

Democracy *Sub Specie Aeternitatis*:  
The Theological and Metaphysical  
Foundations of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk's  
Political Philosophy

by

Jan A. Uhde

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## ABSTRACT

Thomas Garrigue Masaryk's (1850-1937) reputation as one of the pre-eminent philosopher-kings of the twentieth century in Europe has not been tarnished nor has it been much revised by historians. Masaryk's philosophical opinions continue to be studied in current academic literature, especially in the Czech Republic where the issue of Masaryk's legacy as both thinker and politician remains alive. The author of the following thesis recognizes that although other studies have noted the religious element in Masaryk's philosophy, they have not analysed it for its inherent theology and have therefore not made the important link between the philosophy of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk and the theology of Jan Amos Komenský (1592-1670). The following thesis examines Masaryk's works for evidence demonstrating the fundamental place of theology in Masaryk's political philosophy and argues that although Masaryk distanced himself from theology as ancillary to medieval theocracy, and from metaphysics as purely theoretical speculation, the fundamental assumptions upon which Masaryk constructed his political philosophy and philosophy of history were theological and metaphysical and borrowed from Komenský.

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## DEDICATION

To my wife

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The community is also a realm of religious order, and the recognition of a political situation is incomplete in one decisive point if it does not also embrace the religious forces of the community and the symbols in which they find expression.” – Eric Voegelin

“It is not our problem to investigate what religion is and how it appears among men; it is sufficient for us to know that it exists and that, like the invisible fragrance of the flower, it invests man with his true value.” – T. G. Masaryk

### Thesis

One of the most noted aspects of all interpretations of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk’s (1850-1937) life and works is the apparent synthesis of his political philosophy with his practical political career. W. Preston Warren wrote:

Masaryk ranks uniquely as a statesman of democracy. Not merely is he to be credited with building up almost over night a distinctive democratic state in absolutist central Europe, but with a comprehension of the functional nature of a democratic system which stands out among the political philosophies of history.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, most studies of Masaryk’s thought and life relate his political philosophy to his political activities before, during, and after the First World War; they are obviously intrigued with the fact that Masaryk was outspoken about his belief that philosophy and politics, theory and practice, should not be separated. He was convinced that his practice of politics was not without a theory and vice versa.<sup>2</sup> His interpretation of Plato’s philosophy is also a declaration of his own

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<sup>1</sup> W. Preston Warren, *Masaryk’s Democracy: A Philosophy of Scientific and Moral Culture* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 32.

<sup>2</sup> Karel Čapek, *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1990) 308.

philosophical conviction: “For Plato philosophy was completely different from scholasticism; it was theory and practice harmoniously combined, indeed, theory and practice are one”.<sup>3</sup>

Before becoming president of Czechoslovakia in 1918, Masaryk wrote several volumes on the theme of the individual’s struggle to adjust to modern society observing, from his perspective, the peculiar social and political circumstances of Europe from the latter half of the nineteenth century up until 1937. From his academic dissertations on Plato (1876), to his sociological study of suicide (1881), to his multi-volume work on Russian literature and society (1913), his studies dealt with the issue of the modern European individual’s existential condition. Masaryk approached this problem with the methods of sociology,<sup>4</sup> interpreting statistical data in the context of history, especially religious history;<sup>5</sup> he also included poetry and literature as evidence pertaining to the mores of contemporary European society. By the time Masaryk wrote *World Revolution* (1925) he was a practising politician and no longer an academic sociologist, but he still looked to history and literature as fields in which the human spirit is revealed in its cultural context. He did this to gauge the political situation in Europe and plan his strategies accordingly.

The European condition and the demands of the European individual ever remained the subject of Masaryk’s analysis; he believed they were primarily spiritual in nature and therefore he accounted for and studied religion for its effective force in politics, society and history. Out of his study of society, the individual, religion and history Masaryk developed a philosophy of

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<sup>3</sup> George J. Kovtun, ed., *The Spirit of Thomas G. Masaryk (1850-1937): An Anthology* (London: Macmillan Press, 1990) 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

politics and history that argued for establishing society and politics on a religious moral foundation.<sup>6</sup>

In his interview with Karel Čapek in 1937 Masaryk reflected on his life – both as a thinker and as a politician – and he answered questions concerning the foundations of European politics, society and individual existence. Masaryk’s answers to these questions amount to his political philosophy: “I understand the state...politics...the whole of life truly *sub specie aeternitatis*”.<sup>7</sup> Also, Masaryk’s idea that theory and practice should be based on Christian morality interpreted through the lens of his philosophy of history demonstrates that the foundations of his political philosophy must be related to European religious tradition. A criticism of Masaryk’s political philosophy should, therefore, also refer to the theological and metaphysical bases of his philosophy because together they constitute the descriptive and technical language of a divine revelation that Masaryk explicitly adhered to; the limited extent to which this has been done is our justification for focussing our thesis on the theological and metaphysical foundations of Masaryk’s political philosophy.

### **T. G. Masaryk’s Political Philosophy *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* and Democracy**

Thomas Garrigue Masaryk held one particular tenet that was fundamental to his political philosophy: an individual’s life as it relates to society and politics must have recourse to the eternal, thereby the whole of life is perceived as *sub specie aeternitatis*, or contingent to the

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<sup>6</sup> Jaroslav Opat, *Průvodce životem a dílem T. G. Masaryka: Česká otázka včera a dnes* (Prague: U.T.G.M., 2003) 485.

<sup>7</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 328.

divine.<sup>8</sup> The individual may suffer from a fate that is the result of history but history is ruled by Providence. The individual and society are doubly contingent to God. For Masaryk this meant that not only political action and individual conviction, but also the political order and society, must have their basis in the divine. To what degree Masaryk proposed a civic theology by constructing his philosophy of history is a question to be kept in mind as we seek to discover the theological roots in his political philosophy. On our way we will demonstrate that Masaryk's considering life from the viewpoint of eternity, or *sub specie aeternitatis*, is a theological and metaphysical tenet directly inherited from Jan Amos Komenský's (1592-1670) theology.

Jan Patočka has thoroughly studied both Komenský and Masaryk's philosophies but he did not deal with the way in which Masaryk's political philosophy is rooted in Komenský's theology. Patočka's work, however, makes the following analysis of Masaryk's political philosophy possible. Our contribution should demonstrate that Masaryk's idea of life and politics *sub specie aeternitatis* can be fully understood only with reference to Komenský's theology and metaphysics.

Other authors have looked at various aspects of Masaryk's political philosophy: its inherent positivism, its concepts of humanity<sup>9</sup> and crisis,<sup>10</sup> its emphasis on morality and ethics,<sup>11</sup> and nationalism.<sup>12</sup> All of these aspects are important, but – we argue – only from the perspective

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Antonie van den Beld, *Humanity: The Political and Social Philosophy of Thomas G. Masaryk* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 6.

<sup>10</sup> Roman Szporluk, *The Political Thought of Thomas G. Masaryk* (New York: East European Monographs, 1981) 3.

<sup>11</sup> Warren, op. cit., viii.

<sup>12</sup> Zdeněk Suda, "The Theories of Nation in the Work of T. G. Masaryk," in *On Masaryk: Texts in English and German*, ed. Josef Novák (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988) 317.

of the religious foundations of Masaryk's thought. Criticism of Masaryk's thought so far has not sufficiently penetrated to the theological roots of those foundations. The historian Jaroslav Pelikán wrote a brief essay on the religious basis of Masaryk's political philosophy, but it remains a cursory introduction.<sup>13</sup> Roman Szporluk recognized the importance of religion in Masaryk's thought, but treated it alongside other themes such as nationalism and political authority, without criticising its theological and metaphysical foundations.<sup>14</sup> There has been no attempt to treat the religious basis of Masaryk's political philosophy as a theological point with historical roots on which all of Masaryk's thoughts and actions are hung. With the exception of Jan Patočka, who criticised Masaryk's philosophy and wrote extensively on Komenský's thought, only the surface of Masaryk's thought has been scratched for its ultimate metaphysical source.

The themes of humanity, nationalism, morality and ethics, authority and crisis, as well as the influence of European trends in philosophy are important to Masaryk's political philosophy, and they will not be neglected in the following study. Our reading of Masaryk's work, however, confirms the judgement that religious belief expressed by theology and metaphysics is the most important element of Masaryk's political philosophy, and that despite even his own objections to the contrary,<sup>15</sup> it is homologous to a theology. Masaryk's religious conviction is his philosophy of the individual in society and history, which we argue is nothing less than his theology applied to both political theory and practice.

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<sup>13</sup> Jaroslav Pelikán, *Jesus, Not Caesar: The Religious World View of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk and the Spiritual Foundations of Czech and Slovak Culture* (Westminster College of Salt Lake City: The Westminster Tanner-McMurrin Lectures on the History and Philosophy of Religion, March 7, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 3.

<sup>15</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 286, 287.

Masaryk's political philosophy is significant also for its relation to the formal principles of modern democracy. Masaryk's understanding of democracy includes many points that are accepted in contemporary democratic states. One example is Masaryk's full agreement with the idea that democracy is of the people, by the people, for the people.<sup>16</sup> There is also Masaryk's separation of church and state; but all of the important points of Masaryk's democratic theory have their source in a democratic spirit based on religious conviction. Without reference to the source of the democratic spirit in religious conviction Masaryk's entire political philosophy falls apart. His political philosophy therefore depends on theological justification and metaphysical description. T. G. Masaryk would never have developed his theory of modern democracy, nor would he have established Czechoslovakia as an actual democratic state in 1918, without his particular religious conviction; his memoirs attest to this fact. Masaryk's modern democratic theory and practice was therefore founded on a personal spiritual conviction best understood in theological and metaphysical terms.

The hypothesis that Masaryk's political philosophy is founded upon religious conviction is one that has not been given the treatment that it deserves. This may be because Masaryk "never really coordinated his voluminous and sometimes contradictory discussions of religion, despite the fact that all his writings were devoted to or touched upon the subject".<sup>17</sup> The following study will therefore focus on Masaryk's political philosophy in its proper context as a predicate of his religious conviction. Our study will demonstrate that the prototype of modern democracy, which Masaryk outlined in his work on the establishment of Czechoslovakia during World War I, and

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<sup>16</sup> Warren, *op. cit.*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Szporluk, *op. cit.*, 51.

which is accepted as definitive – in its broad outlines – in other modern democracies, contains an essential religious principle that is not usually considered by theorists of contemporary democracy. A critical study of Masaryk's political philosophy therefore contributes to the theory and history of modern democracy.

Masaryk should be recognized for the influence his ideas had beyond the borders of Czechoslovakia. Internationally renowned in his day as a member of the western political elite, Masaryk's political philosophy was addressed to all of Europe, as well as to America. His understanding of contemporary politics was global; this is especially evident in his *The Making of a State*, which belies the significance of its original Czech title *Světová revoluce* or *World Revolution*: the title that we will refer to. This work was written in 1925, and is a personal memoir of the First World War, but it is also a comprehensive treatise on Masaryk's political philosophy, including a philosophy of history. *World Revolution* is Masaryk's more mature reflection on themes he already considered in his earlier works; and because it was penned after having practised politics at the highest level we will take it under analysis for our critique of his political philosophy. Because our study examines the basis of Masaryk's political philosophy in religious faith we will also look to his conversations with Karel Čapek that were recorded in 1937, a year before Masaryk's death; they include Masaryk's explanation of his political philosophy *sub specie aeternitatis*.

### **Philosophy, Religious Conviction and Masaryk's Early Political Career**

Our critique of Masaryk's political philosophy will not consist of a religious biography. The childhood experiences that affected Masaryk's religious thinking, as well as his mature

considerations of Catholicism and Protestantism, culminating in his own conversion to the Reformed Church are noted, but will not be treated as essential for our purpose of delineating his political philosophy for its theological and metaphysical foundations. Our examination of Masaryk's Christian faith will focus on his idiosyncratic adoption of theology that we will demonstrate is based on Jan Amos Komenský's theology, much more than is generally recognized. We will show that Masaryk's religious conviction is not just a part of his political philosophy, it is his philosophy. Masaryk's own insistence on having both Plato and Jesus as teachers justifies our hypothesis.

By focussing on the theological foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy we will also shed light on a particular motivating force in political history, specifically one that impelled the making of a modern democracy. An examination of Masaryk the thinker and political actor therefore also can serve as a case study for the effects ideas have on politics. We expect that our analysis of the foundations of Masaryk's thought will broaden the perception of the nature of modern democracy. Masaryk and the first democratic republic of Czechoslovakia are important precedents in the history of modern democracy; therefore, what Masaryk thought about politics, society, democracy, history and religion cannot be neglected for seeming to be anachronistic. The theological foundations of his political philosophy cannot be ignored for not conforming to other theories of democracy. Although not conducting a comparative study we expect that our treatment of Masaryk's political philosophy will also contribute to the literature devoted to democratic theory.

Any theory that neglects the underlying religious conviction that was Masaryk's impetus for actual democratic state creation does not satisfy the requirements of sufficiently defining

Masaryk's political philosophy or his life as a politician. We do not suggest that Masaryk's understanding of democracy is the first or the last word on modern democracy, but because it was one of the more influential "firsts" it cannot be neglected and should be critiqued as an original contribution to current perceptions of democracy.

Democracy is young, but already it has a history – an important part of which has been largely ignored. We hope to dispel some of this ignorance. For this purpose we consider Masaryk's political philosophy as significant for demonstrating how religious conviction based on theology and metaphysics can be infused into modern secular republican democratic politics.

T. G. Masaryk began his career in the late 1880's as an academic. He was a student of sociology, literature and philosophy in Vienna and Leipzig, but it was not until 1891 that he entered politics as an elected member of the Austrian parliament.<sup>18</sup> By then he had already published his influential work *Suicide as a Mass Social Phenomenon* as well as *The Foundations of Concrete Logic* (1885), as well as having been a professor at Prague University. His preoccupation with the question of religion in society and the spiritual needs of the individual led him, initially, to advocate for science as a replacement for theology as the means by which individual needs could be met and the spiritual crisis relieved: "[i]n the 1880's Masaryk engaged in the task of unifying the sciences as a backdrop for his new scientific religion".<sup>19</sup> During this time, and in the early 1890's, he also began to argue for democracy as the best political system; he did so as an Austrian subject.<sup>20</sup> Masaryk's early stand on behalf of science was his way of

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<sup>18</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 62.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 64.

supporting the democratic system against what he believed were the a-scientific and mythical notions informing autocratic and theocratic political regimes such as those he observed in Russia, Prussia, Austria, the Ottoman Empire and the Papacy:

Masaryk called democracy a political system that would best promote life in accord with ethical values. His other point of departure was historical: contrasting theocracy and democracy, he saw the latter as a product of the historical evolution of mankind, one destined to succeed theocracy.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, his advocacy for scientific democracy was at the same time an advocacy for religious and ethical foundations in politics; morality would be the basis of democracy, but in Masaryk's words "religion must be the basis of morality".<sup>22</sup> The religious foundations of Masaryk's thought reveal themselves in the apparent contradiction between democracy and theocracy:

While Masaryk presumably did not believe that the Deity literally sanctioned theocratic rule, he does seem to have decided that it was the particular type of religious faith that determined the form of government.<sup>23</sup>

Masaryk, moreover, believed that the state "always served cultural, religious and moral ideals".<sup>24</sup>

Masaryk's works from the late 1880's discussed the role of religion against the background of the historical development of European politics and society. Like some of his contemporaries, Masaryk believed that the European individual was suffering a crisis caused by the loss of traditional faith. His sociological-historical studies argued that the European

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Humanistic Ideals* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971) 115.

