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## The Academic View of Religion

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## THE ACADEMIC VIEW OF RELIGION

Lester Ward (1883): What I desire to draw especial attention to here is the remarkable fact that not only has the world been thus far ruled by passion and not by intellect, but that the true rulers of the world have had to be, in order to win that distinction, not merely enthusiasts and fanatics, but, in the majority of cases, insane persons, in a certain legitimate acceptation of that term. It is no longer a question among modern medical men that the remarkable actions of those men who have laid claim to divine inspiration and founded religious systems must be referred not only to a pathological but to an actually deranged condition of their minds.

The strange truth thus comes up for our contemplation that, instead of having been guided and impelled by intellect and reason throughout all the years of history, we have been ruled and swayed by the magnetic passions of epileptics and monomaniacs. (I, 11-12)

--Ward, Lester F. Dynamic Sociology, or Applied Social Science as Based Upon Statistical Sociology and the Less Complex Sciences. New York: D. Appleton, 1915.

Carl Becker (1932): Zeus, having been deposed, can no longer serve as a first premise of thought. It is true we may still believe in Zeus; many people do. Even scientists, historians, philosophers still accord him the customary worship. But this is no more than a personal privilege, to be exercised in private, as formerly, in Protestant countries, Papists were sometimes permitted to celebrate mass in private chapels. No serious scholar would now postulate the existence and goodness of God as a point of departure for explaining the quantum theory or the French Revolution. If I should venture, as certain historians once did, to expound the thought of the eighteenth century as having been foreordained by God for the punishment of a perverse and stiff-necked generation, you would shift uneasily in your chairs, you would "register" embarrassment, and even blush a little to think that a trusted colleague should exhibit such bad taste. The fact is that we have no first premise. Since Whirl is king, we must start with the whirl, the mess of things presented in experience. We must start with the irreducible brute fact.... Our supreme object is to measure and master the world rather than to understand it. (15-17)

--Becker, Carl L. The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932.

John Dewey (1934): Secular interests and activities have grown up outside of organized religions and are independent of their authority. The hold of these interests upon the thoughts and desires of men has crowded the social importance of organized religions into a corner and the area of this corner is decreasing. This change either marks a terrible decline in everything that can justly be termed religious in value, in traditional religions, or it provides the opportunity for expansion of these qualities on a new basis and with a new outlook.

I cannot understand how any realization of the democratic ideal as a vital moral and spiritual ideal in human affairs is possible without surrender of the basic division to which supernatural Christianity is committed. Whether or no we are, save in some metaphorical sense, all brothers, we are at least all in the same boat traversing the same turbulent

ocean. The potential religious significance of this fact is infinite.

Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant. (85, 86, 87)

--Dewey, John. A Common Faith. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934.

## PAGAN IDEA OF MAN AND GOVERNMENT

One of the things most strongly impressed...upon the minds of the Egyptians was patriotism.... No one was permitted to be useless to the state. The law assigned to each one his work, which was handed down from father to son. No one was permitted to have two professions. Nor could a person change from one job to another.... But there was one task to which all were forced to conform; the study of the laws and of wisdom.... As a result of this, Egypt was filled with wonderful inventions, and nothing was neglected that could make life easy and quiet.

--Bossuet (tutor in the court of Louis XIV), quoted by Frederic Bastiat

The foreign languages department at the university is a work unit, one of the basic organizational building blocks of Chinese society today. .... Assignment to a work unit is for life. Many people are "hired" by work units in places they would like to live in but cannot get permission from their own work unit to take the new job. Some families are separated all their lives, father in one city, mother in another, working son in yet another. Even newly married couples cannot always swing job assignments in the same town.

--James Kenneson, in Harper's, April 1982

...Social order rested on the assumed natural inequality of men. The individual was regarded as of value only as he formed a part of the political fabric, and was able to contribute to its uses, as though it were the end of his being to aggrandize the State. This was the pagan idea of man. The wisest philosophers of antiquity could not rise above it. Its influence imbued the pagan world. The State regarded as of paramount importance, not the man, but the citizen whose physical and intellectual forces it absorbed. If this tended to foster lofty civic virtues and splendid individual culture in the classes whom the State selected as the recipients of its favors, it bore hard on those whom the State virtually ignored, - on laboring men, mechanics, the poor, captives in war, slaves, and woman.

--Richard Frothingham, 1890, quoted by Verna M. Hall

We are constantly told that the Constitution and its defenders are attempting to put property rights above human rights. No political shibboleth has a more evil influence in developing class passion than this oft repeated distinction between human rights and property rights. It is now the dominant note of appeal of professional demagogues who rely upon it to gain their ends.

