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## Maurice R. Roers

### "An Analysis of Roman Catholic Human Rights Doctrine"

#### **Organization of Paper and Statement of Thesis**

In the paper that follows I have two objectives. First, I will document the history and development of the Catholic human rights tradition. Utilizing primary Church documents and the writings of those ordained within the faith, I intend to briefly outline the Church's progression of thought and to define selected necessary concepts.

In the second portion of my paper, I will state what I believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of this doctrine. I will argue that the Catholic doctrine provides a solid and viable foundation for human rights through the use of the human dignity argument which is superior to a liberal or Marxist formulation of human rights. I intend to show that the primary strength of the Church's philosophy over these two philosophic tradition rests in its ability to wed the positive and negative rights. However, I will also maintain that the Catholic system of human rights is susceptible to relativistic faults. Additionally, the Church's belief in a system of human rights based on human dignity falls partially prey to a number of rational arguments against human dignity.

This paper will not provide a critique of how the Church's institutions succeed and fail to upholding the moral principles which its members lay down. Instead, I will focus on the *philosophical* arguments for and against a Catholic conception of human rights. Theological arguments for human rights will largely be avoided so as not to become entangled in overly burdensome squabble over the nature of God, biblical interpretation, and the validity of other Catholic beliefs which are not germane to the philosophical discussion of human rights.

#### **History and Development of the Catholic Human Rights Doctrine**

Roman Catholic thought on human rights and social doctrine in general has only truly begun to develop in the past century. Prior to the 19th century, the Church preferred not to become embroiled in contemporary social debate and instead clung tight to its medieval heritage. Concerns over the strength of individualism present in developing liberal democratic theory, the objectification of human persons by Marxist socialism, and the potential diminishment of the sovereign power of the Holy See all had the effect of stunting the growth of Roman Catholic social thought and participation in the rapidly evolving world. As the Church herself recognizes:

...the Church's attitude towards human rights during the last two centuries too frequently has been characterized by hesitations, objections, reservations and on occasion, even vehement reaction in the Catholic side to any declaration of human rights... (*Justitia et Pax*, 12).

However, with mounting pressure resulting from the Church's inability to relate to a world which was changing dramatically via the industrial revolution, world wars, and the growth of atheistic socialism, the Church attempted to leap across centuries into the modern era through the enrichment of its social doctrine.

With Leo XIII (1878-1903), the Church began its modern social teaching. Using human dignity as the standard, Leo declared in the 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* that "Man precedes the State" (Traer, 33-34). The main focus of *Rerum Novarum* was to address the Church's concerns over the uses of labor and the development of capital. Leo affirms the equal dignity of all human persons when he states that "...all men are equal; there is no difference between rich and poor, master and servant, ruled and ruler" (Hollenbach 1979, 45). He likened the "wretchedness and misery" of the present labor conditions to the conditions of slavery (*Rerum Novarum*, 15). Leo also reveals a Kantian line of thought in Catholic teaching when he declares that:

The first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money making (Hollenbach 1979, 47).

Focusing primarily on the concerns of the economic order, Leo established basic Catholic human rights thought. A primary tenet of this tradition was the link between rights and duties. The right to a just living wage, the right to purchase and own property, and the right to adequate food, clothing and shelter were the rights which the encyclical declared essential to the recognition of human dignity. Connected to these rights were the duties of the employers and the state to recognize and protect these rights. Leo also affirmed the right of workers to organize and defend these rights (Traer, 34).

Pius XI (1922-1939) continued to build upon the foundation established by Leo XIII. Pius developed the conception of social justice as the principle by which one can determine the social conditions necessitated by human dignity (ibid.). The demands of human dignity are not always clear or known *a priori*, and hence, to discern the dictates of human dignity, one looks to what is social just to locate an answer.

With the pontificate of Pius XI, the Church began to develop a relativist thread in her conception of human rights. Pius recognized that attempts to specify human rights must take place in the context of the various social, political, and economic organizations in which people live. For example, property rights will have different implications in traditional, command, and capitalist economies (Hollenbach 1979, 54-55). Lastly, Pius also criticized Marxism because of its failure to recognize the transcendental worth of human persons and instead focused on persons as a materialistic things which are merely the collection of needs.