<sup>23</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 67.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 114.

individual's and European society's alienation from God were the leading cause of an increasing suicide rate; his sociology was thus developed into a philosophy of history and religion.<sup>25</sup> Masaryk's analysis of suicide in Europe was grounded in empirical evidence, but his conclusion suggested that any study of the European individual, society, and history should be conducted *sub specie aeternitatis*, to get at the underlying spiritual-religious foundations of human life; hence our argument that, even early in his career, Masaryk thought in terms that were theological and metaphysical. Likewise, his *Concrete Logic*, which divided departments of scientific knowledge in a hierarchical structure, reserved for philosophy as metaphysics "special treatment because he believed it to be the most comprehensive science, embracing total human knowledge, a unified scheme for looking out upon the world".<sup>26</sup> Over and above objective natural science Masaryk placed metaphysics, which was supposed to be "directed toward the substantial issues in scientific work".<sup>27</sup> Masaryk believed that religion was the fundamental constituent of individual and social life in Europe, and philosophy – as metaphysics – crowned the apparatus of knowledge, making it possible to see the whole of life *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Masaryk partook in a number of the controversies of central European politics. In 1883 he founded a periodical, *Athenaeum* that was – ironically – financed by money a friend of Masaryk's had left him after having committed suicide. Through this literary vehicle Masaryk came into conflict with Czech nationalist sentiment over two manuscripts: "King's Palace Manuscript" and "Green Mountain" manuscript, which most Czechs, and many other Slavs,

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970) xxxiv.

<sup>26</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 52.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

believed to be early-medieval documents illustrating the glory of Slavic culture. The manuscripts were eventually denounced by Masaryk, among others, as forgeries. In this episode Masaryk honed his critical skills and positioned himself as a potential lodestar for a new, and empirically more genuine, interpretation of Czech history. This controversy marked the beginning of his public life and pre-dated his official entry into politics by five years. In Prague Masaryk was however branded a traitor by many Czechs. Later, as a deputy of the Austrian Reichsrat and working for Bohemian state rights he was likewise denounced by Germans as a traitor to Austria. In these controversies Masaryk's actions appear on the surface to have been based on the principle of truth and not of political expediency, but in Masaryk's own words it was:

a battle over the spiritual authority in our nation, because...the older authorities...are dead and a new one is only slowly constituting itself. Naturally, this battle is a battle of the press and of the philosophical faculty which to a large extent are concerned with those studies that directly and indirectly affect the life of society.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1891 and 1893 Masaryk was a deputy of the Austrian parliament. He was preoccupied with criticising the Habsburg monarchy, whose policies he considered reactionary and autocratic.<sup>29</sup> He re-entered politics as the head of his own party in 1900, but it was not until 1914 that he felt confident enough to enter a bid to have the Habsburg Empire dismantled and to promote the independence of the nationalities within its borders.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světova Revoluce* (Prague: Masarykuv Ustav, 2005) 12.

In the period between 1890 and 1914 Masaryk began to develop and employ his concept of “nation”.<sup>31</sup> He understood the term in the sense originally given to it by Herder.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the individual Masaryk stressed the importance of an “organic” collective or “nation”, members of which are not necessarily related by citizenship in a state, but by their culture: language, literature, folk song and dress, which reproduces itself in history and forms the collective memory symbolized by tradition. He saw the modern European individual as belonging at once to universal humanity and to the nation from which he/she emerged. His ideas on nationality were developed in the 1890’s and were published in his book *The Meaning of Czech History*, which is a testimony to Masaryk’s philosophy of history. René Wellek writes in the introduction: “Masaryk aimed at giving an ethics, a national ethics, to his people, one that would at the same time be universal, yet anchored in the peculiar history of the nation”.<sup>33</sup> Masaryk understood the meaning of Czech history to be embodied in the religious movement known as the Czech Reformation that began in fifteenth century Bohemia. According to Roman Szporluk, Masaryk’s turn towards a national philosophy of history signalled a “profound change” in his political philosophy.<sup>34</sup> Masaryk’s thought was quite consistent throughout his life, but his construction of a philosophy of history based on a Herderian concept of nation, where Masaryk has the Czech nation play the leading role in the universal development of modern mankind, was pivotal. Masaryk would maintain this new national element in his political philosophy from this

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<sup>31</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 80 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) viii.

<sup>34</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 81.

point on, but like everything else in his thought it would only be considered *sub specie aeternitatis*.

During the war Masaryk's philosophy of history was an integral part of his propaganda as he sought to form a coalition with England, France and America for democracy and the freedom of nations and against Austria and Germany. The inherent democratic tendencies of the Czechs, which Masaryk derived from his interpretation of their history, were contrasted to the just as inherent German tendencies to autocracy.<sup>35</sup>

The single most important element in Masaryk's philosophy of history was the religious basis of nationality; religion was seen as inspiring a national-moral spirit. Masaryk's idea of nationalism was rationalized in his philosophy of history continued to maintain the historic Christian spirit as the substance permeating society, history, and individual life. The "nation" and its history were viewed by Masaryk *sub specie aeternitatis*. We will discuss this further when we look at Masaryk's philosophy of history.

Masaryk had a high regard for modern science; he went against the grain by advocating for its place in a modern democracy, but he would have disparaged the idea that the individual is merely the material agent in a society likened to a mechanical construction or a mathematical equation. In the early twentieth century Masaryk kept reminding his contemporaries that in politics man does not live on bread alone, but also on spirit.<sup>36</sup> The spirit he was evoking for modern European individuals and the Czech nation – soon to be a state – was the underlying

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světova Revoluce* (Prague: Masarykuv Ustav, 2005) 426.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970) 222.

religious principle of his politics: “Morality, today, is in large part political morality”.<sup>37</sup> Masaryk referred specifically to Christian religious principles and history, but more broadly he adhered to the theological principle that all human life is defined by its relation to God; society, politics, individual life, history, and the nation must be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. To what extent is personal truth related to social order? Individualism to humanity? Masaryk’s philosophy to civic theology? These questions cannot be adequately resolved without at least differentiating the peculiar theology that we believe Masaryk adhered to. However, before looking to the peculiar aspects of Masaryk’s thought we must relate it to a general concern in Europe thereby reminding the reader that Masaryk partook in a debate that was common to the whole of Europe.

### **European Crisis and Prologue to World Revolution**

Masaryk lived in an era that is not so much estranged from our own; rather, we are dealing with the very same epoch. Many of our contemporary individual, social and political issues reflect those that preoccupied Masaryk in the early twentieth century.

To better appreciate Masaryk’s sensitivity to the social and political conditions of Europe we will relate Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) to Masaryk. Husserl was a philosopher and Masaryk’s friend from his Leipzig university years. Husserl’s presentation, in the 1930’s, of his concept of “crisis” in Europe reflected Masaryk’s own understanding. Both Husserl and Masaryk died before the outbreak of the Second World War, but this fact does not diminish their appreciation of the crisis. Husserl believed that the crisis in Europe resulted from a misguided application of the methods used in objective natural science to the subjective and “spiritual” field

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Humanistic Ideals* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971) 120.

of the humanities.<sup>38</sup> The crisis manifested itself in spurious *Weltanschauung* philosophies that derailed the teleological course of European history and potentially fostered barbarity.<sup>39</sup> Masaryk perceived the cause of the crisis to be in the modern European's attempt to overcome traditional religion, a process which resulted in an alienation from God. He found evidence for this spiritual phenomenon in modern European poetry and literature. The modern European suffered a "titan's" pathos which was manifested objectively by mass murder (in war) and subjectively by suicide.<sup>40</sup> Besides murder and suicide the crisis manifested itself in nationalist chauvinism and anti-democratic imperialism.<sup>41</sup> Both Masaryk and Husserl shared the view that the crisis of contemporary Europe was "spiritual" and was, therefore, also a philosophical problem that needed to be addressed for the sake of Europe's and the world's future.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, in Masaryk's philosophy, the crisis was a problem resolved by theology.

Masaryk's analysis of the crisis owed much to August Comte's philosophy of history. Masaryk and Husserl recognized the validity of Comte's argument that the European crisis was caused by a historical passage from religious theological thought – exemplified and led by the medieval Church backed by scholastic metaphysics – to scientific reason spearheaded by the methods of the modern natural sciences.<sup>43</sup> Although Masaryk was influenced by Comte's

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<sup>38</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) 271 ff.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>40</sup> Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006) 22. and Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) 139.

<sup>41</sup> Erazim Kohák, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) 193.

<sup>42</sup> Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006) 22.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 ff.

interpretation of history both he and Husserl protested against the notion that the terminus of the crisis will come when objective scientific reason totally replaces metaphysics and religion.<sup>44</sup> Although they examined different aspects of the European crisis, both Masaryk and Husserl believed that the constitution of a peaceful, rational, and sane society in Europe was not possible without reference to Europe's roots in philosophy and religion – Husserl and Masaryk respectively. The most important accomplishments in both fields were considered spiritual.<sup>45</sup> Unlike Comte, both Masaryk and Husserl believed that the crisis revealed itself in the contemporary European trend towards irreligiosity.<sup>46</sup> However, of the two it was Masaryk who had studied most thoroughly the place of religion in the life of the modern European. He was not able, however, to conceive of theology and metaphysics separate from the institution of Roman Catholic theocracy in his philosophy of history, and thus barred himself from analysing the theological foundations of his political philosophy as well as his philosophy of history.

Like Comte, Masaryk championed a philosophy of history, but he maintained Christian religion particularly as the motivating spirit of events, without which his democracy would never have been established 'positively'.

Masaryk dealt with various aspects of philosophy and politics. We will list a few that figure prominently in his works and which we consider significant to our study: 1) The malaise of modernity (nihilism and irreligiosity) documented in European literature, from Goethe's *Faust* to Nietzsche's *Superman* to Dostoevsky's murderers – all of which, Masaryk believed, depict

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>45</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006) 25.

the modern European spirit as suffering the effects of the loss of religious faith; 2) The nature of absolutist regimes: Habsburg Austria, Prussian Germany and the Ottoman Empire, all of which exemplified anti-democratic political principles and organizations based on militarism and the suppression of nations, and which were justified by the ideology of Pan-Germanism in the case of Austria-Germany; 3) The question of nationalities in Europe, from Alsace-Lorraine to the Caucasus, with every nation in-between subjected to an estimation of the viability of its potential independence and sovereignty; 4) The nature of democracy, understood by Masaryk as humanistic and universal; 5) The Czechoslovak national question, which included a fully developed perspective on and interpretation of the meaning of Czech history, thus relating the contemporary situation with a traditional inheritance, i.e., Masaryk's philosophy of history; 6) A personal attitude towards politics based on an attitude the individual assumes in the face of his/her mortality, i.e., Masaryk's confession of faith and his final estimation that all social and political life is seen *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Emerging from the various subjects that Masaryk analysed, and which consumed his political thought, is a picture that is at once global and regional. Masaryk himself suggested that Czech history was significant not only for Czechoslovakia but for Europe and the world as a whole – as long as the Czechs and Slovaks would strive towards instilling a moral substance into their democracy.<sup>47</sup> The apparent contradiction between the national and universal in Masaryk's thought may perhaps be resolved but not without reference to the theological foundations of both his political philosophy and philosophy of history. Although Masaryk's field of analysis was primarily Europe, Masaryk made it clear that the idea of democracy and its actual establishment

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 388 ff.

in a single country must have significance for the contemporary political situation globally. This is evident from his *World Revolution* to which we shall turn shortly.

We know that Masaryk's project for democracy and peace in central Europe after the First World War was interrupted just twenty years after its first inception. In addition, the Holocaust and de-colonization in Africa and Asia – to give just two pertinent examples from political history – are events that occurred after Masaryk's death; therefore, some of the most significant historical events to have influenced philosophy and political thought in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries did not factor into Masaryk's work. Nonetheless, his sensitivity to and recommendations regarding questions of spiritual existence and politics was such that, even after all we know of modern history, and given the present political situation in the world, Masaryk's example of an enduring democratic ethos in the face of critical circumstances both spiritual and political must be treated as still having something to offer to those concerned by the human predicament and with the future of politics and society.<sup>48</sup>

Despite globalization provincial outlooks consistently encroach upon the 'world-views' of thinkers concerned with politics, and as a result parochial trends in politics are strengthened. The roots of these trends can be found in the Europe that Masaryk lived in and whose history he studied. In 1914 Masaryk recognised that such narrow-minded trends were responsible for the outbreak of war and yet, despite his peculiar attachment to nationalism, he argued for Christian love as a remedy against national chauvinism and as the substance for his ideal democracy.<sup>49</sup> This was not an argument for love in the abstract, but the very specific and definitive love that

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<sup>48</sup> Jaroslav Opat, "Notes on Disputes with and about T. G. Masaryk," *Kosmas: Czechoslovak European Journal* 16, no. 2 (2003): 83.

<sup>49</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 327.

Masaryk saw exemplified by the ethics of Jesus. The modern European was considered by Masaryk to be ever the Christian.<sup>50</sup>

Humanity, democracy, independence and interdependence of nations, and personal relationships based on love were offered by Masaryk as antidotes to Europe's and the world's ills. His recommendations were based on his detailed study and his practical experiences of contemporary politics from before, during and after the First World War. It is through his participation in the events of his day that his philosophy becomes an empirical datum that we can use to measure politics. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk's perspicacious estimation of the course of political events makes it very difficult to deny the judgements he made of his own life and his contemporary situation in Europe.

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 372.

## CHAPTER 2: MASARYK AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### **Austria and Masaryk's Propaganda in Exile**

Not only Czechs and Slovaks, but other nationalities living within the Habsburg domains contested their domination by German Austrians and Hungarians. Before the war there were strong national liberation movements in the regions between the Baltic Sea and the Ionian coast. In Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (historic lands of the Bohemian Crown) the struggle to gain cultural recognition and political autonomy was, after 1848, largely conducted by political means. Masaryk was a member of the Young Czech political party in the late eighteenth hundreds, working to achieve linguistic rights and greater autonomy for the Czechs. The parliamentary struggle of the Czechs to win concessions from the Emperor at Vienna had some tangible results demonstrated by the creation, in 1882, of a Czech language section of Charles University in Prague, where Masaryk had a short stint as a professor.

In Prague Masaryk found a politically charged environment where he could rub shoulders not only with Germans but also with Czechs estranged from the ruling powers sitting in Vienna, and many of whom considered Masaryk a Habsburg lackey because he did not show the proper amount of zeal against Austria and for the popular form of Czech nationalism.<sup>51</sup> Masaryk had antagonists in all major camps: Czech, German-Austrian, and Catholic.<sup>52</sup> Initially, Masaryk was

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<sup>51</sup> Emil Ludwig, *Defender of Democracy* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971) 29.

<sup>52</sup> Masaryk was denounced as a traitor by Germans for advocating Bohemia's rights. He garnered the enmity of the Archbishop of Prague, who tried to have him defamed as an atheist for defending Joseph Hilsner, a Jewish man, against the libel of ritual murder. In Ludwig, *op. cit.*, 29, 31, 32.

not for the dismemberment of Austria, but instead was more inclined to work towards František Palacký's (1779-1876) ideal of an Austria with a federal structure and treating the nationalities within its domains equally and fairly.<sup>53</sup> In the years leading up to the war Masaryk changed his position and advocated the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire. His stand in favour of democracy, which he had declared in the late 1800's, did not abate with the coming of the war, nor was it deterred by the pressure that Austria exerted on her citizens. In siding with democracy Masaryk had to look beyond Austria and Germany for allies. He uncompromisingly reached out towards France, England and America and threw in his lot against Austria for the cause of democracy and an independent Czechoslovakia.<sup>54</sup>

Masaryk went into exile to pursue a vigorous propaganda program, organizing forces for the creation of a democratic republic in central Europe. All the while he would have with him two "political mementoes" from his homeland, Komenský's *Kšaft (Legacy)*, which was Komen-ský's hortatory testament to his fellow Bohemian Brethren, and a copy of the Czech *Kralická Bible*.<sup>55</sup>

The success of Masaryk's propaganda depended on presenting the ideals of Austria and Germany (Prussia) as diametrically opposed to those of democracy, and then relating democracy to the Czech nation and its aspirations. In 1916 Masaryk gave a speech that summed up many of the points of his propaganda program, including his refutation of German imperialism. He concluded that central Europe – from the Baltic to the Ionian coast – should consist of

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<sup>53</sup> Warren, op. cit., 82.