Property has no rights, but human beings have a right to property and it is one of the most ancient and sacred of all rights.... Property rights have been the very foundation of civilization. When the Constitution ceases to defend them, it ceases to defend liberty.

--James M. Beck, former Solicitor General of the United States

## FAMILY PLANNING

"Here it is: a law which follows from that principle (abolition of sex discrimination) and all that has gone before, namely that, of these Guardians (military caste), no one man and one woman are to set up house together privately; wives are to be held in common by all; so too are the children, and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent." . . . .

"...There should be as many unions of the best of both sexes, and as few of the inferior, as possible, and that only the offspring of the better unions should be kept. And, again, no one but the Rulers must know how all this is being effected; otherwise our herd of Guardians may become rebellious." . . . .

"...If a man's person is his only private possession, lawsuits and prosecutions will all but vanish, and they will be free of those quarrels that arise from ownership of property and from having family ties."

--Socrates in-Plato, "The Republic," c. 360 B.C.

## TOTALITARIAN DEMOCRACY

"...The Sovereign, being formed wholly of the individuals who compose it, neither has nor can have any interest contrary to theirs; and consequently the sovereign power need give no guarantee to its subjects, because it is impossible for the body to wish to hurt all its members. We shall see later that it cannot hurt any in particular. The Sovereign, merely by virtue of what it is, is always what it should be." . . . .

"...Each individual, as a man, may have a particular will contrary or dissimilar to the general will (or will of the community) which he has as a citizen. His particular interest (e.g., property) may speak to him quite differently from the common interest: his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him look upon what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which will do less harm to others than the payment of it is burdensome to himself." . . . .

"In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each citizen to his country, secures him against all personal dependence." . . . .

"It follows from what has gone before that the general will is always right and tends to the public advantage; but it does not follow that the deliberations of the people are always equally correct." . . . .

"There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will; the latter considers only the common interest, while the former takes private interest into account, and is no more than the sum of particular wills; but take away from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel one another, and the general will remains as the sum of the differences."

"If, when the people, being furnished with adequate information, held its deliberations, the citizens had no communication one with another, the grand total of the small differences would always give the general will, and the decision would always be good."

--Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract," 1762

## RULE OF LAW

"The king ought to have no equal in his realm, because this would nullify the rule that an equal cannot have authority over his equals. Still less ought he to have a superior or anyone more powerful than he, for he would then be below his own subjects, and it is impossible that inferiors should be equal to those who have greater powers. But the king himself ought not to be subject to any man, but he ought to be subject to God and the law, since law makes the king. Therefore let the king render to the law what the law has rendered to the king, viz., dominion and power, for there is no king where will rules and not the law."

--Henry de Bracton, c. 1250

## NO TAXATION WITHOUT CONSENT; GOVERNMENT BY CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

"No scutage or aid shall be imposed in our kingdom, unless by the general council of our kingdom; except for ransoming our (the king's) person, making our eldest son a knight, and once for marrying our eldest daughter; and for these there shall be paid no more than a reasonable aid. In like manner it shall be concerning the aids of the City of London."

--Magna Charta, 1215

"They do therefore humbly pray your Most Excellent Majesty, that no man hereafter be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such like charge, without common consent by Act of Parliament...."

--Petition of Right, 1628

"The free fruition of such liberties Immunities and priveledges as humanitie, Civilitie, and Christianitie call for as due to every man in his place and proportion without impeachment and Infringement hath ever bene and ever will be the tranquillitie and Stabillitie of Churches and Commonwealths. And the deniall or deprivall thereof, the disturbance if not the ruine of both. We houlde it therefore our dutie and safetie whilst we are about the further establishing of this Government to collect and expresse all such freedomes as for present we forsewe may concerne us, and our posteritie after us, And to ratify them with our sollemne consent."

--Massachusetts Body of Liberties, 1641

"'Tis true, Governments cannot be supported without great Charge, and 'tis fit every one who enjoys his share of the Protection, should pay out of his Estate his proportion for the maintenance of it. But still it must be with his own Consent, i. e. the Consent of the Majority, giving it either by themselves, or their Representatives chosen by them. For if any one shall claim a Power to lay and levy Taxes on the People, by his own Authority, and without such consent of the People, he thereby invades the Fundamental Law of Property, and subverts the end of Government. For what Property have I in that, which another may by right take, when he pleases to himself?"

---John Locke, "Second Treatise on Civil Government," 1689