Witnessing the horrors of World War II, Pius XII (1939-1953) was moved to place human dignity as an implicit and formal concern of the Church (Hollenbach 1979, 56). In his Christmas address of 1942, Pius XII stated the fundamental rights which must be upheld in order to respect human dignity. These rights are included in the definitive list of rights developed by the Church under John XXIII (1958-1963),

which shall be discussed later. Respect for human dignity is only workable according to Pius in a "community of morally responsible citizens" (ibid., 59).

*Dignitas humana* has appeared in papal writings since the 1800s, but it was not until John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth," 1963) that human dignity became the basis for all Roman Catholic social teaching. At this point in this essay, it may be necessary for a brief discussion as to the rationale behind the supremacy of human dignity within Catholic social philosophy and theology.

An understanding of human dignity is essential to the comprehension of a Catholic system of human rights. Indeed, David Hollenbach, S.J., one of the foremost Catholic scholars in this area, states that "The Roman Catholic tradition answers the question of the foundation of the human rights with a single phrase: the dignity of the human person" (Hollenbach 1979, 90). Hollenbach argues that the Catholic tradition provides two warrants for the validity of this principle. The first is the transcendent nature of the human person.

The imperative arising from human dignity is based on the indicative of the person's transcendence over the world of things. The ability of persons to think and to choose, their hopes which always outrun the historical moment, and the experienced call to discriminate between good and evil actions--all these indicate that persons are more than things (Hollenbach 1986, 376).

Other indicative, transcendental characteristics of persons include our rationality and our endowment with intelligence and free will.

The second reason Hollenbach offers to support human dignity is based in theology. Christian faith upholds the doctrine of the *imago Dei* (image of God):

The beliefs that all persons are created in the image of God, that they are redeemed by Jesus Christ, and that they are summoned by God to a destiny beyond history serve both to support and interpret the fundamental significance of human existence (Hollenbach 1986, 376).

To say that we are created in the image of God, however, is not to say that we are gods. Each of us can strive towards perfection, but none of us are fully perfect. In the same respect, human persons are not at liberty to decide who is created in the image of God. It is repugnant to the Catholic tradition to place limits on who is human, whether that be in terms of race, socioeconomic status, or mental capabilities.

Human dignity is a quality of human persons stemming from *imago Dei* that cannot be eliminated.

Human beings then are not to be considered simply as selves, but as selves in relation to God. God is portrayed throughout this tradition as treating men and women with respect, never as 'things.' Because of this love of and relationship with God, every human being is a subject of reverence to other people. Human

dignity arises from the self-giving of God, described in the creation and covenant narratives. Even though men and women have broken this relationship with God and each other through sin, the image of God has not been eliminated from them (Childress and Macquarrie, 279).

According to Catholic tradition, because people are sacred and precious, human persons *have* dignity. Human dignity is not predicated on activities of the person or bestowed on a person by external factors. Human dignity is a reality which exists where ever a human person exists and must be respected and recognized. Human dignity is more fundamental than any human right, and human rights are the specification of the claims necessitated by the imperatives of human dignity. Human dignity is the standard by which all moral norms and human behavior is to be judged. Lastly, "Human dignity is an entirely concrete reality. Indeed, the primary referent of the term is not conceptual but existential: concrete, existing human beings" (Hollenbach 1979, 90).

However, the understanding of human dignity cannot end here. Hollenbach feels that the above notion of human dignity is empty and meaningless without any reference to the actions, needs and relationships of human persons. Human dignity in its most abstract definition is the inherent worth and value of a human person. According to the Second Vatican Council, human dignity can be defined by what a human person is. Because a human person is a social creature, glorifies God in his body, pursues God and truth to overcome evil and darkness, and is endowed with freedom (Flannery, 917-23), human dignity can be seen as the right to pursue these ends. The demands of human dignity are further spelt out in the Catholic list of human rights as declared by John XXIII.

The liberal and Marxist theories of human rights fail because of the limited domain of human existence which they address:

Unless the relations between the transcendental worth of the person and the particular material, interpersonal, social and political structures of human existence can be specified, human dignity will become an empty notion (Hollenbach 1979, 91).

It is against this backdrop that the Church has endeavored to specify the concrete conditions necessary to fulfill the requirements of human dignity and hence has created the Catholic human rights tradition.