<sup>54</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 128.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světova Revoluce* (Prague: Masarykuv Ustav, 2005) 18.

independent states instead of being subjected to domination by four empires (Prussian, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman).<sup>56</sup> Masaryk appealed to the democratic ideals of the French Revolution and stressed the effective potential of the democratic spirit as a political commodity in his propaganda: “spiritual and moral forces in society and their growth are not less real than Prussian generals”.<sup>57</sup> The lecture where he presented his propaganda was given at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at London University. It is no wonder that Masaryk could also deliver in his lecture a portion of his philosophy of history, without however explicitly referring to his personal religious conviction. Nonetheless, all but one (Žižka) of the Czech heroes that Masaryk presented as exemplary models of Czech freedom and democracy against German imperialism and chauvinism were theologians: Jan Hus, Petr Chelčický, and Jan Amos Komenský.<sup>58</sup> It is understandable that in an academic lecture-*cum*-propaganda forum Masaryk would not lay out his entire body of thought. This would not have been in line with the propagandist intent of his lecture, and Masaryk consciously sublimated the religious element of his philosophy in order to elicit a positive response from his audience; therefore, instead of Christian morals and religion, Masaryk stressed their alter ego as he understood it – the French Revolution.<sup>59</sup> As a representative of the cause of Czech and Slovak independence Masaryk presented his case against Austria and Germany by suggesting that the Czech nation was historically and culturally inclined towards the principles of humanity and democracy and was

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Problem of Small Nations in the European Crisis* (London: University of London The Athlone Press, 1966) 22 ff.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 28.

therefore not only related to the western democracies but logically in conflict with the autocracies of Austria and Germany.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand Masaryk presented the German and Austrian regimes as informed by a particular spirit of their own. He represented the First World War as a battle between the democratic and the autocratic spirits, a final global resolution of the Czech Reformation and French Revolution, a true world revolution that began with a religious reform movement in the fifteenth century.

Masaryk's personal contacts in England, France, Russia, Yugoslavia and America, as well as with Czech émigré communities, ensured him an audience that would be receptive to his message. His mission against Austria and Germany found international support.<sup>61</sup> His first war-time move was to escape from within the borders of imperial Austria. He would not return to his homeland until the war was over. His wife and children would stay behind – and suffer – in Bohemia; his wife would be imprisoned and fall ill, and his oldest son, Herbert, would die of typhus contracted during the war.<sup>62</sup>

Masaryk's initial journey out of Austria was to Rome via Venice. In Italy (1914-1915) he met with Serbs, Croats, Russians, and tried to ascertain whether Italy itself would join the battle against Austria and Germany. It became clear to Masaryk from his conversations with the Russian journalist V. P. Svatkovskij that the outcome of the war was going to be decided in the west, not in Russia.<sup>63</sup> However, the goal of independence for Czechs and Slovaks would depend

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 402.

<sup>61</sup> Masaryk obtained monetary assistance from the Chicago based Czechoslovak auxiliary committee. *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Szporluk, *op. cit.*, 32, 176.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 42.

on organizing the far-flung Czech and Slovak diaspora communities against Austria; in this extra-territorial organization the Czech and Slovak community in Russia would play the decisive role, not only as a military force, but also as an instrument of political propaganda world-wide.

To answer the question how Masaryk was able to garner the authority required to become leader of the Czechs and Slovaks one must look to Masaryk's work in organizing Czech and Slovak communities outside of Austria and Germany. Before Masaryk left for Italy, he travelled extensively in Russia, America and in Western Europe, and wherever he travelled he contacted Czech and Slovak émigrés and their leaders. During the war he further developed those contacts to form a unified national organization against Austria with a consistent and effective propaganda message favouring the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia. In his own words "my authority grew as I worked abroad [with the émigrés]".<sup>64</sup>

Throughout the war Masaryk was active outside of Bohemia. An anti-Austrian National Council was, however, formed inside Bohemia and was complemented by the Czechoslovakian National Council abroad that Masaryk headed. Contacts between the two were maintained by an ad hoc intelligence agency. As chairman of the Czechoslovak Committee Abroad, Masaryk signed an official declaration of war by the Czech and Slovak nation(s)<sup>65</sup> – not yet a state – against Austria-Hungary on the 14th of November 1915.<sup>66</sup> On March 20, 1917 a provisional

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>65</sup> Masaryk was part Slovak on his father's side; his mother was a Czech from the Hana region of Moravia. Masaryk believed in the linguistic kinship of Czechs and Slovaks but he also recognized that hundreds of years of Austrian and Hungarian rule separated Czechs from Slovaks politically. His philosophy of history and concept of "nation" relied on the history of religious reform movement that began in fifteenth century Bohemia; therefore, a "Czechoslovak nation" – by Masaryk's own standards of defining a "nation" historically – existed only in so far as Slovaks participated in Czech culture and history which meant first and foremost in the history of the Czech Reformation. See Čapek, op. cit., 12 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 69.

Czechoslovak state was proclaimed with Masaryk as its dictator – his wartime position before becoming president.<sup>67</sup>

Masaryk's key to the foundation of an independent Czechoslovak state was his propaganda. All sides in the war used it. Germany-Austria and their opponents lobbied the principal countries during the war. In France, Italy, England and America Masaryk countered the "antipropaganda" of Germany and Austria with his own propaganda, working to suppress Austrophile and Germanophile sentiments that might otherwise have gained currency and influenced the foreign policies of the western allies.<sup>68</sup> Germany and Austria had a long-standing and influential diplomatic corps backing their foreign policy, whereas the nascent Czechoslovak state did not have any such corps, not until Masaryk and others began to organize one.<sup>69</sup> The dissemination of propaganda was essential for the acceptance and subsequent creation of an independent Czechoslovakia; however, because this would take time Masaryk assumed that success depended on the length of the war: a longer war favoured the establishment of a Czechoslovakia free from Austrian or German control. Masaryk accurately estimated that the ensuing "war of position" would result in a long war, which meant that an independent state could, in the end, be achieved by the Czechs and Slovaks on their own terms – with some aid and recognition by the Western Allies; hence the importance of propaganda.

France, England, Italy and America were parliamentary democracies with a press that Masaryk believed favoured his brand of propaganda over Germany's or Austria's. After the fall

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

of the Tsar his propaganda even bore fruit in Russia. He came to realize that to be effective, propaganda had to be tailored to an intelligent public, and based on a knowledge of and sensitivity to the culture of Europe. Masaryk's conception of propaganda, moreover, reveals the place and purpose of morality in politics, which means that even his propaganda was viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*:

From the psychology of propaganda there is one important lesson to be learned: Do not think that people gain sympathy for their political program simply and primarily by an energetic and impassioned announcement and presentation of individual points...[P]ropaganda must be honourable. Exaggeration and outright lying do not help one's cause...it is a mistake for the protagonist to blindly justify everything [in his cause]; this is done by run-of-the-mill mercenary agents. Honourable and reasonable politics – honourable and reasonable propaganda!<sup>70</sup>

With this kind of propaganda Masaryk gained the confidence of leaders in the west. He never hid his fundamental political principles, which were moral and based on religious conviction.

“Austrophilism” was a sentiment that Masaryk had to reckon with in his propaganda campaign. The Habsburgs availed themselves of this sentiment especially near the end of the war, when they tried to convince the Western Allies that the sole culprit that could justifiably be punished was Germany. The Habsburgs, however, lost the propaganda war and their bid to keep their empire and escape responsibility for beginning hostilities. Masaryk played a major role in convincing the allies of Austria's nefarious role. In Masaryk's own words “I further brought to the president's [Wilson] attention Austrian guilt for the provocation of war; he admitted that Austria was not forced into war by Germany”.<sup>71</sup> Masaryk should take credit for defeating the pro-Austrian sentiment in Western Europe and America. Whether or not Masaryk also influenced

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světova Revoluce* (Prague: Masarykuv Ustav, 2005) 71.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

post-war policy in the direction of what would become President Wilson's Fourteen Points is not for us to argue. Masaryk claimed that Wilson modified his position on Austria on his own.<sup>72</sup> Masaryk's interpretation of Wilson's judgement, however, correlates with his own evaluation of – and propaganda – about the political situation in Europe; yet again founded upon a moral basis:

President Wilson was not biased against Austria...because of me. The American democratic program was led by a conscientious president against Prussian Germany as well as against the German Habsburgs. The war was not so much a question of power – military and political – but a moral question. However, in Vienna such a politics could not be understood and was therefore not accounted for. American democracy – democracy in general – buried Austro-Hungary along with the Habsburgs.<sup>73</sup>

Masaryk and the American president shared the conviction that democracy is based on religious foundations.<sup>74</sup> It cannot be ruled out that Masaryk was influenced by a study of American democracy. As early as 1881, Masaryk concluded his *Suicide as a Mass Social Phenomenon* with a quote from Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*:

When the religious views of the people have once been shaken, there is no greater despair, but one must promote enlightenment at any cost, because, although an enlightened and sceptical people may indulge in a tragic view of life, there is nothing more terrible than a nation at the same time ignorant, coarse, and unfaithful.<sup>75</sup>

Masaryk advocated for religious morality in democratic politics. He was therefore of like mind with Wilson and saw his concept of Czechoslovakian democracy reflected in American democracy. In its European context Masaryk's pro-democratic propaganda suggests a transfer

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světova Revoluce* (Prague: Masarykuv Ustav, 2005) 252.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>74</sup> Robert B. Pynsent, *T. G. Masaryk (1850-1937) Volume 2 Thinker and Critic* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989) 193.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970) 231.

of authority from theocracy and autocracy to a new democratic order that has, nevertheless, a religious basis and purpose.

### **The End of the War – Czechoslovakian Independence**

Masaryk's evaluation of the political situation in Europe during the war can be judged as having been perspicacious. Masaryk recommended that the German army be made to lay down its arms, by occupying Berlin if necessary; seeing that,

by this means no more lives would be lost than would be the case in the future as a result of the conditions created by the peace treaty – the result of an unsure peace...Knowing the conviction of the German nation...I was concerned that the mass of the German nation will not believe that Germany and Austria were strategically defeated.<sup>76</sup>

Indeed the case turned out just as Masaryk had feared it might. Masaryk's judgements and predictions were based on his analysis of the European moral spirit in addition to statistical information; their accuracy depended on viewing politics *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>77</sup> He noted the dissipation of moral forces – as morale – in the war. The European crisis that predated the war was already analysed by Masaryk – country by country – for its dissipation of a religious spirit. Now during the war he perceived the acute exhaustion of moral forces. Masaryk saw in the military defeat of Austria and Germany in 1918 a defeat of the spirit that informed these regimes. Outmoded and aggressive autocracies were defeated by a revolutionary democratic spirit: “In the end the Germans – believing too much in mechanism and the power of material – could not properly account for moral power”.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 253, 254.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 273.

Masaryk's understanding of moral superiority allowed for a vigorous use of military force, if employed for defensive purposes. He admitted that Wilson was a "stronger pacifist" than himself.<sup>79</sup> Masaryk organized military action for democracy against autocracy and militarism in Europe. In his war memoirs Masaryk made it clear that the forces that go into sustaining a state are the same as those that went into its creation, meaning there was a place for moral force as a combative force in Czechoslovak democracy specifically.<sup>80</sup>

A discussion of Masaryk's opinion on the use of military force would be incomplete without mentioning the Czechoslovak Legion he helped organize in Russia. This force was made up of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war as well as émigrés in Russia, and it played a decisive role in establishing the Czechoslovak state. The fact that an independent army numbering over 100 000 entered combat as representatives of a state existing only in law ensured that the creation of an independent state in fact would have the guarantee of arms. As dictator Masaryk guided the strategy of the legion. In addition to directing it across Russia to the Western Front via Vladivostok, Japan and America, Masaryk was keen on infusing the legions with the innate spirit of Czech history. In a time of war the Hussites seemed to Masaryk to be the most proper national symbol for a military force. The legions, therefore, bore the names of the more militant Czech Reformation figures such as Žižka, Prokop, Poděbrady – all military leaders in the cause of the Czech Reformation. Masaryk recalls: "resurrecting the Hussite spirit was not for the sake of a mere slogan, it was a real feeling and resolution [to fight for ideals]".<sup>81</sup> During the First World

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 137.

War the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia became famous – most notably in America – for its “anabasis” back to the battlefields in Western Europe.<sup>82</sup> In Masaryk’s words: “We achieved our independence by fighting in Siberia, France and Italy...This revolution was unique: its armed form was not carried out at home on our soil, but outside of our borders on foreign soil”.<sup>83</sup> Not to forget the home-front: “Revolution outside of our borders was made possible because from the very beginning of the war and throughout the war there was agreement with it at home [in Bohemia]”.<sup>84</sup> Masaryk’s strategy to create a democratic state included his application of his philosophy of history. His plan for Czechoslovakia’s independence and democracy can be represented both as having been a modern original creation and a resurrection of an ideal understood historically.

Masaryk recognized the importance of fighting for independence to achieve it on one’s own terms. Czechoslovakia was established in large part by the vigorous use of arms and Masaryk believed that democracy would maintain itself as long as military force would be used in its defence; this is an explicit tenet that Masaryk bequeathed to his nation: “My position was and is: we had a right to our own state, but this right must be defended and maintained by ourselves, with our own strength”.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Pynsent, op. cit., 194.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 303.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 305, 306.

After independence was achieved<sup>86</sup> the political parties within the new country held differing opinions concerning the kind of constitution Czechoslovakia should have. Masaryk desired above all a republican democracy completely independent from the Habsburg monarchy. Others desired a monarchy with a Russian dynast as its head; the Russian Revolution, however, influenced Czechoslovakian politics in the direction of republicanism, and the Social Democrats were recognized by Masaryk as the sole party that upheld this kind of constitution.<sup>87</sup>

With the war over Masaryk appraised the political settlement of Europe as more just than the *status quo antebellum*, despite its shortcomings. Masaryk believed that tensions among states in Europe would continue to ease after the war:

The lessons learned from the war, we hope, will strengthen peace despite all antagonisms. The defects of the peace settlement in Europe can be resolved peacefully case-by-case. Despite all the difficulties it can be said that we can see the emergence of a free and federated Europe in place of absolutism and the domination of the continent by a single or small group of powers...In such a new Europe the independence of even the smallest individual nation can be guaranteed...the unity of Europe is possible.<sup>88</sup>

Writing these words in 1925 Masaryk believed that the First World War as a world revolution secured the place of democracy; because his reason for establishing democracy was also specific to the spiritual needs of the European this meant that the religious requirements of European individuals and society could now begin to be fulfilled. Masaryk's idea of religious renovation in Europe was built upon his philosophy of history. He established a democracy in Czechoslovakia not merely as an institutional structure, but also to provide a means by which the modern European spiritual crisis could be overcome efficiently, peacefully and in accord with the

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<sup>86</sup> Officially, 28 October, 1918.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 340.

progress of history. Masaryk's irenic vision of a modern ecumenical civilization is reminiscent of Komenský's diplomatic mission in seventeenth century Europe after the Thirty Years War, but was distinguished by Masaryk's addition of modern democracy as the vehicle that would return Bohemia to Czech rule.

For Masaryk democracy was Europe's existential and religious necessity, an antidote to the confusion of transition from one spiritual order to another; it resolved the spiritual crisis by instituting not only a republic but a religious principle as its foundation. We must therefore conclude in agreement with Roman Szporluk, who believed that given the evidence of Masaryk's life and thought it is probable that Masaryk would never have accepted the Munich *Dictat* in 1938.<sup>89</sup> Masaryk's defence of democracy was a defence of a religious institution. We suggest that Masaryk instituted a Christian republicanism in Czechoslovakia that was antithetical to the surrounding dictatorships, Nazi and fascist regimes.

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<sup>89</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 165.

