected most strenuously to this advice, and Tamar went on to have a very full household of children and grandchildren (eighteen). Day, having such strong feelings in the matter, would almost certainly protest heavily at the idea of tax dollars from pro-life citizens being given to Planned Parenthood (not to mention its status as a corporation and thus corporate welfare).<sup>544</sup>

In the end, small pockets of Distributism survive and carry on Day's mission. Apart from her own Catholic Worker movement, there are still Agrarians who cling to something similar to Distributism. These latter might be fairly represented by conservative author Rod Dreher and

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<sup>542</sup> Numbers vary widely on the number of deaths from 4,700 stated by Senator Lindsey Graham to approximately 2,400 stated by the White House in 2016. See <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/mar/07/us-drone-strikes-death-toll> and <https://thinkprogress.org/after-7-years-obama-finally-announces-the-number-of-people-killed-in-drone-strikes-9f0b751c430e#.2ysee5q4b> for discussions of these numbers (both accessed January 29, 2017).

<sup>543</sup> On this last, US arms sales in 2014 alone equaled \$36.2 billion, see Denver Nicks, "The U.S. Is Still No.1 At Selling Arms To The World," from the December 26, 2015 issue of *Time* magazine, available online at <http://time.com/4161613/us-arms-sales-exports-weapons/> (accessed January 29, 2017).

<sup>544</sup> Day and Goldman were well known to each other during the Teens and Twenties, and Goldman constantly pressured Day to engage in promiscuous sex with as many men as possible. Day was disgusted by her and her ideas on birth control and abortion. See <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2015/09/04/dorothy-day-is-the-perfect-role-model-for-post-abortion-women/> and <http://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/dorothy-day-and-abortion-new-conversation-surfaces> and <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/abortion/dorothy-day-s-pro-life-memories.html> (all accessed January 29, 2017).

communitarian author Wendell Berry. So long as the dream of a society dedicated to the ideals of Distributism remains, Day and her movement remain relevant. That alone might just be the greatest measure of success possible for an impoverished single mother who started a one-cent per copy newspaper over eighty years ago.

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## **Vita**

William P. Schulz, Jr., a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, received his bachelor's degree in history at the Louisiana State University at Shreveport in 2007. He pursued graduate studies in history initially, earning a master of arts degree in the field at Southeastern Louisiana University in 2009. Shortly thereafter, he was admitted to the doctoral program in political science at Louisiana State University, simultaneously pursuing a master of arts degree in philosophy, which he was awarded in 2011. While at Louisiana State University, William taught several undergraduate courses in the philosophy and political science departments, and earned a juris doctor degree and graduate diploma in comparative law from the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University in May of 2016. William passed the Louisiana State bar examination in February of 2017. After briefly serving as a special assistant district attorney, William has practiced in the fields of criminal defense, family law, and immigration law. He will begin teaching as a tenure-track assistant professor of political science at Lonestar College in Cypress, Texas in August of 2017, after award of his doctor of philosophy in political science.