

62. Do the Ends Justify the Means?

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1. INTRODUCTION

This part of our Conference deals with political strategies. Strategies, as we all know, may be very different but have at least one common characteristic. They all include a plan or method in relation to the steps which have to be taken. Usually, in strategies, the goals or targets are supposed to be known, are assumed as given. The choice of the strategy is just confined to the question of in what way and by what method you want to reach your given goals.

In the context of Christian ethics this poses an important question. We all will certainly agree that the goals or targets which you want to achieve can never be "neutral". They are by definition value-laden, open to test if they are good or bad, also in relation to Christian principles. But what about the means, what about the strategies which you choose - are they as value-laden as the ends? Of course, means and strategies have more connotations than only rationality or efficiency; they may include both good and bad behaviour. But how far should you go in bothering about that, if the goal or end is beyond moral dispute?

Let me try to make it more practical. Let us suppose for a moment that the goal, the end which you want to reach, is in your own and the opinion of others you respect, of utmost significance. It may be essential for the future of an entire nation, or for the destiny of one's own people, or regarded as decisive for the fate of mankind or Christianity as a whole. But suppose at the same time that there is no real chance to reach your goal, unless you are willing to use a strategy which is ethically questionable? Does that imply that such a promising strategy should not be considered as worthwhile at all? Everyone knows this feeling; at such a moment you - almost by necessity - start a kind of weighing and balancing. It is between two things: on the one hand the value of what is at stake and what may be lost if you should not reach your goals, and on the other hand a certain degree of sinning, the unavoidability of dirtying your hands.

And so indeed the question arises: are there situations in which the ends are so important that they begin to justify the means? Saying "no" appears to be the only (180) responsible way, but, as at least some among us will say, are we then not forgetting that we live in a so-called broken world?

I think at this Conference we all recognise the seriousness of those questions. They seem to be abstract and theoretical, but in the midst of a still turbulent South Africa, we know that they are not. We are all aware of situations, which are so deeply characterised by, for instance, fear, or by oppression, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to exclude *a priori* a possibly very effective strategy, for the simple reason that it does not meet all the standards of good morality. And it may be wise, also here at this Conference, to admit this openly and publicly.

But as soon as we say that, we immediately have to add something. And that is, that such a choice for goal-effectivity above morality is a step on the path which, in fact, is a kind of slope. For it always brings with it its own kind of dynamics, a movement in a downward direction. It is a path in which, step by step, you may even be drawn into an abyss. For the question is: where and when will this process of pre-justification of your deeds stop? After one step on this path, it is almost illogical not to take the next one, even if it is to some extent perhaps morally less good or, for instance, more violent. Your heart may even be hardened during this process, and that not only because your own mentality becomes less scrupulous, but also because the hearts and mentalities of your opponents can play a deteriorating role.

This implies, that in a world of conflict and tensions, at a certain moment, so-called ideologies come to the fore. They may have been sleeping for a long time, but at such a moment they become effective and fully awake - with usually devastating consequences.

2. IDEOLOGIES AT WORK

What real ideologies are and how they work, is often not well understood. So I want to say something about that, especially because the future of South Africa depends entirely on the ability of everyone to resist and evade them. Real ideologies in the original or classical sense of the word can be recognised by at least two characteristics, which I now want to mention by name.

Seduction

The first characteristic of any real ideology is that it has an extremely strong inbuilt seductive or tempting power for all of its followers. And even in more than one way. Firstly because it makes a promise. It is the promise that you can and will have what you wish to obtain, maybe what you need most in your life. But secondly it is seductive because it gives a guarantee as well. It guarantees you and me, that we can reach (181) those goals without any feelings of guilt or bad conscience. How is it able to achieve that?

The answer is in the name. *Ideology* literally means: the knowledge of a set of ideas. And the knowledge of a set of ideas may indeed act as an antidote, like a pain-saving device. Let us imagine for instance that you are constantly plagued with doubt about the moral goodness or badness of the steps which you take, about the strategy which you follow. Then every real ideology takes that pain away from you in one mighty stroke. It is the stroke of the reformulation of the very concept of what is good and bad, of the concept of what is true or untrue, and of the idea of what is justified or unjustified. The dilemma between moral and immoral itself is removed. For every ideology which starts from the preset goal which has to be obtained or preserved at all costs, merely declares by the force and the power of its own mindset that all you will do and can do to reach that goal is by definition good, moral, just, loving and standing at the side of truth.