## CHAPTER 3: MASARYK'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

### **Augustine, Vico, Comte and Herder**

In order to understand Masaryk's philosophy of history we must begin by discussing Augustine's *City of God* (c. 410) – the work that initiated the Christian philosophy of history genre. In his *City of God* Augustine portrayed secular political history as alienated from God and separated from the spiritual history of God's chosen people (prophets and Christians), whose march through time was seen as an exodus out of the secular world (*civitas terrena*) into the city of God or *civitas Dei*.<sup>90</sup> Political history in Augustine's philosophy of history was a story of a civilization's unregenerate decline, or *saeculum senescens*.<sup>91</sup> Augustine's concept of the decline of secular history was subsequently not acknowledged in some of the most important and influential modern philosophies of history, but the idea that God as Providence or spirit (*Geist*) determines and orders history was developed in relation to modern secular history.<sup>92</sup>

Nonetheless the roots of modern western philosophies of history go back to Christian faith and revelation, if not to ancient Greek myth and philosophy; they may be considered rationalizations of the question of the meaning of history, which is a question relative to a specific European religious tradition and philosophic experience. Modern historical conscious-

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<sup>90</sup> Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin Volume 12: Published Essays 1966-1985* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990) 78, 105.

<sup>91</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Order and History Volume Four: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974) 268.

<sup>92</sup> Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers of the Western World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961) 225.

ness carries a heavy mortgage, and Masaryk assumed it in his own Christian philosophy of history.

Masaryk's interpretation of history emerges out of the matrix of a Christian philosophy of history where the "instrument of interpretation was the fundamental dichotomy of sacred and profane history".<sup>93</sup> One of the philosophers whose work had an influence on Masaryk's philosophy of history was Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), whose *Scienza Nuova* modified the traditional Augustinian conception of sacred-secular history by developing the idea of meaning in profane history by "leaving sacred history untouched".<sup>94</sup> This work opened the door to modern sociological studies of history, whose methods Masaryk employed. In his *Scienza Nuova* Vico portrayed Christian spirituality as only a part of the general course of profane history, with the assumption that a particular spirituality or religious tradition may be exhausted in some civilizations, like the ancient Roman.<sup>95</sup> Masaryk's belief that Europe was going through a spiritual crisis indicated by a loss of religious belief reflects Vico's insights into the cycles of spiritual history. Masaryk, however, appreciated Vico for not neglecting his roots in the Christian religion, its history and philosophy:

I was particularly engrossed by Vico's genius. His philosophy of society and history, his psychological penetration into social forces and their function, his comprehension of the spirit of Roman law and culture – again and always a synthesis of Catholicism and classical antiquity, for Vico was a priest and at the same time also a philosopher of history and the first of modern

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<sup>93</sup> William Petropulos and Gilbert Weiss, eds. *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin Volume 33: The Drama of Humanity and other Miscellaneous Papers, 1939-1985* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2004) 50.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>95</sup> Richard H. Popkin, ed., *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) 503.

sociologist. Indeed, Catholicism, with its long ecclesiastical tradition, led to history and a philosophy of history. Vico's predecessor was Bossuet, and so on.<sup>96</sup>

Two other predecessors that most influenced Masaryk's philosophy of history were Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) and Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Insights from Herder's, Comte's and Vico's philosophies of history are synthesized in Masaryk's philosophy of history. Herder appealed to Masaryk because he was the first philosopher of history to account for ethnic nationalities as the vessels of meaning in history "arranged organically as a great chain of ascending perfection".<sup>97</sup> Masaryk took Herder's historical concept of "nation" and "humanity" and applied it to his interpretation of Czech history; he also applied Herder's concepts to his political program: "Herder especially... desired a renewal of Czech independence".<sup>98</sup> For insights into the religious question in modern Europe Masaryk looked to Comte's philosophy of history. Masaryk believed that Comte's proclamation of the establishment of a new religion in Europe on the basis of progressively evolving scientific reason, which would eventually supplant the religious dogmas of traditional Christianity, demonstrated sensitivity to the spiritual condition of modern European; Comte, like Masaryk, appreciated the spiritual situation in Europe as revolutionary.<sup>99</sup> From Vico, Masaryk accepted profane history as a field to be studied by the methods of modern sociology. From Herder, he took the idea that meaning in history is attributed to the peoples of the earth organized into nationalities, each with its own unique historical development and culture. And Masaryk transformed Comte's belief in the spiritual progress of

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 38.

<sup>97</sup> W. Windelband, *A History of Philosophy* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1914) 528.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 399.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Baldwin, *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 322.

scientific reason into the belief that spiritual progress in Europe comes with the completion of the Czech Reformation which is inherently moral and Christian, and – despite its pedigree – squared with modern science and democracy as well as historical revelation and metaphysical theism.<sup>100</sup> The ideas of these three philosophers of history were thus reinterpreted by Masaryk in support of his vision of democracy in twentieth century Europe:

As the first great sociologist Vico recognized in the bygone era an epoch of gods and heroes, only to be followed by a human era. A like understanding was proclaimed by Comte when he called the first epoch theological, after which – through the intermediary metaphysical stage – a new era of positive science would be established. Vico’s differentiation of the eras of gods, heroes, and men we would express today as the conflict between aristocracy and democracy.<sup>101</sup>

Masaryk’s interpretation of history thus became his political philosophy.

### **The Transition Period**

In his interpretation of European history Masaryk wrote about a “transition period”.<sup>102</sup> During this transition period, which he believed defined modernity, Roman Catholic theocracy was dissolving and a new social, political and spiritual order in Europe was emerging in its place. Masaryk believed that the transition period was initiated by a religious reformation, specifically by the Czech Reformation of the fifteenth century which was regarded as the first major schism in medieval western Christendom. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the historical process of transition had not yet been completed; a conflict between old and new conceptions of spiritual-social order revealed itself in psychological and psychic symptoms of the modern

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<sup>100</sup> Baldwin, op. cit., 322.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 371.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Modern Man and Religion* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 37 ff.

European individual's spiritual crisis.<sup>103</sup> The individual's spiritual crisis was therefore partially determined by the history of institutional religion in Europe. Masaryk thus couched his sociological studies of the individual into his philosophy of history as political philosophy. His conception of history as the story of a particular religious institution relates Masaryk's philosophy of history to other philosophies of history such as Augustine's; but his understanding that religious renovation was possible, that the crisis of transition could be resolved, and that the present social and political conditions of Europe could be improved along religious lines relates Masaryk's philosophy of history most to Komenský's theology. Vico's Catholicism, Comte's anti-Christian stance, and Herder's German heritage must have alienated Masaryk to a certain degree from these three thinkers, although he used their insights to construct his own philosophy of history. Masaryk's insistence on maintaining Christian spirituality – based on a Czech national-religious precedent – and his belief in unchanging human nature conspired against a total acceptance of any one of these thinkers' philosophies of history; not so with Komenský, who did not so much influence Masaryk's philosophy of history as he informed it with its theological and metaphysical foundations. In the grand scheme of transition in Europe Masaryk's democracy was meant to initiate a renovation of religion: the religious history of Europe continued with an ineluctable development towards democracy. In Masaryk's thought modern democracy should be *mutatis mutandis* a new and renovated Christendom.<sup>104</sup>

Masaryk needed to modify Comte's idea of historical transition from traditional religion to make room for his idea of morality and his interpretation of Czech religious history, but he

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<sup>103</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Modern Man and Religion* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 51.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

would maintain – with Comte – the idea that the institution of medieval theocracy was passing: “What I consider as defining the loss of [traditional] religion is...the desire for a different, more viable, pure and perfected form of religion”.<sup>105</sup> A new spirituality or renovated religion would not only inform the individual’s soul but the whole social order as well, thereby resolving the crisis of transition both individually and collectively in politics. In Masaryk’s philosophy of history the progress towards democracy was a progress towards the ideal of humanity, the simultaneous realization of a new religious consciousness and a new politics in history.<sup>106</sup>

Masaryk observed how, during the transition period, various European nations drew from their respective histories particular moral energies, each according to their culture. The choice for what kind of moral spirit could be adopted by each culture was only partially determined by the nation’s cultural-historical context. The option to choose a moral principle with which to sustain individual as well as social life demonstrates a degree of indeterminacy of fate in Masaryk’s philosophy, especially regarding the direction a society can take based on its historical store of culture; thus, for example, from German history and its cultural context Masaryk argued that the Germans could have chosen a Beethovenian spirit over the diametrically opposed Bismarckian spirit, the latter representing violent force and state mechanism, and the former humanity and democracy.<sup>107</sup> According to Masaryk’s interpretation, in Germany the Bismarckian spirit prevailed and informed Prussian politics. The choice that could have been made from

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<sup>105</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 292.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) xvii.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 281.

within the German cultural-historical matrix for a different morality based on humanity and democracy was passed over with consequences that Masaryk spelled out in his propaganda:

The humanistic ideals of Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Kant, and Schiller that were drawn from participation in the development of the West...were replaced by Pan-German imperialism. "Berlin-Baghdad" represents an attempt to gain lordship over Europe and from there over Asia and Africa. The ideal of the old world is demonstrated by this project: Germany continues and maintains the ideals of the Roman imperium...opposed to this the Western ideal of organizing all of humanity, by first unifying Europe and America [is posited].<sup>108</sup>

Masaryk's nod to the potentially positive influence of German intellectual culture in contemporary Europe was, however, rare considering his stand against both Austria and Germany and his generalizing German philosophy as subjective and egotistical. In his interpretation of the crisis of transition Masaryk presented "subjectivism" and "egoism" as the essential faults of modern Europeans, both of which were most fully developed in German philosophy especially: "this [type of] metaphysical titanism necessarily led the German subjectivists to moral isolation; the fantasies of Fichte and Schelling gave birth to Schopenhauer's nihilism and pessimism".<sup>109</sup> Masaryk considered much of modern German philosophy an obstacle to his vision of democracy. Against the negative symptoms of the critical period Masaryk posited his own "objectivism" and choice of spiritual forces to draw upon. He believed that his antidotes to the transition period were available as inheritances from Czech history and culture. We can now turn to the particular national history that Masaryk used to construct his philosophy of history, revealing it as the empirical anchor of his political philosophy.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 282.

### **Symbols of National History**

When Masaryk wrote and spoke of democracy it was often with the predicate term “humanistic”, in Czech *humanita*, which denoted “various moral and religious elements which were the pillars of his [Masaryk’s] philosophy of Czech history”.<sup>110</sup> Masaryk insisted that for Czechs and other Europeans the Czech Reformation – with its ideal of religious morality – still had practical import to democracy and the contemporary social situation in Europe.<sup>111</sup> For Masaryk the Czech Reformation was the most significant and defining moment of European history because it inaugurated at once the principle of a *national* religious movement and the collapse of western European religious unity; in his mind modern European history began at this point.<sup>112</sup> Masaryk appealed to modern European humanity to instate a morality that had its precedent in a national religious reform movement; he states: “The moral foundation of all politics is humanity and humanity is our national program”.<sup>113</sup> Masaryk’s philosophy of history was therefore also made to cater to practical political requirements.

According to Masaryk all subsequent European history would be defined by the process of reformation and, since the eighteenth century, by revolution as well.<sup>114</sup> The transition period of European history would therefore have to refer to its precedent of the Czech Reformation for its resolution. Masaryk affirmed his belief in humanity and democracy as the new order that would emerge out of the conflict with the old absolutist theocracy; he therefore stressed specific

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<sup>110</sup> Kovtun, op. cit., 5.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974)13, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 374.

<sup>114</sup> Szporluk, op. cit.,124.

democratic aspects of the Czech Reformation to make his case for the Czech national mission,<sup>115</sup> as well as the historical factors that determined the Czech nation's tendency for democracy: "we have neither a national dynasty or nobility, nor old military traditions, nor a politically organized church... for these reasons our renewed state had to be a democracy".<sup>116</sup> His philosophy of history gave meaning to national politics by an appeal to the national ideal of Christian morality *and* it directed the practical course of the Czech nation in contemporary Europe towards democracy. Democracy in Masaryk's Czechoslovakia was an attempt at creating a post-critical social, political and spiritual order and was therefore meaningful only if it affected all of Europe, considering the pan-European extent of the spiritual crisis it was meant to cure. Masaryk believed that the idea of a national-historical moral precedent did not contradict the assumption of European spiritual unity and the universality of humanity. He harmonized his focus on Bohemian history with his vision of pan-European and global revolution. In his opinion the Czech Reformation was the first manifestation of a crisis of European religious conscience, stating: "...the response that our reformation evoked throughout Europe testifies that it was spirit – mainly the Czech spirit – that set the great struggle in motion".<sup>117</sup>

Masaryk chose his national symbols from Czech Reformation history. He did not believe that pre-Reformation events and personages should have much influence over the spirit of contemporary Czechs and their politics: the conversion to the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity by Cyril and Methodius, the martyrdom of King Wenceslas, the life of St. Ludmila

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) 8.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 358, 359.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) 5.

– are incidents and personages in Czech history whose spirit demonstrated a medieval piety that Masaryk wanted to disown for the political attitude that it potentially fostered. Roman Szporluk notes Masaryk stating:

Self-sacrifice has been our ethical ideal since Wenceslas, St. Ludmila, John of Nepomuk, Hus, and the Unitas Fratrum...This is a great danger, for the idea of martyrdom will become a commonplace to the nation which toys with it constantly.<sup>118</sup>

Masaryk wanted to disassociate contemporary Czechs from a part of their history for the sake of resolving the modern spiritual crisis in favour of democracy. He chose instead the figure of Jan Hus.<sup>119</sup> Masaryk believed that the religious movement in Bohemia inspired by Hus' martyrdom (1415) was a definitive expression of the Czech national spirit; this was due to his interpretation of the Czech Reformation as Europe's first nationally conscious religious reform movement.<sup>120</sup> "Moral striving" for a Christian spirituality free from the bonds of institutionalized dogma was according to Masaryk first proclaimed by the Czechs in their reformation.<sup>121</sup> After the martyrdom of Hus Bohemia was made the target of a crusade and was thus separated from the corporate organization of Christendom, and labelled a heretic kingdom.<sup>122</sup> The old political and spiritual organization of Europe was changed by this proto-nationalist freedom movement in the name of religion. Jan Žižka (1376-1424) and the Taborites repelled the brunt of the crusader invasions. For Masaryk, Žižka symbolized the militant wing of the Czech Reformation. Masaryk has admitted to not being a pacifist, and in his interpretation of the Hussite wars Žižka

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<sup>118</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 87.

<sup>119</sup> Ernest Denis, *Huss et la Guerre des Hussites* (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1930) 1 ff.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) 7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>122</sup> Denis, op. cit., 173 ff.

and the Taborites are portrayed as morally justified defenders of Bohemia and the Czech nation. Besides Žižka and the Taborites, Masaryk included as another national symbol Petr Chelčický (1390-1460) who indeed preached pacifism. Chelčický is remembered as the forerunner of the Bohemian-Moravian Brethren, whose last bishop was Jan Amos Komenský. Masaryk had Chelčický symbolise peaceful Bohemian Christianity not moved to violence, despite having every opportunity to do so. Masaryk tempered Žižka as the symbol of militancy with the symbol of Chelčický's pacifism. These historical personages in Masaryk's interpretation of Czech history were meant to perform the task of delivering a nation from political *and* spiritual crisis; therefore, Masaryk recommended them as examples to be emulated in contemporary Europe, especially by the Czechs and Slovaks.

The list of national symbols is not complete without Jan Amos Komenský (John Amos Comenius) (1592-1670). Komenský, the last bishop of the Bohemian Brethren, was expelled from Bohemia and Moravia after the end of the Thirty Years War (1648) along with other Protestants. He died in exile, in Holland, but his fame and legacy as an early-modern educational reformer remain well known.<sup>123</sup> Komenský, together with the other Czech personages symbolize – in composite – the best of what Masaryk believed the Czech spirit stood for. He made his choice of symbols while considering the contemporary social and political situation and its requirements. Masaryk's desire to use history to resurrect a spirit for the sake of democracy could be seen as a transfer of authority from theocracy to democracy, with the democratic state stepping into the shoes of medieval theocracy. Masaryk employed the Czech Reformation figures

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<sup>123</sup> See Jean Piaget's introduction in Johann Amos Comenius, *John Amos Comenius on Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967).

of Žižka, Hus, Chelčický and Komenský for his political agenda of establishing a democratic Czechoslovakia, but so far as his thought is concerned he really had little in common with any one of them, except Komenský.

