

The OT is the world's supreme document on the subject of justice. God purposes, after and through the cosmic-historic mess ["the Fall"], the victory of "righteousness and justice" [Gen.18.19] through a nation [Gen.12.2] different from the other nations [Num.23.9]--a nation founded on faith [Abraham in Gen.] and obedience [Moses in Ex.--the two sagas converged in the Joseph-reconciliation saga]. When the nation self-idolatrizes into nationalism, God's purpose of "righteousness [in character] and justice [in structure and process]" is frustrating. When faith/liberty vaunt themselves over obedience/equality, justice is destroyed [a tendency of Declaration of Independence thinking]. When the reverse occurs, again justice is destroyed [as in the Communist Manifesto, which reverts romantically to the pre-nation communitarian ideal--a despotic regime setting itself up, in anticipation of the withering away of the state, on behalf of the proles as "the dictatorship of the proletariat"].

1. Neither of the two nation motifs now dominating the globe bodies forth the biblical ideal of "liberty with justice [in equality] for all." "Democracy" [the liberty motif] and "communism" [the equality motif] are alike in dedication to justice. NB: As ideal terms, I follow here my old teacher Mortimer Adler: "democracy" as the ideal term for political justice, "socialism" as the ideal term for economic justice --and "communism" useless as an ideal term, for it combines "socialism" and tyranny, buying pseudo-equality at the price of liberty [i.e., political justice, "freedom," the rights of the individual as spelled out in the UN's "Universal Declaration of Human Rights"--which is thinksheet #831].

2. "Property" is the one factor I need to add, for purposes of this thinksheet. The image of a line of naked human beings marching into Hitler's gaschambers is for me an ultimate image of propertylessness. Property is "proper" to selfhood--as in the pairs "good/goods," "personalty/personality," "realty/reality"--and ever in danger of beginning a black mass of selfishness. Individual reality requires space at least somewhat under one's control; so, "real" property, real "estate" [biblically, "the land"]. Portable property ["money," "riches," "wealth," barterable "goods" in kind, animals, slaves]--biblically, "the fat of the land"--is also essential to individuality, personality, even survival at the minimal level. Belief that property is politically basic may be called "propertarianism" (Marcus Cunliffe's neologism); Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration being "life, liberty, and property." Private-individual/semiprivate-group/public ownership of property are the dimensions within each nation; there is some transnational (e.g., UN property). Further splits: passive/active property [the former being little under one's control]; income/control rights [the latter, e.g. the giant corporation in "the free world" and a bureaucratic enclave under Communism]. Finally, I am self-property [owning my own soul and body] and God-property [being owned, along with all the rest of creation, by God] and the property of those to whom I commit myself [Jesus, Loree, etc.]. We are both "naturally" [species-specifically] equal and equally "naturally" [genetically, environmentally, personally] unequal: in our "nature" as God-made/owned creatures we differ not in degrees of humanity [as slavers argued] but rather in degrees of ability and opportunity. The term "distributive justice" relates to most of the factors we've mentioned so far.* Other terms: "the public interest," "the common good." Not government of, by, and for the landlords. "Sovereignty" is fluid. Equality: therefore dignity, with "unalienable rights." Liberty: therefore the right and duty to throw off oppression of self and others.

3. In light of all of the above, liberty and equality--like Jews and Greeks under the Romans--can be both present in a healthy society only when each is limited, in the interest of the other, by JUSTICE as the reigning value; and this taming of the lust of each can be done in both the economic and the political realm. [I've done many diagrams of this complex dynamic, but leave you to draw your own.] This, as I see it, is what truth and love should strive for in a positive, in contrast to a merely rhetorical, attack on nation[al]ism, classism, racism, and sexism.

*From
Jn.Locke.

*Marx's
CRITIQUE
OF THE
GOTHIA
PROGRAM:
"From
each..."