The Nazis already said it: the party is always on the right side., "die Partie hat immer Recht", and Lenin declared that it was morally and completely in order to wade through rivers of blood, if and only if it was to further the interests of the labour lass. For why should one abide by the painful judgment that a chosen way or strategy is really wrong and objectionable, even if it is the only effective way to secure the good end or goal? Then it looks far better to say openly, that there are indeed conditions in which the means are justified by the ends. Just like General Malan and Mr Eugene de Kock stated at the beginning of their trial in court, that their illegal actions were justified because of the simple reason that they were necessary

and unavoidable in the struggle against anarchy and Communism. In that way indeed the painful dilemma between good ends and evil methods vanishes totally and radically.

But the price of taking this way out of political dilemmas is usually insurmountably high. For this is the same way in which fanatics all over the world have always rationalised their behaviour and have motivated their choices - from Hitler who concluded that it was necessary to eliminate the evil Jewish race to the man who murdered Premier Rabin in Israel.

It is important to see that in all those cases there is, or always has been, a critical point. The critical point is obviously reached, if one self-set goal or end has become so significant in the life of a person or a nation, that it is allowed to take the place of an ultimate meaning. So that from that place or source of ultimate meaning it is, so to speak, admitting to the creation of your own new kind of morality, a morality which may fill all existing norms with a new content. A new kind of morality or normativity, which decides which means should be chosen, which strategy has to be followed (182) and also which persons or groups should be identified as real enemies. The real enemies are those who act as a blockade for the realisation of all that is good and meaningful to you. And because of that reason, every action against them is good and acceptable, even the most destructive ones. In the spirit of the ideology, it is not only necessary, but also good to eliminate them.

Powerful means

But next to the inbuilt seduction there is also a second characteristic to every full ideology. It is its specific dynamic relationship to the means, to the instruments, which are used. For the means cannot remain mere servants. Power is given to them, which means that a kind of tyranny always enters.

For what happens if a number of means, instruments or methods are sanctified or legitimised from the beginning, because they are seen as necessary or unavoidable if your goals are to be reached? Those means or instruments are then no longer of a relative significance. They can simply not be missed. Which means that not only power is given to them, but also that those who are giving them power turn into servants.

It is exactly the same process which we find in the rise of idols, in the origins of idolatry. It may be that something created by yourself, is seen as the vehicle which can lead you to everything which you desire or want to be. But the thing from which you expect everything, will finally tower above you. For you simply have no other choice than to listen to its wishes and to accede to its commandments. For a lack of obedience will mean that you may lose everything which you wish to have or obtain.

And so indeed we see in history, that the main instruments of every ideology gradually became idols with tyrannic features. It happened to the holy Nazi party in Fascism, which turned into a force of awful tyranny. In the ideology of Apartheid something similar was at hand for the state-laws regulating apartheid. What was meant to save the country, turned into a vehicle of oppression.

(183) We can draw from this a more general conclusion. Bitter violence during conflicts usually does not happen because people themselves love to be violent. That is normally only true for a small minority. But a whole society can easily turn to violence as soon as one or more parties or groups have chosen absolute goals, ends beyond any form of discussion. Then violence which has been called in by one of the parties as an ultimate resort will, after a short time, rule as a tyrant over all.

3. IDEOLOGIES: MORE THAN OLD HATS

Two characteristics of full-grown ideologies have been mentioned. Ideologies are highly seductive because they take away your sense of sin and guilt in what you are doing. But at the same time they can lead you on way of transforming yourself into a servant or slave in the tyranny of their means.

But what does that help us, here and now, on the brink of a new South Africa? One could think and maintain to some extent that the old ideologies of the past which indeed have plagued this country for many years, should be seen as gone for ever. For have we not all seen to what kind of hatred and injustice they can lead? Post-modern philosophers like Lyotard therefore declare that all classic ideologies, the great stories of Western society, have now reached the point of bankruptcy. And writers like Bell and Fukuyama even say that we have now reached, in world history, the end of the epoch of great and universal ideologies.

If you have listened carefully, you will, however, understand that this judgment appears far too simple to me. We cannot and should not close our eyes to this double reality, that on the one hand old ideologies are still active in the background and still defeat thousands, and on the other hand that we can never exclude that new powerful ideologies emerge and are already at work - maybe on a small scale than before, and more coloured by nationalism, group egoism, and especially religious fundamentalism. But they are not less serious or explosive. For how easily one or more goals or ends take the place of absolutes for their adherents, who in their turn are changed so easily at least to some extent into possessed people, possessed by the spirit by which they themselves awakened? Indeed, ideologies can appear everywhere in modern times when vital interests are at stake. Then, in these secularized times, it is only a small step towards developing your own moral system of justification, which gives all the persons and groups which are involved a new enthusiasm and rationale of (184) what should be done, and which, in turn, automatically awakens a kind of counter-ideology on the other side.

4. IDEOLOGIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Therefore it may be good to reflect together for some time about the question of what kind of ideologies there are which can still hamper the coming of real peace and reconciliation to the new South Africa. This short reflection will lead us, in conclusion, to a rough sketch of at least three possible scenarios for the future of South Africa - scenarios which can also give us an indication of how Christians can and should co-operate in these risky times.