### **Theocracy and Democracy**

Masaryk had the Czech Reformation and modern democracy play the role of historical protagonists and as such they were never presented without also presenting their antagonists: Roman Catholicism and theocracy. Masaryk, however, was not a specialist in medieval history, nor was he a professional historiographer, even of the Reformation. His interpretation of history had the practical goal of guiding the Czech nation to independent democratic statehood. “Illumine the past with the light of the present; the reverse process is an illusion” was one of his maxims.<sup>124</sup> Masaryk’s philosophy of history had two parts: first its practical applicability, arguably as a national mythology or civic theology, and second Masaryk’s insistence that everything, including history, be seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; the latter guaranteed the truth and eternal necessity of the former. If the past as political and social organizations *tout court* cannot illumine the present the same cannot be said of the spirit that Masaryk demanded for the sake of his contemporaries’ spiritual well being. The moral principle upon which the Czech Reformation was based, is indeed historical and older than the Czech Reformation or even the Middle Ages; and it cannot be denied that the Christian moral principle that Masaryk desired for his democracy also informed Roman Catholic theocracy from its very inception. In addition to the story of the

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<sup>124</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) 64.

Czech Reformation and the plight of the Czech nation the moral principle in Masaryk's philosophy has its ultimate justification beyond any particular nation or even epoch for its relation to the immortal God-given soul. Masaryk's idea of life *sub specie aeternitatis* transcends national boundaries and contradicts his philosophy of history. The paradox of Masaryk's philosophy of history is in its having both the national-historic and the eternal-spirit inform it as two distinct elements of historical interpretation.

The paradox remained unresolved by Masaryk, who did not even examine it. To do so would have required a critique of his philosophy of history for its theological and metaphysical foundations in Judeo-Christian revelation and Greek philosophy. His adaptation of Comte's idea of a progression from metaphysics towards pure scientific reason may have clouded his perception of the connections between ancient, medieval, and modern philosophy, especially regarding theology and metaphysics making it distasteful to treat modern philosophy for its theology. Masaryk would have liked to have believed that he was not connected to pre-modern theocratic and scholastic modes of thinking; but it will be demonstrated that pre-modern modes of thinking connected his political philosophy to a specific theology as with an umbilical cord. But first, more on Masaryk's interpretation of medieval theocracy, which led to his alienation from theology and the reason, we believe, why he did not look to the foundations of his thought in theology and metaphysics.

The Middle Ages were significant to Masaryk for having been a "systematically constructed monumental edifice" of theocracy.<sup>125</sup> Masaryk's philosophy of history portrayed the medieval edifice as having hardened over time, becoming dogmatic and no longer able to deliver

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 7.

on its responsibility for satisfying the spiritual needs of Christians. The medieval theocratic edifice, hitherto supported by an elitist clergy, became more concerned with maintaining a hierarchical political structure than practising Christian morality. Masaryk deplored the church's loss of moral substance: the institution of medieval theocracy thus lost its purpose. Europe, however, was still Christian and pious so a new institution had to necessarily be created to satisfy the spiritual needs of people. The response in Bohemia to the moral bankruptcy of theocracy was a revolutionary religious reform movement. So Masaryk interpreted European religious history from his contemporary perspective, adding democracy as the decisive modern political element that went hand in hand with the movement of religious reform; moreover he linked both religious reform and democracy to Czech history:

The Taborites...abolished the priesthood [in the fifteenth century] and thus undermined the power of theocracy. They destroyed religious aristocratism in the conviction that from a religious point of view no man could be placed above another. They understood that there could not be a double morality – a higher morality for the clergy and a lower morality for ordinary men. Thus, in place of spiritual and religious elitism they established a religious democracy. This attitude is also apparent from the Taborite's egalitarian acceptance of women as preachers and soldiers...As the Taborite form of communism demonstrated, great emphasis was placed on political and social justice...this indicates that our struggles were aimed at reformation in the literal sense of the word and that its fundamental thrust was moral...The moral impetus underlying our reformation movement is confirmed by historical analysis.<sup>126</sup>

Religious reform and the establishment of a polity are synonymous in Masaryk's political philosophy and philosophy of history. Czech democracy was meant to continue a religious movement, and in no way was it meant to do away with traditional Christian piety and morality, but rather fulfill it under modern circumstances.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 8, 9.

Masaryk interpreted the political and spiritual struggles of Europe, from the Czech Reformation up to the First World War, as one continuous story. He believed that democracy was inherently moral and bound to victory; and to secure his nation's place and direction in the world he stressed the source of religious morality to have been the Czech Reformation: "The striving for a higher moral level, for a purer, more intense piety – this is the hallmark of our Czech Reformation".<sup>127</sup> The spirit that Masaryk sought to resurrect through his philosophy of history and for the cause of democracy and independence was, however, also eternal; it could not have been otherwise considering Masaryk's insistence that even history be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. Masaryk's democracy was therefore inherently religious and theological; but because it required a philosophy of history for its support, it was also inherently the product of modern historical consciousness and was able to rationalize the historical demise of medieval theocracy. Masaryk kept his Christian morality and ate his positivist cake.

### **Enlightenment, Revolution, and Historicism**

Following the Czech Reformation was the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the latter fomenting fresh opposition against theocratic and absolutist rule in Europe. Masaryk believed that these two late-eighteenth century movements were, like the Czech Reformation, representative of the modern movements of humanity and democracy. In the Enlightenment and the French Revolution Masaryk believed he saw a historic connection with the Czech Reformation.<sup>128</sup> Czech "national awakeners" of the nineteenth century were at once carriers of

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 15 ff.

the Czech Reformation spirit and participants in the general Europe-wide revolutionary movement that began in France:

I maintain that the national revival that began toward the end of the eighteenth century already contained certain elements derived from the Reformation. Men like Kollár, Palacký, Šafařík are direct descendants of the Bohemian Brethren...The struggle of our national revival to promote enlightenment is a continuation of our reformation, just as the French Revolution – from which we gained so much – was the continuation of the French Reformation temporarily halted by absolutism.<sup>129</sup>

Masaryk maintained the Czech Reformation as his traditional Christian inheritance and proclaimed himself decidedly on the side of revolutionary progress in modern Europe. Resolving this apparent contradiction he attacked historicism for its tendency to separate the reader of history from his present situation. He also believed that historicism fostered romanticism and conservatism. He likewise attacked romantics for their inability to find actual peace in the present, escaping instead to an imaginary past:

People were fleeing back to the old regime, even as far back as possible, to the Middle Ages, for then there was political and social tranquillity, there was unity and reconciliation...People were fleeing back to the past, they were carrying on a reaction, but that reaction was, after all, only a forced one, and it was being led by people whose nerves had been rattled by the ‘poesy’ of the [French] Revolution.<sup>130</sup>

How can Masaryk’s interpretation of the Czech Reformation be reconciled with his criticism of historicism and the romantics except by assuming that his vision of life *sub specie aeternitatis* was his belief in a living spirit that was also historical? But is this not just a simple definition of the Christian faith? Accepting this point as a valid summation of Masaryk’s philosophy justifies a critique of its theological and metaphysical foundations.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 13, 14.

<sup>130</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Modern Man and Religion* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 40, 43.

In a lecture delivered in 1895 Masaryk presented his argument against historicism complete with a conviction that moral regeneration trumps empirical science when it comes to human existence:

It is the philosophical basis of an outlook that may be called ‘realism’...the central imperative of this philosophical approach may be put this way: always strive to understand everything in its concrete reality, by going to its core. The first intellectual requirement is to understand things as they are, rather than to analyze processes of change and development. Naturally, the quality of any phenomenon is affected by its evolution, but attention must not be focused exclusively on historical change per se. Historicism often has an unwholesome effect even on individual personal character. A person lost in the stream of continual change becomes vague and indecisive in responding to the needs of every-day life...The past should be subordinated to the present, although the past of course illuminates the present...the perspective of the present makes the past significant...historical empiricism has no such anchor in present reality...our own lives are more important for future generations, and far nearer, than the lives of our misty ancestors.<sup>131</sup>

But is not Masaryk’s philosophy of history based on a Comtean conception of development? And does it not also adhere to Vico’s analysis of society? The answer to both of these questions is yes, which suggests that Masaryk’s philosophy of history was inherently historicist. So why did he disown historicism? The answer must be sought in the Christian theological and metaphysical foundations of Masaryk’s thought, which demonstrate a way of looking at the world that is strikingly similar to Komenský’s. In his refutation of historicism Masaryk described his “realism” as striving to get at the “core” of “concrete reality”; even his choice of words echo those that Komenský used in his most popular work, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*. In this seventeenth century allegorical story of a pilgrim’s progress the protagonist criticises the “philosophers” for their inability to go beyond external appearances and

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) 115.

get to the “kernel” of things – the “core” of Masaryk’s “realism”.<sup>132</sup> Masaryk’s political realism is a reflection of Komenský’s “pedagogical realism”; the binding tie is in objectivity: Masaryk’s idea of objectivity or “objectivism”, which he posited against the “subjectivism” he perceived in German philosophy, was a concept pioneered by Komenský in his pedagogical works *Orbis Pictus*, *Janua Linguarum*, and *Schola Ludus*; in these works Komenský demonstrated his realism through his method of teaching at once the word and the thing it signified.<sup>133</sup> Komenský, seventeenth century educational reformer and theologian, spoke directly to Masaryk’s realism and political philosophy.

Historicism was however advocated by the most famous of Czech and Slovak national awakeners, František Palacký – one of Masaryk’s heroes and “father of Czech historiography”.<sup>134</sup> Palacký was a major influence on Masaryk. Masaryk saw reflected in Palacký’s interpretation of Czech history his own philosophy:

Palacký showed us that our Czech idea is truly a world idea, an existential question...the idea that the relation of man to man, of nation to nation, must be determined in the most profound possible sense, *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>135</sup>

Masaryk, however, believed that Palacký’s historicism had consequences detrimental to the cause of progress and democracy:

History is a great teacher, and this is especially true in our case...but the supreme teacher is the present, actual life itself. And there is no point denying that we are still drawn away from the present and toward the past more than we need and that this preoccupation poses a serious

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<sup>132</sup> John Amos Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1972) 36, 37.

<sup>133</sup> Jan V. Novák, *Jan Amos Komenský: Jeho život a spisy* (Prague: Dědictví Komenského, 1932) 684.

<sup>134</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) 122 ff.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

danger to our national cause...above all we need to grasp the present, and Palacký's influence is not altogether beneficial in this regard. Palacký's historicism has led many of our best people toward sterile conservatism.<sup>136</sup>

Masaryk argued against historicism because it conflicted with his poetic imagination which he exercised while building a state; it also argued against the Christian moral standard that Masaryk upheld as an eternal moral standard. At the end of the war in Czechoslovakia Masaryk saw sterile conservatism manifest itself in those who wanted, instead of democracy, a monarchy based on historic feudal rights (of the Bohemian Crown). Masaryk's anti-historicism gave him the flexibility to allow for natural rights as the basis of the constitution of his new democratic republic whose borders would have otherwise been circumscribed by historic feudal boundaries.<sup>137</sup> Masaryk answered the supporters of historic Bohemian rights with a call to the ideals of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment in his attempt to persuade the Czechs and Slovaks that historicism and historical scholarship should not "constitute the main force of [their] national consciousness".<sup>138</sup>

We hazard to assume that in place of historical scholarship Masaryk wanted principles to rule in politics, but we would be deceived, for "[p]olitical practice is not merely a logical extension of theoretical principles; it must stand on its own merits".<sup>139</sup> But what are those merits? To answer this question we must refer not only to Masaryk's political creativity, but also to his understanding of the place of morality in politics.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 113, 114.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 395.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 136.

### Morality and History

Masaryk's understanding of morality was essentially Christian. His interpretation of the Czech Reformation stressed the Christian moral inheritance of Europe. He considered progress as a step forward, away from the theocratic Middle Ages, but the moral substance of contemporary Europe and its politics was derived from traditional Christian religion. Masaryk lived by his interpretation of Christian morality in private and in public and recommended this mode of living to others for the good of European society. He believed that Christian morality was meant to be practised in the modern political context. Is this really a case of Masaryk having his cake and eating it too? Can we say that Masaryk's thought combined old and new? But this generalization does not lend itself to explicating why Masaryk necessarily supported religion *and* modern secular republican democracy. Masaryk's conception of morality and politics bears testimony to the necessity of reconciling present thought and action with the historical fact of Christian religious revelation. The paradox between historical religious revelation and historical change was operative in Masaryk's mind and is demonstrated by his treating modern life and politics *sub specie aeternitatis* while simultaneously constructing his philosophy of history based on a belief in progress and revolution. Masaryk's modern historical consciousness struggled to reconcile itself with an atavistic concern for the soul and the revealed message of God. For Masaryk history was indeed more than a teacher, it was the root of living morality exemplified first and foremost in the person and ethics of Jesus.<sup>140</sup>

Masaryk believed that the most valuable thing in history was moral example. His belief was the product of a Christian historical consciousness influenced by Herder and tinged with

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<sup>140</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 295.

Platonism; it held that history enters present life as morality and informs politics through individuals and nations. Masaryk was not interested in historical studies detailing changes in thinking/mentality through time.<sup>141</sup> Morality's precedent and continual standard meant that revelation was true for all times. This is a traditional Judeo-Christian understanding of the authority of revelation and it underlies Masaryk's understanding of morality in his philosophy of history which is otherwise Comtean for its belief in revolutionary progress.<sup>142</sup> Masaryk's convictions were based on his consciousness of belonging to a Christian civilization; for him the modern European was a "true Christian".<sup>143</sup> Masaryk could not abandon the memory of his authoritative moral examples because his historical consciousness was at the same time also his Christian consciousness. All of Masaryk's national heroes were, in one way or another, examples of Christian morality. Masaryk, however, took morality as the means to achieve democracy in Czechoslovakia. His interpretation of the course of history conceptualized morality as having slipped away from the institution of medieval theocracy and into its new abode in modern democracy. Masaryk believed that this particular movement or course of European history began in Bohemia and was bound to finish there with the re-institution of democracy and Czech rule.<sup>144</sup> The emerging democratic order in Europe was, however, also to be international. Masaryk's interpretation of the First World War as a world revolution was linked directly to his idea that Czech history initiated the movement towards religious moral reform in the whole of Europe:

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<sup>141</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) xvii.

<sup>142</sup> David Walsh ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin Volume 6: Anamnesis on the Theory of History and Politics* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 385.

<sup>143</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 372.

<sup>144</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 7.

The war was a world war; it was not merely a conflict between France and Germany (over Alsace and Lorraine); neither was it a fight between Germans and Russians, or Germans and Slavs. All of these and other issues were a part of a great war for freedom and democracy. The war was a struggle between theocratic absolutism and humanistic democracy. The world therefore participated in the war and the war thus – because it took so long – spread to become a world revolution.<sup>145</sup>

Comparing World War I with the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) Masaryk underlined the religious significance of the latter, saying that the Peace of Westphalia was meant to restructure Europe after a religious revolution, while the former was understood to be a continuation of this revolution, but in a political form.<sup>146</sup>

During the Reformation large-scale theocracies fell apart into smaller theocracies, and the state was, thereby, strengthened; in Protestant countries the state sponsored reformation, while in Catholic countries counter-reformation was the policy pursued – in both cases state absolutism was strengthened and replaced church absolutism. Revolutions arose against state absolutism, lasting until our times.<sup>147</sup>

European society and political order were changed in reformation and revolution; they were still in flux in Masaryk's day. With his sweeping vision of the political and religious history of Europe in mind, Masaryk decided that he would have a hand in guiding the course of modern European history to its completion in democracy based on Christian morality. His philosophy of history was an important means by which he directed this political action *sub specie aeternitatis*.

