(Roy)

Summary of remarks by Franklin Sherman, commenting on the Eckardt and Von Waldow papers

Israel Study Group
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The problem posed by the contrast between Roy's and Eberhard's papers
can be understood as a new version of the ancient problem of eschatology and
ethics, which is so pivotal to the New Testament. Especially is this the case
if eschatology (and apocalyptic) is interpreted as referring so much to "the
end of the world" in a literal sense as to "the end of the world as we have
known it." In that sense, the problem has recurred frequently throughout
Christian history.

Jesus apparently envisioned a twofold response to this problem, as
evidenced in his admonition, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."
This refers not to cognitive innocence but to moral innocence (which are two
very different matters). The problem is how to combine worldly wisdom with
moral purity.

In the course of Christian history, this twofoldedness of Jesus'
response split apart and two typical answers to the problem developed. We can
call them the Augustinian and the Franciscan solutions. (The latter could also
have other names, but we dub it thus in honor of the Franciscan anniversary
this year.) According to the Augustinian solution, the purity lies in the
intention, whereas the deeds may be ambiguous. In the realm of deeds, the
end may well justify the means (as Joseph Fletcher said, "If the end doesn't
justify the means, what does?"). This point of view is the source of utili-
tarian thinking and of Realpolitik. According to the Franciscan point of
view, in contrast, the church is called to be a sign of the Kingdom, rather
than an institution embracing the world. In the church as eschatological com-
munity, moral purity is to be expressed in deed as well as in intentionality.

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It is most intriguing to note how this typology can be applied to the question of how one understands the state of Israel, vis-a-vis questions of morality. From the one point of view, Israel is called to be a light to the nations, a moral examplar. This is, as it were, the Franciscan view. From the other point of view, Israel is to be a nation like unto others, whose establishment represents a "return to history" for the Jewish people. But a return to history inevitably involves a return to the ambiguities of history, including the necessity of reckoning with the ends-means question. Such an understanding is equivalent to the Augustinian view.

If one accepts, as I do, the Augustinian option as the only one compatible with the facts as we know them--that is, the actual ambiguity of all human institutions, including religious and religio-political ones--then it is important, indeed, that one retain a firm grasp of this sense of historical ambiguity. To be avoided as a very dangerous aberration is what can be called the "eschatologizing" of one's relative and ambiguous aims and purposes, which is to say the absolutizing of them. It is in this connection that it is worth paying close attention to what I consider the pivotal paragraph of Eberhard's paper, namely, paragraph 1.b. on page 1, and especially the second and third sentences of that paragraph. Let us attend first to that second sentence.

"Humans without God," Eberhard writes (and I take this phrase to mean, functionally, "without a transcendent source of judgment"), "are prisoners of their own ideology which if carried through to their last consequences can drive people to logical insanity." When Eberhard speaks of being "prisoners" of one's own ideology, I would like to interpret it in this sense: that ideologies as such are inevitable and essential as schemes for interpreting the world, for organizing our experience. In that sense, they are not _per se_ evil, although they certainly are finite. Thus democratic socialism is an ideology; existentialism is an ideology; transactional ayalisis is an ideology, in this sense.

The human mind demands these "intermediate structures" of analysis and interpretation between the ultimate religious or philosophical truths and the raw facts of a situation. (Compare Berger and Neuhaus' emphasis on "intermediate structures" in society generally.) These structures, to repeat, are not in themselves demonic, but they can become such if we become "prisoners" of them, in Eberhard's phrase; that is, if there is no transcendent source of criticism of them.

Thus, if we consider "national security" to be an ideology, as Eberhard clearly does, I would interpret this (in a different sense than his) to mean that this is indeed a legitimate concern of any nation--including the United States and Israel. But it must not become the dominant and all-encompassing consideration which blinds one to everything else that is at stake in human terms. Again, this stricture can and must be applied to both the United States and Israel.

Not having been at the meeting last spring, I was somewhat at a loss to know how this whole debate concerning the use of nuclear weapons applied to the question of Israel, which is, after all, the specific focus of this group. The debate about nuclear armament and disarmament, and the nuclear freeze, has focussed primarily on the security of the United States and Europe. So far as our support for Israel is concerned, it is conventional arms that are in question. If we take into account the probability that Israel also, in fact, possesses "the bomb," I assume that those who support a "no first use" policy on the part of the United States would support a similar policy on the part of Israel; and I would wholeheartedly agree. As to the possession of nuclear weapons, however, I cannot agree with Eberhard that this is meaningless as a form of deterrence, or that "the word deterrence is just a code word for self-righteousness." On the contrary, it is a very real fact and a very real factor in the world political and military structure, and we do have the "balance of

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terror" to thank for the non-use of nuclear weapons during the past thirty-five years. Without this, either side would surely have been tempted to use these weapons, and might well have yielded to the temptation. The value of Roy's paper is in pointing out how this "balance of terror" is threatened today, although I am not clear about what remedy he proposes.

To return to Eberhard's paragraph 1.b., it is dismaying in the extreme to read now, in the fall of 1982--that is, "after Lebanon"--his third sentence. Let me also read again the one that precedes it, on which we have already dwelt:

> Humans without God in a secular world are prisoners of their own ideology which if carried through to their last consequences can drive people to logical insanity. When such people are permitted to use without restraint all available devices of modern technology, the result can be wholesale destruction of human lives that have been designated as victims by the prevailing ideology. (My italics)

The key phrase here is "without restraint." The traditional "just war doctrine" of the church was an effort to exercise such restraint; and I take it that the contemporary Israeli concept of "purity of arms" is an equivalent to that just war doctrine. The two chief points in the doctrine are usually considered to be "discrimination" and "proportionality." The "discrimination" referred to is between the opponent's military forces and the civilian population; it is also known as the principle of non-combatant immunity. "Proportionality" refers to the tenet that only that degree of force shall be used that is required for the achievement of the given end. How does the war in Lebanon look from the standpoints of these two criteria?

Between pacifism on the one hand and militarism on the other, there has existed this noble but precarious effort to articulate a set of restraints both regarding the question of when it is morally justified to use military force-- the so-called jus ad bellum--and a set of restraints on how that use of force,

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once initiated, shall be exercised--the _jus in bello_. Although they surely do not use these particular terms, it is these questions that are agitating the people of Israel today with reference to Lebanon. This searching of the national conscience that is going on, in the full light of publicity, is surely evidence of the vitality of Israeli democracy, as well as, I believe, of the fact that the Spirit of God is still at work in the world today.