Looking at the ideologies which may still be working or active on the African scene I see there three actual or potential candidates, though they are not all similarly intensive and full grown.

There is, firstly, the presence of the *aftermath of the Apartheid ideology*. Secondly there is the presence of those *peoples movements* which at and live under the continuous temptation to give their own ethnic or tribal identity an absolute meaning. They may in some cases also use elements of the Communist ideology in their efforts. And, thirdly, there is the broad ideology of what we could still call *Capitalism*.

Until now I did not mention Capitalism at all, and so it may be a surprise for some of you that I also label Capitalism as a kind of ideology. Is Capitalism then more than the use of markets or competition in an economy, which use is indeed quite common and normal, especially if we think of so called mixed economies? Yes, in my

opinion Capitalism is far more than that. The difference lies in the element of faith or trust, which you can put together in these societal instruments or components. If that happens then indeed a Capitalism is emerging which bears in a nutshell all the traits of a real ideology, though perhaps not so broad and openly manifest as in the case of Communism.

For in the first place this Capitalism has in its spirit also an absolutised goal. It teaches us to set our hearts on the growth of money, economic power and luxury. And it also places its trust in some means and powers, which have been given a place all other powers and instruments. They are the powers of unlimited economic and technological growth which, in their turn, are guided by the infallible laws of the market mechanism. And indeed nobody can deny that these instruments are seen by most people and especially by the intellectuals of modern society as forces or compasses which we have to follow - as if a higher authority is peaking through then to us. While it is also impossible to deny that the whole Western idea or mindset is formulated in such a way, that "going against" their rules or commandments is almost immediately interpreted as stupid and unjust, working against the good of your own nation or continent.

So indeed in our modern societies there are still elements of a Capitalist ideology working as a kind of civil religion. It is an ideology in the most hidden form which you can imagine, but it has all the traits - even with the inclusion of some traits of social tyranny, which takes place as soon as forces or instruments are set on a pedestal. Just think of the harshness, with which Structural Adjustment Programmes are sometimes enforced for the poor indebted countries of Africa.

But what will all this mean for the future of South Africa? At last three different ideologies may be at work, which can and will try to mobilise its population as a whole or different parts of it. But we do know from history, that ideologies also always react to each other. They do interact, which means that they can confront each other, but may also, to some extent, co-operate with each other. Moreover there is always the element of choice. Ideologies do not come over us as a blind fate, but only work and are only effective, if they are welcomed.

This now leads me to the sketch of three different scenarios for the future of South Africa, and it may be that the choice between these three scenarios will be decisive for its future.

5. THREE SCENARIOS

* The first scenario can be called the *confrontational scenario*. We all recognise the risk, that in the coming years the tensions will grow again between the different parts of the population in South Africa, especially if the reconciliation between black and white, and within the black population itself, is not taking place. It may be that my judgment is entirely wrong, coming from outside, but I still see, especially in the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, and to some extent in the Inkatha Movement, elements of an ideological nature. They may be tempered for some time by the (186) ongoing awareness that there are Christian norms which forbid violence. However, those elements can be easily suppressed if those ideologies gain strength again, for instance because there is fear for the total loss of one's own identity and self-respect.

Especially the younger generation is at risk here, on the black side as well as on the white side. In our modern communication culture they are reached by many distortive messages of power and aggression, and combined with the aspect of a sometimes continuous lack of employment, especially if you are poor or feel discriminated against, it may undermine your feeling of dignity and self-respect. But,

particularly if you are still young, you may then want to find, in one or another way, a channel to express that you are still there and that other people are not entitled to ignore you. That is the type of situation, which ideologies, so to speak, love or cherish. There they easily get a foothold, maybe at the beginning as a gang-ideology, but they are always extremely seductive. For violence has its most profound significance if people are choosing the path of self-affirmation; it creeps almost naturally in the hearts and minds if affirmation is not voluntarily given to you. So please, let us not underestimate the possibility of a full return of the confrontational scenario in South Africa.

* The second scenario which I envisage could be named the *scenario of pseudo reconciliation*. In this scenario it is the ideology of Capitalism which, so to speak, takes the lead, as it has already done many times in world history. By this I again mean more than the presence of markets and competition in the economy. In this scenario the spirit of Capitalism is also accepted as a guiding force and compass to the future. And that implies the faith that, by listening to all the incentives of material self-interest and all the commandments of the market, after some years of pain and suffering, the daylight will come - the daylight of a diminishing poverty, a general rise in the standard of living and a strong increase of general employment.