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<sup>145</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 338.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

## CHAPTER 4: MASARYK'S PHILOSOPHY OF DEMOCRACY

### **Czechoslovakian Democracy**

Masaryk wanted democracy as an abode for a regenerated Christian spirit; however, despite his avowal of Jesus' ethics for both personal and public life he had no desire to reinstate a hierarchical theocratic institution or join the church to the state.<sup>148</sup> Instead Masaryk established a democratic state in his image of history and morality as a replacement for European theocracy, autocracy and aristocracy and he advocated the separation of church and state. Masaryk's Czechoslovakia was modern and progressive: universal suffrage was proclaimed and a national women's rights movement was supported, by Masaryk.<sup>149</sup> It is therefore pertinent that we outline some of the practical aspects of Masaryk's republican model of democracy, remembering that he stressed these issues in 1925 as president of Czechoslovakia:

1) Nationalism must go hand in hand with internationalism because the two are in a reciprocal relationship where by an increase in one results in an increase in the other. Nations themselves are to be strengthened and defended because of their role as "organs of humanity".<sup>150</sup>

2) The present political and cultural situation in Europe demands a synthesis of cultures. States such as Czechoslovakia are "mixed" states wherein minorities have an important role to play in bringing about this synthesis.

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<sup>148</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 327.

<sup>149</sup> H. Gordon Skilling, *T. G. Masaryk: Against the Current, 1882-1914* (University Park Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) 114 ff.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 357.

3) Czechoslovakia will play the role of advocate for democracy both within its borders and without. The country must be aware of its creation out of democratic freedom for democratic freedom. But democracy is nowhere perfectly realized,<sup>151</sup> and all existing democratic states are but “experiments in democracy”.

4) Czechoslovakia is comparable to America because of similar historical social and political conditions that conditioned both to become democracies. Neither had a dynasty, national nobility, an old military tradition, or a politically recognized church of the Papal or Tsarist kind that was recognized by absolutist and theocratic states.<sup>152</sup>

5) Now that Czechoslovakia is independent a democracy must be positively constructed in society, meaning that ingrown habits of thinking – the result of centuries of absolutist propaganda which made for “reactionary” and “negative democratism” – must be turned into active participation in a real democracy where the citizens are actively engaged in striving towards the democratic ideal.<sup>153</sup>

6) The democratic ideal is expressed as “by the people, with the people, for the people”; therefore, “humanity” rather than a monarchy or the church is the foundation of a democratic state, thereby also emphasising democracy’s modern status in the course of history.<sup>154</sup>

7) The emphasis in a democracy should be on constitutional creativity and not on governing citizens. Direct democracy is the ideal, but given the large populations of states a democracy needs to be parliamentary and delegated.

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<sup>151</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 358.

<sup>152</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 358, 359.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 359.

8) Democracy supports individualism and freedom because democracy arose out of modern individualism. In a democracy authority is not in the domain of castes or estates, but in the qualification of specialists in the administration. Therefore, in a democracy all must be educated as potential elected leaders. Qualification becomes a question of merit. Equality in a democracy is expressed through equal opportunity.<sup>155</sup>

9) The running of a democracy is reflected not only in knowledge of administration – technical knowledge – but in a political understanding of the nation's goal; hence, the differentiation of the statesman from the politician.<sup>156</sup>

10) Democracy is supported by modern scientific education. The method of science shares with democracy the need for experimental freedom and criticism. A true democrat does not fear scientific discoveries.<sup>157</sup>

11) The foreign policy of a democracy is a general policy promoting peace and freedom in the world predicated on the unity of democratic countries.<sup>158</sup>

12) Democratic diplomacy is appointed by the parliament and is guided by the ideal that the truth is the most practical means in politics. Lies and deceit were the norms of autocratic diplomacy.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 360.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 361.

13) A more unified organization of the whole of humanity is historically determined and democracy must aid this process in so far as mutual sympathy among nations is fostered.<sup>160</sup>

14) Historical development demonstrates the changing conception of state sovereignty; the Westphalian (1648) definition and model of sovereignty was essentially theocratic and autarkic and therefore does not satisfy the new conditions of internationality and mutual dependence of modern states. Overcoming outdated notions of infallibility in jurisprudence and sovereignty in politics is an unfinished job in a democracy. Democracy must still work to relinquish the theocratic model of political order.<sup>161</sup>

After Masaryk's presidency Czechoslovakia lost its democratic status – twice. Yet even after the disruption of democratic continuity it appears that Masaryk's idea of a democratic republic, as outlined in the points above, would still be recognized as the standard of a typical democracy. This is only superficially the case. The religious foundation of Masaryk's political philosophy is not accepted within some theoretical frameworks. To what extent, if any, is the religious foundation of Masaryk's democracy the element that motivates political action and informs political decisions? If Masaryk were still alive and president in 1938 would the moral principle supporting the state have dictated that Czechoslovakia risk “going it alone” against Germany and her allies thereby changing the course of history once again? We cannot know for sure, but since Masaryk viewed Czechoslovakia as the vanguard in a historical movement at once revolutionary, modern and spiritual the likelihood of him giving up the temporal-spiritual abode of democracy without a fight would have been highly unlikely. The principle question then

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 362.

becomes whether Masaryk's appreciation of democracy in contemporary Europe has been vindicated by subsequent events in European history? What aspect of his democracy reveals itself as most noteworthy? Czechoslovakia may be praised for having been the only democracy in central Europe between 1918 and 1938, but the religious foundations of Czechoslovakia's democracy are hardly advanced as her most enduring legacy, despite Masaryk's insistence to the contrary.<sup>162</sup> But what does contemporary democratic theory and practice gain from the example of Masaryk's Czechoslovakia if it leaves out morality understood as the religious basis upon which Masaryk established his country's reason for being?

Masaryk died before everything he held most dear – religion and morality, nation and democracy – was attacked by an anti-democratic regime inspired by an altogether different kind of theology: “God speaks only to the Fuhrer; the people learn of His will only through the mediation of the Fuhrer”.<sup>163</sup>

### **Christian Morality in Politics**

Machiavelli and Loyola were names anathema to Masaryk because they represented characteristics of the old autocratic and theocratic regimes, in which immoral practices were permitted and the individual's conscience was silenced for the sake of political self-interest; moreover, they also represented the divorce between politics and morals that Masaryk associated with the Austrian and German regimes. Well before the war in 1901 Masaryk wrote: “Let us not,

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<sup>162</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 121.

<sup>163</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Political Religions* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986) 70.

therefore, dissever politics and morals”.<sup>164</sup> Against Machiavelli and Loyola, Masaryk posited Jesus as a moral example for both personal *and* public life.<sup>165</sup> Democracy was – ideally – supposed to fulfill the moral injunctions of Jesus – a new political order based on religious morality, which would – despite its religious nature – replace theocracy:

There are so many different types of religion that simply to think that whoever has a religion is ipso facto moral is an error. Morality arises from relationships of man to man.<sup>166</sup>

Nonetheless, it was the revelation of Jesus as a moral example that set the standard of human relationships: “Jesus’ religion is revealed in morality and humanity; it is humanity *sub specie aeternitatis*”.<sup>167</sup> The moral foundation of democracy was upheld, not by formal constitutional procedures and structures of democratic polity, but by a common faith in the religious substance of democratic politics, which was indicated by morals:

...written constitutions, parliaments, bureaucracies, police, the army, industry and the economy do not by themselves secure democracy, and no state secures a democracy if there is no moral reality of the citizens and agreement – at least in regards to general opinions on life and the world.<sup>168</sup>

Is Masaryk’s imperative of not separating public and private morality a return to theocracy? Is his morality a modern scholastic apology for Christian spirituality in political power: “I understand the state, state life and politics as whole life, truly *sub specie aeternitatis*”?<sup>169</sup> How

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Humanistic Ideals* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971) 120.

<sup>165</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 412.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Humanistic Ideals* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971) 114.

<sup>167</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 296.

<sup>168</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 373.

<sup>169</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 328.

can one know without differentiating the theological and metaphysical foundations of his political philosophy?

In Masaryk's thought the choice of democracy was not simply between one institutional mechanism and another, but between goodness and evil, morality and immorality, Jesus and Caesar.<sup>170</sup> From Czechs and Slovaks he demanded the choice for morality. Masaryk believed that religious morality should be the *modus operandi* in public and private life in a democracy. Moral regeneration is spiritual regeneration on earth, in states and people, in politics; democracy founded on religious morality is the political abode of this religious regeneration. Masaryk's vision of ideal democratic justice was, admittedly, active participation in God's will for the sake of life on Earth.<sup>171</sup>

Unlike some of the philosophers of his day Masaryk believed that religion was an existential requirement for Europeans. He believed this was demonstrated even in the contemporary philosophical ethics debate with philosophers such as Hume and Kant. However, unlike Hume and Kant, Masaryk insisted on religion understood as the ethics of Jesus, the belief in God, and the immortality of the soul.<sup>172</sup> The democratic movement in Europe that Masaryk assisted was based on these religious principles. The influence of an organized church was however not supposed to be felt in the new political order of democracy; Masaryk, therefore, separated church from state even as he began instilling a Christian morality into his fledgling democracy:

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<sup>170</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 406.

<sup>171</sup> Čapek, *op. cit.*, 329.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

I say that our duty is to realize the religion and ethics of Jesus, His uncorrupted and clean religion of humanity. In the love towards God and towards one's neighbour Jesus saw all laws and prophets as well as the substance of religion and morality...spiritual absolutism that partitioned worldly rule together with the state, was evil. That was truly the spirit of the Roman Empire: Caesar [Julius] supported moral and religious as well as administrative reform, as did Augustus and his followers. But a religion dictated by the state and its politics cannot satisfy the modern person.<sup>173</sup>

Democracy had stepped into the place of theocracy, but a moral foundation was maintained as its most important support:

Material and economic foundations of state and society are overemphasised; it is easy to forget that always and everywhere society was founded, and is being founded, on ideas and ideals, on morality and ways of looking at the world.<sup>174</sup>

The moral idea in Masaryk's political philosophy is the theological foundation of Masaryk's democracy: Jesus' ethics to be realized on Earth by the person whose immortal soul in correspondence with other souls and with God.<sup>175</sup> The eternal moral standard thus communicated between individuals assists them in the task of achieving an ideal democratic society. Masaryk called this cooperation between the individual and God's will "synergism".<sup>176</sup> With this concept Masaryk – who was otherwise loath to do so – approached the metaphysical foundations of his politics:

I accept democracy with its economic and material consequences, but I base it on love – on love and justice, which is the mathematics of love, and on the conviction that we are meant to help the world realize God's order, in synergy with God's will.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>174</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav 2005) 373.

<sup>175</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 327.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

For Masaryk love is an expression of religious morality and the manner with which one approaches individual relationships. In his interpretation of Christian love the nation played the significant role of beloved: “the more national, the more humane, the more humane, the more national; humanity demands positive love of one’s own nation and condemns hatred of other nations”.<sup>178</sup> Before achieving the ideal of universal humanity and the union of all democracies one must begin with one’s own nation in the role of neighbour:

active work is possible where energy can most easily be spent and where it can be consistently applied...therefore a reasonable person will work for the benefit of those who can be readily influenced – love has to be work done for the sake of the beloved; fickle sentimentality directed at the whole world is not true humanity, but rather its opposite.<sup>179</sup>

Masaryk went further in order to strike a balance between the ethical requirements of both national and universal humanity:

...with love towards one’s own nation we reject national chauvinism and hold fast to the ideal of internationality and cosmopolitanism, and we strive towards the organization of the whole of...humanity in as complete a unity as will be possible.<sup>180</sup>

Jan Patočka suggested that the apparent contradiction between the national and universal elements in Masaryk’s concept of humanity arose out of his simultaneous adherence to a positivistic philosophy of history – where progress is proclaimed – and a theistic belief in the individual’s moral freedom and immortal soul; the latter, moreover, is underpinned by theology and metaphysics, both of which conflict with Masaryk’s positivism:

In Masaryk’s understanding these two elements [of positivism and theism] are not harmonized via philosophic presentation; they are, instead, juxtaposed, simply placed beside one another;

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<sup>178</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 376.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

there is not even a clear formulation of the problem of how to think of history from the perspective of the individual as a free existence.<sup>181</sup>

Masaryk roughly squared the circle of his concept of universal humanity and national history by not criticising the theological and metaphysical foundations of his political philosophy, which may have led him to describe his understanding of Providence and his ideas of moral freedom, Christianity, community and universal humanity in greater detail. Masaryk was however concerned with the practical results of his religious conviction, not its theoretical or even logical accuracy; when it came to matters of faith Masaryk was not averse to borrowing Tertullian's *credo quia absurdum*.<sup>182</sup> For the purpose of establishing a democracy and terminating the European spiritual crisis it was enough for Masaryk to interpret Jesus' ethics without debating theology or metaphysics.

Masaryk's was a political realist because he ultimately wanted tangible results, but they had to emanate from the practical application of Christian ethics. The maintenance of a democratic state required that citizens follow Jesus' command to love, if not Jesus' advice to turn the other cheek: as a politician and state-founder Masaryk shied away from the injunction to love one's neighbour as one loves one's self, finding it more politic to enjoin his citizens to respect their neighbours by *not* committing injustices against them.<sup>183</sup> Masaryk thought that modern democracy inherited its concepts of law and morality from ancient and medieval legal theory and transformed them. Ethics then became secular, having been formulated with reference

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<sup>181</sup> Jan Patočka, *Češi I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 2006) 356.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 416.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

to religion before the modern age. Since then philosophers such as Kant have dealt with the problem of authority and ethics. Masaryk believed that the state had a reason, but not in and of itself and without reference to religion; therefore, he did not accept Kant's Categorical Imperative wholesale:

...the ethical principle cannot be assigned formally but must be determined with reference to empirical examples. For example Kant's Categorical Imperative is incorrect...I reject all attempts at separating state, law and politics from ethics in the sense that the state and law have their own separate origins with extra-ethical and non-ethical goals justified by some sort of absolute necessity of having to live together in a society.<sup>184</sup>

Masaryk understood that the separation of church and state led to the idea that morality, laws and the state are "normative"; however, he considered this a hangover of a theocratic mentality:

Lawyers generally look for reasons of the state's independence from the church in non-ethical principles. They are ignorant of the fact that they still operate with old theocratic conceptions however transformed. I stand consciously opposed to modern attempts at instituting sanctions for the state and its law in some kind of non-ethical normative principles...I recognize in this [method] the remnants of a theocracy reduced to juristic abstraction and scholasticism applying the theocratic model to a fictitious conceptual entity.<sup>185</sup>

Masaryk also rejected anarchism, patriarchy, Rousseau and Hegel as misguided in their conception of the state's origin and the corresponding attitude and stance a citizen should take when confronted with its reality, especially in its democratic form. As for Liberalism, Masaryk could speak to the requirement of individualism in democracy:

If, from the democratic perspective, there be a demand for as little of the state as possible then I accept this in the sense that democracy, by its nature, expects from each citizen a sense for the state, for its administration and its laws. Democracy is rooted in individualism; individualism does not mean caprice, but an effort to create strong individuality, not only one's own, but that

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<sup>184</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 376, 377.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

of other citizens as well. Democracy is autonomy and autonomy is self-correction – self-correction starts with one’s self.<sup>186</sup>

But he rejected Liberalism for its disavowal of traditional religious faith, especially Czech liberals who could not accept Masaryk’s interpretation of democracy as a modern polity based on the principles of traditional Czech piety.<sup>187</sup>

### **Democratic Education, Leadership and the National Program**

Masaryk believed that the state was more than simply a mechanism; it depended on the power of creativity. This is why Masaryk reserved a place for art and the artist in politics and differentiated the statesman from the politician. The state was likened by Masaryk to a work of art because it is constructed not only using concrete materials, but also political rhetoric and poetry.<sup>188</sup> Masaryk considered political oratory to be constructive, “a good word, it was once said, is also an act”.<sup>189</sup> Even words said long ago have the power to persuade. The words of poets have had a creative influence over politics and state creation before: “poets in all nations are the creators and keepers of national and political ideals”.<sup>190</sup> Masaryk’s opinion concerning poetry, imagination and state creation harmonized his “realism” with the “exact fantasy” of a poet such as Goethe.<sup>191</sup> Masaryk’s interpretation of poetry as expressive of the spiritual crisis in Europe

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>187</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 92.