In the most popular modern encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, John XIII presents the Church's theory of human rights, grounded in human dignity, as the basis for world peace. *Pacem in Terris* begins by affirming the dignity of the person.

Any human society, if it is to be well ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person; that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from

his very nature. And as these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered (*Pacem in Terris*, 132).

The encyclical goes on to recapitulate the rights found in the Catholic tradition since Leo XIII. These rights can be summarized as follows:

- Rights concerning life and an adequate standard of living are the rights to: life, bodily integrity, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, necessary social services, security in case of sickness, unemployment, old age, and widowhood.
- Rights concerning moral and cultural values are the rights to: respect for one's person, a good reputation, freedom of communication, pursue art, be informed truthfully, share in the benefits of culture, education.
- Rights concerning religious activity are the rights to: honor God in accordance with one's conscience, to practice religion publicly and privately.
- Rights concerning family life are the rights to: choose one's state of life (the equal right of men and women to, or not to, set up a family); to the economic, social, moral, and cultural conditions necessary to support a family; of parents to support and educate their children.
- Rights concerning economic liberties are the rights to: work, humane working conditions, appropriate participation in the management of an economic enterprise, just wage, own property.
- Rights concerning assembly and association are the right to: organize societies according to the aims of the members, organize groups to secure goods which the individual could not otherwise attain.
- Rights concerning movement are the right to: internal and external migration.
- Rights concerning political liberties are the right to: participate in public affairs, judicial protection of one's human rights (*Pacem in Terris*, 132-35; Hollenbach 1979, 66-67).

John XXIII also argues that the human person is "the foundation, cause and end" of social institutions. Lastly, John links human dignity and the achievement of the common good together with the common good being defined as "the sum total of these conditions of social living, whereby men are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection" (Hollenbach 1979, 63). The common good is the guarantor of human dignity.

The Second Vatican Council served to affirm the Catholic human rights tradition, placing particular emphasis on the right of religious freedom. Another

important development in Catholic social thought which stems from Vatican II was the recognition that human rights are conditioned by historical realities.

The Council's understanding of the relation between the transcendental worth of persons and the historical realizations of this worth leads it to conclude that the full implications of dignity of the persons cannot be known or affirmed apart from the concrete conditions of an historical epoch (Hollenbach 1979, 70).

In short, human rights cannot be known *a priori*.

Paul VI (1963-1978) and the 1971 Synod of Bishops added another right to the Catholic tradition. During the pontificate of Paul, the Church's attention shifted to the concerns of the Third World. In this era, the Church included the right to development among its list of basic human rights. This was founded in the belief that human development in dignity is not an illusory goal, and that human rights are the expression of the "fundamental moral experience of human solidarity" (Hollenbach 1979, 80-81).

True to the Church's recognition that Catholic doctrine is subject to change and evolution, and that the realization of human dignity is also subject to continual change, Catholic human rights thought also continues to develop. David Hollenbach, in his 1979 book, *Claims in Conflict*, provides one of the most extensive investigations into Catholic teaching on human rights. Hollenbach essentially attempts to retrieve and renew the Catholic human rights tradition. One of the greatest challenges of the recognition of the equal validity of the negative and positive rights granted under a Catholic system is balancing conflicting claims. With the adoption of Catholic doctrine, one can easily imagine a conflict arising between the claim to social rights by one person and the claims to political rights by another. Understanding the historical context in which human dignity is to be actualized, Hollenbach argues for a system of strategic morality in which social rights are given primacy. Hollenbach has developed three strategic moral priorities which should be invoked when claims, especially against society, are in conflict. These priorities are:

1. The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich.
2. The freedom of the dominated take priority over the liberty of the powerful.
3. The participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order which excludes them (Hollenbach 1979, 204).

Scholars such as Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., have strengthened the Catholic human rights tradition in their attempt to make human rights realizable in society. They argue that:

The most fundamental human right is the right to exercise the power of self giving, the opportunity for entrance into

relationship, for deeper participation in the life of the human community (Himes and Himes, 61).

