

THE D'ARCY LECTURES 2021: COMMON GOOD: Theological, Philosophical, and Political Aspects

Lecture Four: The Role of Conflict in a Political Account of Common Goods

Rene Girard's question from 1997 D'Arcy lecture: 'The question about our world is not really why so much violence, but why so little? Why are we not always at each other's throats?'

Basic tools for handling the question

- What is Politics?
- Link of Conflict and Politics
- Distinction Conflict/Disagreement
- Politics as one way of managing conflict
- Not all forms of rule are 'political' in the full sense
- Distinctions of Means/Goals – Technical/Practical
- Distinction of Goals/Ideals

Role of Knowledge

Distinction: Technical/Practical knowledge; Pope Francis (LS) on 'Technocratic Paradigm'

Role of Religion

- Distorting or Facilitating the handling of conflict
- Tendency to assign blame, assuming conflict arises from someone's wrongdoing

Catholic stance on the common good

- The problem of Democracy: no one knows
- Influence of Plato, Augustine, Aquinas: expectation that the 'ruler' knows
- Does the Church's rhetoric of common good continue to assume that someone knows?
- Functional understanding of ruler as having care of the community and its common good
- What happens when the 'one with care of the community' is the whole community?
- And when the whole community is riven with conflict?
- Church slow to incorporate an understanding of conflict in its talk of common good

Pope Francis in *Fratelli tutti* (2020)

- Acknowledgement of conflict, and the appropriate response
- Not yet completely integrated into the rhetoric of common good

Answering Girard's question

How do we succeed (when on rare occasions we actually do succeed) in managing our conflicts such that they do not erupt in violence? How do we institutionalize the peaceful and peace-endorsing handling of conflict?

Bibliography

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