<sup>188</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 382.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 365.

suggests metaphysical foundations in literature that Masaryk did not criticise as such because, as Patočka suggested, he was restricted by the “positivistic components of his philosophical apparatus”.<sup>192</sup> Nonetheless, Masaryk himself admitted that metaphysics are implicit in his literary works.<sup>193</sup>

For Masaryk the establishment of a democracy in Czechoslovakia was a work in progress.<sup>194</sup> The education of a democratic citizenry was one of the challenges facing him as a statesman. He believed that the citizens who found themselves in a new democracy needed to change their mentality regarding politics so they could better meet the challenges of living in and participating in a democracy. The problem confronting Czechs and Slovaks as a new democratic citizenry was a dearth of democratic decorum in society. For Masaryk the old forms of etiquette inherited from the preceding regimes (Habsburg and Magyar) were not conducive to informing a democratic citizenry. The dissolution of the Habsburg Empire as a political form was faster if not easier than transforming the population from one educated to passive servitude and negative resistance into a democratic citizenry. The creation of a democratic state in form had to be paralleled by the education of democratic individuals. Citizens were meant to assume responsibility for the process and progress of democratic state formation. Masaryk knew that the political freedom won during the war was not a *carte blanche* for laxity: “democracy is not crudeness and vulgarity, but demands forms of intercourse that are congenial and unaffected; these are developed only where people are frank with one another and where they are free”.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 208.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 358.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 379.

Like the preceding monarchy, republican democracy had demands: each citizen must take an interest in democracy as that which is held in common.

By taking an interest in democracy the democratic citizen must confront and overcome inherited tendencies of indifference to politics: “without...an interest in the state the republic becomes de facto an aristocratic, bureaucratic state for the minority – form by itself does not decide the substance of a state”.<sup>196</sup> In Masaryk’s Czechoslovakia hundreds of years of absolutist Habsburg and Magyar rule informed the mores of society; this meant that a culture of subservience was fostered by the *ancien* regime. For Masaryk the birth of modern democracy in Czechoslovakia and the end of the war signalled the end of violent revolution; the trend towards unity and peace in democracy would continue. Education was the means by which the post-war democratic ideal could be constructed. The citizen’s education would be conducted in a peaceful and stable political situation where piecemeal and patient work was considered a specifically democratic virtue: “Democracy is the regime of life and for life and it demands work; it is a regime of work...Work overcomes aristocratism and revolutionary inclinations, work that is both material and spiritual”.<sup>197</sup>

A democracy was given direction by its leadership. Masaryk had a clear conception of his role as leader and first president of Czechoslovakia and knew the limitations that his country faced as a new democracy in central Europe. First of all, a national democracy must have a goal that in principle can never be compromised. Masaryk believed that compromise was indicative of democracy, but it can only be made in cases where the means towards that goal are at stake,

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<sup>196</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 380.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

otherwise “the compromise of a people without a definite goal and conviction is gross and amounts to going from wall to wall, politicking, weakness, indecision, half-education, characterlessness and fear”.<sup>198</sup> Masaryk’s understanding of education in a democracy reflected his own religious conviction precisely because it sought to consolidate a religious like conviction for democracy. The goal of Masaryk’s Czechoslovakia was not a balance between reaction and revolution – the ‘golden mean’ – but a conviction for a historically determined and necessary project of global democratic politics based on Christian morality and Czech history.

Masaryk had intimate knowledge of the social and political attitudes that were instilled by the Habsburg monarchy into the now democratic citizenry of Czechoslovakia. A strong sympathy for and loyalty to the Habsburgs was ingrained in much of the populace. Only some of the intelligentsia and the socialist parties desired the form of polity that Masaryk also wanted: a republic.<sup>199</sup> For examples of democratic republics Masaryk looked to Europe and America, choosing France and the United States as the best of the few. But these were examples only, not templates upon which a democratic Czechoslovak republic could be constructed *in toto*: “Each of these examples responds to conditions specific to each country’s development: no institution can be transferred to another country mechanically and un-organically”.<sup>200</sup> Masaryk’s idea of national history demanded that he treat democracy as multifarious depending upon the specific historical development of each community. As much as democracy aspired to universal humanity, and as much as a democratic Czechoslovakia had to practice a global politics, it was

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 387.

very much the case that a republican polity informed by a democratic spirit was also determined by history and the conditions it left in its wake, the most important of which was, in Masaryk's opinion, the specific history of the Christian religion in Europe.

The obstacles and limitations to constructing a democracy were noted by Masaryk, but they were not enough to prevent the establishment of the First Republic. Czechoslovakia became a democracy in law and in fact. But what was its goal? The goal that Masaryk decided upon was already in good part prepared for him well before the First World War by František Palacký. An important aspect of Czechoslovakia's national program was therefore already conceptualized before the state was even established at a time when nobody – not even Palacký – would have believed in the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire and the emergence of a republican democracy in the lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Masaryk took Palacký's idea of national history and developed it by including the idea of a modern parliamentary democracy and complete independence from Austria. Nonetheless, the general outline of the goal of the Czech nation remained Palacký's interpretation of Czech history as a tale of moral regeneration. Masaryk states:

My principles and program grew organically out of our history into which I immersed myself and from which I drew our political and cultural program. My teacher in this endeavour was the Father of the Nation. Palacký gave us a philosophical history of our nation; he understood our global and historical situation and accordingly assigned us our national program...Palacký saw that European humanity was progressing towards unification on a global scale and he told us exactly what our task would be in this "global centralization"...[Palacký writes] "The time has come for our nation to awaken and orient itself according to the spirit of the new age, to raise its vision above the narrow boundaries of the fatherland – without becoming unfaithful to the native land – so that together we may become mindful and diligent world citizens...Whenever we were victorious it was due to a superiority of the spirit, not physical power; and whenever we were defeated the reason was always due to a lack of spiritual activity, moral courage and daring".<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 388, 389.

The democracy that Czechoslovakia represented had a global mission, but because of the country's small size and its history the program that it was assigned on the global scale was to be fulfilled through an augmentation of its spiritual rather than material forces.

Czechoslovakian democracy was meant to contribute to the global democratic cause a religious spirit that had already displayed itself as the leading spirit and vanguard of a new European organization. Democracy was a continuation of reform and the aftermath of revolution; it was, as Masaryk said, "still in its infancy".<sup>202</sup> Masaryk believed that his nation's specific contribution to modern politics was the Christian moral content of its history. Nation, religion and democracy were inextricably intertwined in Masaryk's philosophy:

The ideal of humanity is not specifically Czech, it is indeed [a product] of all peoples; but every nation realizes it in its own way: The English have formulated it primarily ethically, the French politically (the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen), the Germans socially (socialism), and we nationally and religiously.<sup>203</sup>

### **The Question of Religion in Modern Europe**

In Masaryk's day the religious question was common to Europe as a whole. Masaryk was one of many thinkers to experience first hand and analyse contemporary questions regarding society, politics, faith and history; but he was the only one who had the opportunity to practice politics at the highest level while constructing the theoretical framework of his political philosophy. The conflict between traditional faith and contemporary science, whose turbulence inspired various responses, was resolved by Masaryk in his call to Czechs and Slovaks to join

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<sup>202</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 323.

<sup>203</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 391.

in the adventure of democracy and sustain its moral substance. It was a coincidence of history that a statesman advocated for and constructed his political philosophy *sub specie aeternitatis*. That a statesman who was influenced by Comte's philosophy of history could build a modern democracy whose roots are found in theology, metaphysics and the Christian religion is one of the great paradoxes of modern political history.

Czechoslovakian democracy was established in fact, but its meaning was found in a philosophy of history that adhered to Judeo-Christian revelation and faith. Masaryk's construction of both the fact and the revelation of Czechoslovakia demands that his title as a "defender of democracy" be shared with other titles such as "poet law-giver" or "bishop-president"; even "prophet of democracy" would be an apt title. But the paradoxes inherent to these titles as well as the paradoxes inherent to Masaryk's political philosophy suggest that it would be best not to subsume Masaryk's life and thought under a single rubric. Masaryk's imagination complemented and ensured his practical work of establishing a democratic state. Not only was Czechoslovakia established as a republican democracy, but its story was told in a philosophy of history that became a national program. In this story Masaryk assigned Czechoslovakian democracy the role of moral protagonist, whose spirit was resurrected after it first appeared in the early fifteenth century. He developed the story into a political program during the war. Democratic Czechoslovakia was meant to play the role of David against the aging Goliaths of the modern world. Masaryk saw to it that this role was performed as well as it possibly could have been.

The question remains, what does the current democracy in the heart of central Europe aspire to, and does it dare to inherit Masaryk's program that bequeathed to the nation as a

modern democracy the prospect of moral regeneration: “Jesus, not Caesar, I repeat – that is the meaning of our history and democracy”?<sup>204</sup> Or, quite simply, is viewing democracy *sub specie aeternitatis* appreciated at all in Europe today?

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<sup>204</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 406.

CHAPTER 5: THE THEOLOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL  
FOUNDATIONS OF MASARYK'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

### **Masaryk, Theology, and Jan Amos Komenský**

Masaryk could not conceive of political reality, including individuals, ideas, communities, history and morality, without thinking of God. He therefore had to say something about God's identity and nature. Given this point his thought necessarily becomes theological. Religion was fundamental to Masaryk's political thinking, and yet he did not analyse the theological foundations of his political philosophy because he understood theology through the lens of his philosophy of history, where theology played the role of hand-maid to medieval theocracy.<sup>205</sup> Influenced by Comte, Masaryk believed that many of the principles of theology and metaphysics were no different than those of mythology.<sup>206</sup> It is our contention that his opinion of metaphysics and theology was inaccurate because it did not adequately criticise their sources in philosophy and meditations on God respectively, but instead treated them as bound to the passing institutions of medieval Europe – a teleological assumption of his positivistic philosophy of history.

Masaryk related his interpretation of metaphysics and theology to the epistemological debates of his era. However, in all of these debates he squared his ideas of religion and God with his contemporary social, intellectual and political milieu; but he denied that he practised a

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<sup>205</sup> Čapek, *op. cit.*, 283.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

criticism or analysis of theology or metaphysics.<sup>207</sup> When asked about questions of theory Masaryk would bar himself from entering metaphysical speculation by making an immediate reference to practice,<sup>208</sup> thereby limiting theory with practical application. It may seem that Masaryk's decision to partake in politics determined his turn to practicality as a balance for theorizing. We would however miss the mark if we looked only to Masaryk's explicit explanation of his thought on theory-practice. Masaryk's political philosophy was actually rooted in theology and metaphysics, despite Masaryk's recorded proclamations to the contrary, and therefore demands our attention.

The absence of an analysis of theology and metaphysics in Masaryk's thought is evident despite his admission that, "religion, like all other spiritual expressions and human endeavours, is actually a science – [known as] theology".<sup>209</sup> When Masaryk referred to his understanding of all of human reality as *sub specie aeternitatis* he did not explicitly say that he was speculating theologically or metaphysically. But the political philosophy that Masaryk envisioned in this way is actually based on theology and metaphysics. Masaryk's understanding of the soul is Platonic in its correlation of earthly justice with the soul's immortality; his instance on immortalizing in the here and now repeats Aristotle's metaphysical injunction of *athanatizein*;<sup>210</sup> and his image of all human relationships as stemming from the Christian individual's relationship to God the

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>208</sup> Masaryk was schooled in Franz Brentano's method of philosophical speculation "without any metaphysical presupposition". Josef Novák, "Masaryk and the Brentano School," in *On Masaryk: Texts in English and German*, ed. Josef Novák (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988) 32.

<sup>209</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 260.

<sup>210</sup> Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin Volume 12: Published Essays 1966-1985* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990) 88, 89.

Creator echoes Maimonides' (1135-1204) theological construction of a hierarchy of being that was the shibboleth of most medieval scholastic theology.<sup>211</sup> Masaryk understood relationships among individuals as referring to each individual's knowledge of God and his/her own immortal God-given soul; this is nothing less than theology couched in the language of metaphysics.

Masaryk writes:

It is as a spiritual being that individuals are valuable, not only to themselves but to each other in their relationship [as spiritual beings]. The immortality of the soul emanates from knowledge of God and from faith in justice and the world's order. Justice would not exist without...the eternal soul. And finally, immortality is experienced in...this life; we do not have experience of life after death, but we do have, can have the experience...that truly fulfilled life is lived only *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>212</sup>

It is evident from the quotation above that Masaryk practised theological and metaphysical speculation to a degree. When his quotation is compared to the following one by Maimonides our contention that Masaryk's thought is based on theological premises becomes even more evident:

The fourth kind of perfection is the true perfection of man; the possession of the highest intellectual faculties; the possession of such notions which lead to true metaphysical opinions as regards God. With this perfection man has obtained his final object; it gives him true human perfection...it gives him immortality, and on this account he is called man.<sup>213</sup>

Masaryk's belief that knowledge of God is a necessary prerequisite for metaphysical speculation on the soul is evidence that his political philosophy is based on theology. Masaryk's conception of the totality of human life, including politics, as *sub specie aeternitatis* is a theological tenet that he accepted as the basis for social and political organization. His political

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<sup>211</sup> Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956) 385 ff.

<sup>212</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 246.

<sup>213</sup> Maimonides, op. cit., 395.

philosophy reveals its true colours in the answer he gave to Karel Čapek's question: "In the end you see the true foundation of democracy in religion; if I may say so you are actually a theocrat".

Masaryk answered:

I am not afraid of words, which is why I do not hold anything against that formulation, if theocracy is understood literally as the rule of God. I understand the state, society, politics and the whole of life truly *sub specie aeternitatis*. True democracy, founded on love and respect towards one's neighbour...is the realization of God's order on earth.<sup>214</sup>

Masaryk's democracy *sub specie aeternitatis* is a Christian political order based on belief in God, the immortal soul, and Masaryk's peculiar understanding of Jesus' ethics, combined with his insistent but disproportionate – considering its import to his thought – labouring of the point that he is not at all interested in theology or metaphysics:

Jesus – I do not say Christ – is my model and teacher of piety; he teaches that love [directed towards], a loving God, love of neighbour, and love even of an enemy, in other words the purest [expression of] humanity is the essence of religion. Piety and morality are the main elements of Jesus' religion. Consider that in the Gospels – in comparison with the Old Testament and Greek theology – there is little of theology, cosmology and eschatology...Jesus presents almost exclusively a moral teaching, continually oriented towards practical questions.<sup>215</sup>

Masaryk's opinion that theology is not essential to religious life is disproportionate because it does not correspond to the fact that he owes the foundations of his thought to theological speculation. His political philosophy contains theological premises, but because he avoided analysing his own philosophical foundations for their theology and metaphysics he did not clearly recognize these constituents; they were however present in his political philosophy, without even being disguised – they are actually quite glaring.

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<sup>214</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 328.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 263, 264.

The theology and metaphysics implicit in Masaryk's political philosophy owe most to one particular predecessor who was consciously adopted by Masaryk as a national figure, but not – as he should have been – as the testator to his own theology: namely, Jan Amos Komenský. But before we demonstrate the significant relationship between Masaryk's political philosophy and Komenský's theology, we must discuss Jan Hus' medieval theology and thereby dismiss the similarities between Hus and Masaryk as not essential to the theological and metaphysical foundations of Masaryk's thought.

### **Masaryk and Jan Hus' Theology**

Masaryk never studied Jan Hus' theology and the issues that Hus himself lived and died for: papal and priestly authority, simony, and other ecclesiastical abuses of the church in the late Middle Ages.<sup>216</sup> Masaryk, therefore, did not make the connection through Hus to John Wycliffe and medieval scholastic theology generally. In principle, Hus' medieval theological and metaphysical tenets were alien to Masaryk's thought. Hus' thought was – except for his criticism of clerical authority inspired by Wycliffe<sup>217</sup> – orthodoxly<sup>218</sup> Catholic and medieval. The separation of medieval from modern culture alienates Masaryk's thought from Hus' theology but for two important elements: morality and the emphasis on practicality or deeds over metaphysical speculation. Hus differed from other late-medieval theologians, e.g., Wycliffe, by his practical approach to theological controversy and criticism; this is deemed to be in line with the history

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<sup>216</sup> Gordon Leff, "Wyclif and Hus: A Doctrinal Comparison," in *Wyclif in His Times* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 124.