This formulation is based on the post-Conciliar move away from devotional faith to one which draws deeper meaning and insight from the Spirit portion of the Trinity. The Spirit is pure agapic love. This knowledge, coupled with the fact that the Christian faith views "to be" and "to love" as synonymous, pushes the Himes to the conclusion that it is a fundamental human right to participate in relationships (ibid., 57). Communities organized under this principle will strike an appropriate balance between the demands of the individual and society, as well as promote the social and economic rights advocated by the Church.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Catholic Human Rights Doctrine**

In the following section, I will argue that the Catholic human rights doctrine overall provides a justifiable basis and formulation of human rights. I will maintain that the Catholic foundation for human rights, human dignity, is a viable basis for the establishment of universal human rights. I will also argue that this formulation of specific human rights is appealing because of its ability to balance positive and negative rights; it avoids deficiencies in liberal and Marxist conceptions of rights and can be applied to a pluralistic and secular world. I will also claim that the Catholic human rights theory may be susceptible to relativistic weaknesses, and that the Catholic argument for human dignity as a standard may fail to be as inclusive as the author desires.

The first area I wish to analyze is that of the assertion by Catholic philosophers/theologians that human dignity is the basis for human rights. In order to accept the Church's conception of human rights, one must accept the belief that human dignity gives a rational basis for the adherence to a system of human rights. If it can be proven that there exists a single or number of significant common denominators within human persons which justifies the reality of human dignity within all those to whom we wish to extend human rights, than the logical force of the rational imperative to treat 'likes alike and unlikes unlike' will grant us the basis for a human rights doctrine.

The belief in the *imago Dei*, or that human persons are created in the image of God, is one of the rationales given for the existence of a common denominator in human persons, and hence, the need to recognize human dignity. This characteristic is significant because it implies that as beings created in the image of God, we all share the same divine origin, attributes, and calling. However, I feel that this justification for the necessary recognition of human dignity is inadequate for two reasons. First, one need only deny the existence of God in order to deny the existence of human dignity and human rights. Without a God in whose image human persons are created, human persons share no significant common origin, attributes, and certainly not a similar calling. Much of the strength of the Catholic human rights doctrine lies in its ability to appeal to God as the ultimate rationale for the existence of human dignity.

Where characteristics such as rationality or the ability to choose between good and evil fail to include all persons under the umbrella of human dignity and rights,



Catholics fall back upon God and persons being created in the image of God. In the same sense, when the definition of human dignity extends too far, Catholics can also appeal to theology. For example, the claim can be made that other animals such as chimpanzees are worthy of some form of dignity equal to human dignity because, as a part of God's order, they are created in God's image and have just as many transcendental qualities as a severely handicapped person. A Catholic relying upon theology could respond that only through human persons was God revealed, when true God and true man were incarnated in Jesus Christ. Thus, no other creature contains more dignity than the human person.

Still, by arguing against the existence of God, one can deny this entire Catholic system. Without a God-centered cosmology, this formulation of human dignity loses its weight and enforcement. Human dignity based on *imago Dei* fails to be a rationale for a commonality between all human persons, once the keystone of this conception, God, is removed. Hence, for believers in the Catholic faith, human dignity based in God is an infinitely strong argument. However, for those whom deny the existence of God, a concept of human dignity dependent upon God is readily dismissed.

Even if one could prove the existence of God, I still feel that this qualification for human dignity would not afford a solid justification. This is my second reason for disagreeing with this standard. I feel that the proofs for the existence of God in no way speak towards God's nature. For argument's sake, God could be a truly unjust deity. If human persons are created in this God's image, it would not provide us with a rationale to grant all persons dignity. John XXIII opens *Pacem in Terris* by expounding the divine order in the universe and human beings, and this order, it can be asserted, can be used as proof for the divine nature of God. Still, there exist enough counter-examples to the divine order, such as natural disasters and the evil actions which humans engage in, to defeat this line of thinking.

I do feel, however, that Hollenbach's second rationale for the existence of human dignity within all persons is a much stronger formulation philosophically, not theologically. This secular approach, which maintains that all human persons transcend the world of things, offers a solid basis for religious believers in that it is in line with Thomist thought, which adheres to the belief that God's law can be deciphered through reason and observance of the natural world. Not unlike the Kantian belief in the intrinsic value of persons, this second rationale for the existence of significant common factors relies on indicative characteristics of human persons. Some of these transcendental characteristics include our rationality, our ability to make choices, and our intelligence. Another unique, significant characteristic is our ability to aspire beyond the limits of history and the present moment. All these are significant qualities of human persons which separate us from the world of things and endow us with human dignity.