Now the strange thing is that, to some extent, this may also be true. The ideology of Capitalism has proved in history that it can work, can be very effective, though the increase of employment remains a weak point, and though the resulting income distribution is to the advantage of only a few. So, the more intensively a total population is willing to submit to the underlying ideas of the usefulness of self-interest and money-incentives and is willing to act according to the faith that more goods and money will make one happy, to that degree also the economy will work more effectively, at least in relation to its own self-set goals. And so, indeed, the "ideology of Money" can also act in South Africa as the formative power for a whole scenario. In that scenario the consciousness of people will no longer primarily be a white or black consciousness. White and black together are moving - either with joy or squeezed-in with some pain - into the tunnel of a rapid growth of the modern economy, with the (187) promise of daylight for all of us at the end. And so indeed, in some way, this scenario can also act as a platform for more unity among a population, at least in the short term - which makes it preferable to the scenario of full confrontation.

Nevertheless I choose deliberately the name of *pseudo-reconciliation* for this scenario. And that is not because, in my opinion, Christians should have some objections against markets as such, or against economic growth as such, or against technological innovation. On the contrary, I see them all as creational possibilities as, in principle, good gifts coming from the hands of our Lord, open to the serviceability of our neighbours. But Capitalism as an ideology is, as I have already said, far more than an effective method to use markets, growth or technological innovation. It is the expression of the love for Money itself, and therefore gives these means a far too high, even dominating place in the midst of our societies. And because of these Mammonistic traits, it will never be able to bring real peace and reconciliation. Its solutions will always be and remain end-of-the-tunnel solutions, compensating with money that which it has morally done wrongly.

* And therefore I want to turn to the last scenario, which for me is the only real possible scenario for South Africa. It is the *scenario of justice and care*. The essential characteristic of this scenario is its path orientation, instead of one or other goal orientation. It is the scenario which is not related to the effort of ideologically

realising one or more blue-prints at all costs, but the effort to create steps which, together in sequence, form the *path* of justice and care.

The word *care* is the normative concept of economy, as we also find in the New Testament. *Care* or *oikonomia* means there that in every action of production and consumption there should be at least some awareness that other people and nature itself are, so to speak, entrusted to us as good stewards. We have to take care of them before we begin to produce or consume, before we start to act in markets or to take part in competition. *Justice* is the norm or way which leads and qualifies the political realm, in the same way as the norm of *oikonomia* or careful administration leads or qualifies all economic actions. Justice and economy together qualify the very way by which South Africa is on the move in this scenario, trying to go forward step by step.

But why is this scenario the only real scenario of true reconciliation? I think of three reasons. And the summing up of these reasons forms the illustration of its worth and the conclusion of my contribution.

The *first reason* is that going step by step on the way of justice and *oikonomia* implies, for the government, that it honours in every step and measure the dignity of the population, with special attention to the needs of the most needy. This means the strongest possible antidote against tendencies among especially young people to find the essence or fulfilment of their life in one or other type of self-affirmation. Reconciliation (188) cannot happen, will not happen, if there is not, from the beginning, the affirmation of the other, the willingness to listen to their cries and their utterings of despair. are also has this same basic orientation. It implies that business-corporations, for instance, regard it as a part of their own task to care, not only for products, but also for people. Only this type of orientation can remove the seeds from which ideologies grow. The ends no longer justify the means!

The *second reason* is that there is no need in this scenario to look with any kind of contempt or depreciation to differences in culture, language or race. if you are living in a mature capitalistic society, you should obey the laws of uniformity. Everyone is, in principle, seen as an individual, no less but also no more so. Of course, in principle protected by law, but a law which at the same time can only protect one in uniformity. But that is no real reconciliation.

In true reconciliation I am respected and feel respected for what I am, not because I force others to give me that respect, but because I have learnt that in giving myself, in offering my service to another, the other person is motivated to open himself/ herself to me. And that again is a part or a real path-orientation in society. It can never be reached if only *goal* orientations prevail in society and culture.

And the *third and last reason* is, and I have already indicated that to some extent, that on the way of justice and care the modern institutions of the market and democracy also finally begin to work as they should. Not as blind mechanisms which have to be followed wherever they go, but as societal instruments which have to obey binding rules of justice and pre-care as contexts for their serviceability. And this too, conforms with real reconciliation. It will not come if we are all turned into smaller or bigger materialists, listening to the commandments of more money or more power for ourselves. Just look at Russia after its transformation from a plan-economy into a semi-criminal market-economy!

6. CONCLUSION

If we speak about the future, let us always include the younger people of South Africa in our hearts. Let us do everything to uplift them and to preserve their dignity as sons and daughters of the living God. For respect for each others dignity is the very first step on the way towards a peaceful South Africa. The three ideologies which are ready and waiting to absorb its future will then not succeed. For then this country is not led by their evil and seductive spirits, but by the path-oriented spirit of the Lord Himself.

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