I can conceive of two arguments which are problematic to this justification. The first is that these transcendental characteristics which are the basis for human dignity may not be present in all human persons to whom we wish to extend the mark of human dignity. One can imagine a young child, a person who has been in a tragic accident, or one born with severe mental deficiencies who does not possess intelligence, the ability to exercise free will, or rationality. Under a system which relies on human dignity predicated by transcendental qualities, beings whom we wish

to grant moral standing to, but whom lack these qualities, may fall outside of our definitional category.

A second method by which one could defeat the Catholic belief in human dignity would be to deny that there is any direct or casual link between these indicative qualities and human dignity. Conceivably one can maintain that there is no true linkage between dignity and, say, rationality outside of a system which values rationality. One can argue that while rationality may be indicative of the human person, it is value-free and only becomes something of intrinsic worth once we ascribe the value of human dignity to rationality.

I fail to find fully adequate responses to each of these counter-examples. The reality of the situation may be that human dignity is the indicative, significant transcendental quality which serves as the basis for equal treatment of human persons. Secondly, it may be possible that human dignity is the basis for human rights, but that another method of rationalizing the necessity of this dignity has yet to be developed. However, I do continue to maintain that human dignity is a viable basis for human rights because of the strong system of rights which can be developed from this assumption.

Before continuing on with this essay, it may be necessary once again to attempt to clarify the notion of human dignity. One of the faults of the Catholic system of human rights is that one can agree that human dignity exists, but then fail to correctly define this dignity. Catholic doctrine is very good at classifying the necessities of human dignity, but weak in actually stating what human dignity *is*. Human dignity is not to do something which is dignified. Human dignity is the trait which all human persons possess. Human dignity is a continual valid demand by a human person, which can never be eliminated, to be treated justly and with respect. Human dignity is the one universal quality which that endows each human person with ultimate worth and value. Human dignity makes all human person ends and not instruments to another's end. Human dignity as a continual demand of a human person is expressed in basic human rights, previously listed, which are subject to what is socially just within various historical conditions.

One of the strengths of a system based on human dignity is its ability to adequately deal with the tension between positive and negative rights. Philosophers within the liberal democratic school of thought would argue that negative rights trump positive rights, because these positive rights stem from negative rights. In other words, negative rights are the core rights, and positive rights exist in the periphery. However, this system seems to be problematic. A proper counter-example could be as follows:

A person, A, is on the verge of dying of hunger. Another person, B, has more food than can possibly be eaten by A, B, and the rest of the world combined. A demands that B furnish A with enough food so as not to die. B refuses, claiming his negative right from infringement over the exercising of control over his property. A dies because A exists within a moral framework in which negative rights are trump.

In a system in which human dignity is the basis of all moral claims and rights, A would not have starved to death because A would have possessed a legitimate right and B would have been obligated to perform a legitimate duty.

The argument for the equal legitimacy of negative and positive rights in the context of human dignity has another appealing strength, the ability to ensure that both types of rights are enforced. An example of this can be demonstrated through an analysis of the right to life. Negative and positive rights cannot be fully realized without the other. The right to life is an empty notion when both negative and positive rights are not upheld. The right to not have one's life arbitrarily taken by another is an absurd right if that person has no right to food and hence dies of starvation. Similarly, the right to food is a ridiculous notion if a person's life can be taken arbitrarily. The recognition of negative and positive rights through human dignity serves to compliment each aspect of a right. The right to property is more fully realizable when the negative right to self-determination of that property is complimented with the positive right to use property to fulfill basic human needs, and vice versa.

Human dignity also serves as an appealing guide when negative and positive rights appear to come into conflict. With human dignity as the ultimate aim, conflicting claims are negotiable through a context which values social justice. This system will establish just norms, such as Hollenbach's three strategic moral priorities, to properly deal with conflicting claims and result in the preservation of human dignity. Another necessary understanding regarding claims and methods by which to resolve disputes between them is recognition that duties may be satisfied. Rights can be divided *in personam* and *in rem*. Hence, the force of the clash between negative and positive rights can be lessened when positive rights are claimed against society and not a particular individual.

The applicability of a human rights formulation based on human dignity in a pluralistic and secular world is another strength of the Catholic doctrine. First, a system of human rights based on human dignity is a system which can be applied to all peoples. While specific human rights may be applicable only to specific cultures or ideologies, human dignity is a universal and not culturally specific. Human dignity center around a person's transcendence exist in all human persons regardless of age, sex, class, race, etc.

Additionally, Catholic human rights recognize the differences in various economies and societies, and allow for these differences. As stated earlier, human rights are not *a priori*, but conditional, based on the historical context in which they are set. The right to a college education is applicable in a society that necessitates higher education in order to provide for one's family, and hence, to satisfy the requirements of human dignity. However, in a pastoral society without a university system or the need for one, the right to a college education does not exist because the absence of this right will in no way prevent the realization of human dignity within this context. The realization of the claims of human dignity through their expression in human rights is the understanding of the tension between the transcendent nature of human persons and the limited reality in which they exist.

Catholic philosophical tradition recognizes this tension between the historical conditions and limitations in which human persons exist and yet the transcendent

nature of their being. The Church's acceptance of historicity serves to affirm human dignity. According to Hollenbach:

Finite beings in which the tensions of historicity are not present are dumb, brute, and unconscious--in short, they are things. Beings in which such tensions are present are human persons. They are neither things nor pieces in a social machine. Neither are they gods (Hollenbach 1979, 73).

It is within the limits of history and nature that human dignity is fully realized. These circumstances are oppressive to the expansive human spirit only when improperly ordered.

This same strength of the Church's doctrine to appeal to a pluralistic world also opens this doctrine up to one of its greatest faults. The standardization of human rights in a world as diverse as ours is nearly impossible. If the fulfillment of human dignity varies with the concrete realities of various economies and cultures, what or who is to guide the definition of specific human rights? Does this approach to human rights allow too much subjectivity and fail to create a viable system of human rights on the grounds that they lack universality and importance? Hollenbach would reply that there are domains of human expression and existence which cannot be suppressed, such as the basic needs for food, shelter and clothing. However, with the increasing interdependence in the world today, the realm of rights is and will continue to expand (Hollenbach 1979, 75).

The claim that the Catholic system of human rights is too relativistic can also be overcome by applying the notion of principles and rules. Principles can be defined as those things which are universal, whereas rules can be viewed as the application of these principles which varies depending upon the circumstance in which the principles are being applied. The Catholic human rights doctrine is generic and broad enough that these rights can be seen as principles. An example can be the right to political freedom. The Catholic principles regarding political liberties are the right to participate in public affairs and the right to have one's rights protected in a judicial manner. Each of these two principles is not overly specific. Furthermore, the application of these principles through rules can vary from culture to culture. In one culture, the right to participate may be expressed in the rule that all people over 18 have the right to vote. In another culture, the rule governing political participation may be the right to petition the king.

Lastly, I wish to examine the strength of Catholic human rights teachings over liberal democratic and Marxist socialist theory. In a sense, Catholic social doctrine is a hybrid of liberal and Marxist thought that developed in a period dominated by these two ideologies. Catholic doctrine upholds the positive aspects of liberal ideology in that it places the rights of human persons prior to the state and rejects legal positivism. The Church affirms the liberal belief that social, political, and economic organizations should be developed in accordance with the natural condition of human persons. Catholic teaching also adheres to the positive aspects of Marxist thought in its recognition that social and economic conditions and rights are

necessary to participate in political life, that human freedom can only be achieved in solidarity, and that unequal freedoms result in social inequalities.

However, Catholic theology centered in human dignity attempts to avoid the pitfalls of liberal and Marxist conceptions of rights. Catholic doctrine disagrees with the agnosticism of liberal ideology and feels that, through reason and divine revelation, human persons can know what is good. Liberal theory's focus on political freedom, as opposed to social and economic freedom, serves only to address the primary concerns of the developed world and fails to connect with the needs of the Third World. Also, liberal ideology's heavy emphasis on the individual creates situations of extreme want justified by a capitalist system with no positive rights. Marxist thought is also deficient. Marxism degrades the notion of human dignity by turning the human person into a cog in the social machine. This conception of the human person fails to recognize the intrinsic worth of a person and instead instrumentizes the human person. Finally, Marxism as expressed through socialism unduly restricts political rights in the face of social rights.

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