<sup>217</sup> Leff, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>218</sup> "Hus could have said all that he said without the aid of realism; and where it had directly affected Wyclif's Eucharistic doctrine Hus remained markedly orthodox". *Ibid.*, 119.

of religious reform in late-medieval Bohemia.<sup>219</sup> This is significant because it indicates that Masaryk's interpretation of Czech history – as primarily moral and religious – appears to be empirically justified: “He [Hus] was first and foremost a reformer in the moral and practical tradition of Czech forerunners, such as Milíč of Kroměříž and Matthew of Janov”.<sup>220</sup> Masaryk's insistence on the practicality of theory and the primacy of morals in politics appears to be an echo of Hus' life's preoccupation, suggesting that Masaryk may have been correct in supposing a spiritual connection between the Czech Reformation and his own present, but this is a stretch; instead, Masaryk's motivating principle is more specific, and more modern. Nonetheless even Hus' style appears to relate to Masaryk's own: both demonstrate a lack of theological and metaphysical analysis as they focussed on moral questions and their practical application in politics. In Masaryk's concern for the practical effects of morality he appears to be following Hus who was, nevertheless, also a trained medieval theologian. Gordon Leff writes about Hus' practical focus:

If Hus' own position was equivocal, this came from attempting...to combine Wycliffe's metaphysics with his own essentially moral and practical outlook...*De Ecclesia* in its structure illustrates the cleft between the theoretical and moral in Hus' approach...theory was for all practical purposes left behind once Hus turned to the failings of the pope and the Church hierarchy.<sup>221</sup>

Indeed, if one were to focus on the practical and moral endeavours of Hus one would find much in common between Hus and Masaryk, but only superficially; but because we are concerned with the theological and metaphysical foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy we need to stress

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 120, 121, 122.

the interpretation of his political philosophy as theology and metaphysics, and not interpret his work as another symbolic expression of a nation's penchant for practicality.

Masaryk never applied Hus' theology to his own life and thought, even though he held Hus up as a national symbol of the Czech Reformation, possibly even borrowing certain pious *bon mots* from Hus such as "I prefer a good German to a bad Czech", which were noted by Masaryk's war-time friend and historian Ernest Denis.<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, despite his readings in Czech history, Masaryk was oblivious to the issues at stake in Hus's theology and rejected the medieval concept of the individual that Hus and his contemporaries took for granted. That concept was specifically the individual as a Christian sinner and sojourner (*homo peccator et viator*) – original sin was attributed to the individual who had to endure life in the world as a vale of tears, until death. Hus, after all, allowed himself to be martyred for his religious convictions. The medieval conception of the individual's relation with God and with his surroundings could not have appealed to Masaryk because he did not entertain the idea of original sin, despite medieval theology also viewing life *sub specie aeternitatis*. Masaryk's political philosophy was based on a different theology with an entirely different conception of the Christian individual's relation to God and the world. The theology that appealed to Masaryk was the theology pioneered by Komenský in the seventeenth century.

### **Masaryk and Komenský's Theology**

Masaryk was neither a trained theologian, nor a member of the clergy; he never even spoke for his own Helvetic Confession; he did, however, invoke the name of Komenský and the

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<sup>222</sup> Denis, *op. cit.*, 65.

Bohemian Brethren as the predecessors of his and the Czech nation's piety. Masaryk's idea of democracy *sub specie aeternitatis* was built upon theological and metaphysical foundations that he inherited from Komenský. As a conscious epigone of Komenský, Masaryk carried on with convictions that had already had their theological and metaphysical foundations established in the seventeenth century. When Masaryk used the term "synergism"<sup>223</sup> to describe the mutual participation of God and the individual in human affairs, he was not stating anything original but harkened back to his hero Komenský, in whose name he began the first chapter of *World Revolution*.

Komenský was a theologian and the last Bishop of the Bohemian Brethren, but also a diplomat; his understanding of political reality *sub specie aeternitatis* – outlined in his *General Deliberation on the Improvement of Human Affairs* – was accepted by Masaryk for its theological and metaphysical premise that assumed a conscious and scientific knowledge of the divine plan to be predicated on God's assisting the Christian to execute the divine will on Earth.

Komenský wrote:

Someone will say: 'Plato's ideas of the state remained only ideas, as will yours.' To answer this: Plato's ideas remained only as ideas because nobody [actually] put their hands to the task...but the ideas of our Christ and the outlines of His kingdom, revealed through prophets and apostles, will not be Platonic ideas because results will necessarily follow. Because the Lord is powerful and He Himself puts His hand to the task, knowing how to employ his servants...He clearly reveals the way towards a general improvement of all human affairs.<sup>224</sup>

Masaryk saw himself as just such a servant. Komenský's theology, which is revealed in this particular image of God helping man to improve society, was accepted by Masaryk. His modus

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<sup>223</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 329.

<sup>224</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, *De Rerum Humanarum Emendatione* (Prague: Svoboda, 1992) 471.

vivendi depended on the conviction of an immortal soul, and his *modus operandi* depended on a tacit adoption of Komenský's theology, which had a practical turn. This can be demonstrated by correlating Masaryk's political philosophy to Komenský's theology, and by the fact that Masaryk never subjected Komenský's or his own metaphysics to serious analysis despite Masaryk's conscious espousal of Komenský as a personal role model:

Komenský [was] a Czech and a wholly modern spirit. He was a religious person whose religion informed his work as an educator and politician. As an apostle of humanity he preached harmony in everything and everywhere.<sup>225</sup>

Masaryk's social and political ideal, conceptualized by his concept of harmony, is related to Komenský's like concept. By Masaryk's own admission:

Komenský showed us the way, how to look for and find harmony in spiritual life, in his words [this harmony was found in the] *centrum securitatis*. In the field of cognition [Komenský's] harmony was an attempt at concretism.<sup>226</sup>

Masaryk did not recognize Komenský's "harmony" for what it really was: a theological trope synonymous with his own use of the term.<sup>227</sup> The reason Masaryk did not recognize the concept of "harmony" as a theological-metaphysical construction may have been because Komenský's theology, though systematic and based on metaphysics, was qualitatively different from typical medieval scholastic theology.

When Masaryk wrote or spoke of theology it was always with reference to the hierarchical church of the Middle Ages. Komenský's theology was, however, post-medieval and incorporated seventeenth century scientific reason into a Christian system of thought.

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<sup>225</sup> Čapek, *op. cit.*, 209.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

Komenský's theology therefore broke with previous medieval theology and could appeal to Masaryk because of its modern nature. The broad outline of Komenský's thought was, moreover, general knowledge with which Masaryk, like many other Czechs and Slovaks, was familiar. Komenský treated empirical facts scientifically, but not without Christian spirituality in his system. This particular aspect of Komenský's original thought was adopted by Masaryk, who followed in Komenský's theological footsteps as he developed his political theoretical concept of "concretism":

I believe that my concretism is rational enough, but I do not see the fullness of spiritual life and [human] striving only in reason, I also see it in feelings and will. The issue at stake is to harmonize the total spiritual life of the person, as well as the nation.<sup>228</sup>

Masaryk's understanding of logic also referred to Komenský's approach to knowledge. In his *General Deliberation* Komenský believed that total knowledge of all the sciences – spiritual and physical – could be categorized systematically for the effect of directing the improvement of all aspects of individual and social life according to God's plan; his was a progressive, teleological approach.<sup>229</sup> Masaryk, however, did not believe that Komenský's encyclopaedic attempt at categorizing all knowledge was possible in the modern age, but like Komenský he had a teleological view of history<sup>230</sup> and believed harmony was achieved in life in interaction with God.<sup>231</sup> The underlying epistemological assumption of Komenský's theology

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie II* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1998) 129.

<sup>230</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 310.

<sup>231</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie II* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1998) 130.

was accepted by Masaryk in his idea that philosophy was a synthesis of all sciences directed by metaphysics:

For me scientific philosophy [is an] attempt at an all-around world outlook, implicitly [a view of] the soul; it [philosophy] should sum up all knowledge in a synthesis [of all the sciences]; but can anybody encompass all sciences, which have multiplied in [so many] specializations? Well, it is not possible...[and] [t]hat is a serious problem: that is, what can philosophy be but metaphysics beside the specialist sciences.<sup>232</sup>

In the above quotation and in his *Concrete Logic* Masaryk admits that metaphysics has its place at the head of philosophy,<sup>233</sup> but he never attempted a thorough penetration of metaphysics as the foundation of Komenský's or his own science. Masaryk, rather, presented Komenský as a national symbol: the "crown of our [Czech] Reformation".<sup>234</sup>

The theology that Komenský developed is related to Masaryk's political philosophy through its image of the individual's relationship to God. This relationship is portrayed against the post-medieval background of objective scientific method, pioneered in the seventeenth century by Francis Bacon among others. Komenský was a leading advocate of the practical application of the Christian individual's forces on Earth. Masaryk could accept such a theology, and he did, because it did not contradict his conviction that theology, or philosophy for that matter, should "never resist scientific philosophy".<sup>235</sup> The image of the individual was transformed in Komenský's theology from its original medieval version. No longer was the individual conceived as primarily a sinner and sojourner, but instead as a constructor, who has

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<sup>232</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 207, 208.

<sup>233</sup> Szporluk, op. cit., 52.

<sup>234</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 321.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 262.

a practical interest in the world but is still related to God: the individual's interest in the world is reflected in God's interest in the individual and human affairs. The concept of *homo peccator et viator* of medieval theology was replaced with the concept of "man the maker" (*homo faber*) in Komenský's theology.<sup>236</sup> The individual was now portrayed as working with conscious knowledge of God's plan, with God's help, in the task of manifesting God's will on Earth.

Science, theology and an eschatology combine in Komenský's thought and transvalue the image of the world from a vale of tears and suffering to a place where Christian individuals can confidently work to ameliorate society until the Second Coming. The new image of the individual was part of a new theology that dissociated itself from the preceding medieval theology by its scientifically based knowledge of God's plan, as well as the image of God and the individual as working together – Masaryk's "synergism". Masaryk's political philosophy correlates with Komenský's theology in the understanding of a merger of theory and practice. Masaryk writes: "Never entertain thought simply for the sake of thinking... a contradiction between theory and practice signals a problem, either with the theory or with practice, often with both".<sup>237</sup> Without dispensing with Christian piety Masaryk insisted on the mutual value of theory and practice, demonstrating, yet again, his alienation from medieval theology and metaphysics and his relation to Komenský's theology.

Medieval theology held that the purely theoretical activity of reason could satisfy the requirements of an individual's relation to God, and thus completely satisfy the requirements of

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<sup>236</sup> Adam Konior, "Supernaturalistyczna Koncepcja Czlowieka Jako Podmiotu Dzialania w Ujeciu J. A. Komenskiego," *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 33, no. 17 (1987): 125.

<sup>237</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 515.

living a fully human life.<sup>238</sup> In the seventeenth century Aristotle's *bios theoretikos*, which was carried over into medieval theology and metaphysics, was no longer accepted in Europe as fully defining the individual and his God-given powers. The issue of the practical application of scientific method, which Komenský addressed, was accepted by Masaryk who adhered to the principle of practical scientific application and analysis. Medieval theology and metaphysics as a purely theoretical meditation on God were not entertained without consistent reference to practical consequences; therefore, Masaryk did not analyse his own fundamental assumptions for what they were: issues of theology and metaphysics requiring purely theoretical treatment. In the seventeenth century Komenský confronted the re-evaluation of the meaning and purpose of reason, which was brought on by new trends in science and philosophy, with his own systematic construction. Francis Bacon especially influenced Komenský's systematic theology and metaphysics with his method of inductive scientific investigation.<sup>239</sup> Komenský could not conceive of the purpose of life on earth and in relation to God as being purely theoretical; neither did he conceive the purpose of Christian life to be in rapture, nor in transfiguration in death, nor even in mystic union with God. Instead, the improvement of human affairs, including politics, by employing scientific methodology in executing God's plan, was the purpose of life:

[Komenský] justified his conception of the whole religio-ontologically, and [with reference to] eschatology. Nevertheless, his conception of the whole as the perfect world of God informed his theory of education; it set up God's perfect model as a paradigm that one should strive to achieve [with practical effort].<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Maimonides, op. cit., 385.

<sup>239</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické Studie I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1997) 143.

<sup>240</sup> Dagmar Čapková, "Komenského pojetí celku v universálním vzdělání," *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 37, no. 17 (1987): 11.

Komenský's image of the individual's relationship to God, where the individual's knowledge of God's plan had the purpose of serving the present life: "*omnes scholae sunt pro praesenti vita, quam sub coelo vivimus, non pro illa futura*"<sup>241</sup> was radically different from the medieval understanding of human perfection with God in the theoretical life that scholastic theology advocated:

There are some who direct all their mind toward the attainment of perfection in metaphysics, devote themselves to God, exclude from their thought every other thing, and employ all their intellectual faculties in the study of the universe, in order to derive therefrom a proof of the existence of God, and learn in every possible way how God rules all things; they form the class of those who have entered the palace, namely, the class of prophets.<sup>242</sup>

In the quotation above there is not a word about practical application of human knowledge for the sake of the individual's life on Earth. Komenský's early-modern theology and metaphysics is altogether different from the medieval precedent for its scientific and practical nature and its interest in directing knowledge towards the improvement of society; but it shares medieval theology's acceptance of the individual's dependence on God, God's authority and God's intervention in human affairs; in short Komenský, just like Masaryk, and just like the medieval theologians saw the whole of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*; however, Komenský's theological image of the relationship between the individual, the world, and God, which Masaryk adopted, separated both himself and Masaryk from their medieval predecessors.

Masaryk borrowed Komenský's theology and metaphysics and carried them over into his conception of democracy and politics in modern Europe. Komenský's combination of scientific

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<sup>241</sup> Radim Palouš, "J. A. Komenský – Náboženský myslitel," *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 51, no.24 (1994): 9.

<sup>242</sup> Maimonides, *op. cit.*, 385.

practice with Christian revelation influenced not only Masaryk's political philosophy as theology and metaphysics, but also determined his actions in politics:

In the *World Revolution* Masaryk emphasises that besides Komenský's political position it was Komenský's combination of practical politics with revelation that contributed to Masaryk's decision to join the fight against Austria during the First World War.<sup>243</sup>

Further demonstrations of the influence of Komenský's theology on Masaryk's political philosophy are found in the concepts of "harmony" or "cooperation", and "synergy", which Masaryk used to describe his political philosophy. An examination of these terms for their theological and metaphysical import will further reveal the foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy in Komenský's theology. We will therefore correlate these terms with Komenský's use of the very same terms in his theology. Roman Szporluk has noted:

Masaryk called his own view "synergism," by which he apparently meant the joint action of man and God...its theistic determinism made his system a truly metaphysical one.<sup>244</sup>

The concept of "synergism" can only be plumbed so far from Masaryk's works; most of its meaning is found in a criticism of the same idea in Komenský's theology where "[t]he individual as *imago Dei* is a co-creator of events".<sup>245</sup> Masaryk's system becomes metaphysical when his idea of "synergism" begins to describe the theological vision of the world as the location where the individual consciously associates his action with God's plan. We recall that this was Komenský's assumption in his *General Deliberation*. The description of the method by which God's project would be achieved is the metaphysics underlying Masaryk's political

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<sup>243</sup> Petr Rohel, "Poznámky ke Komenského chápání společnosti," *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 21, no. 44 (1991): 140.

<sup>244</sup> Szporluk, *op. cit.*, 73.

<sup>245</sup> Rohel, *op. cit.*, 8.

philosophy and is described by Komenský, who in turn was influenced by the metaphysics of others, e.g., Nicholas of Cusa.<sup>246</sup> Masaryk's understanding of religion as "man's active sense of cosmic synergism" is deafening for the absence of metaphysical analysis, which can nevertheless be found in Komenský's works. As to Masaryk's understanding of harmony, we have noted that Masaryk credited Komenský for the concept.<sup>247</sup> It corresponds to Masaryk's concept of "synergy" where God and the individual work together; in this "synergy" there could not but be harmony. Once again Masaryk borrows this concept from Komenský, who wrote and believed that "the foundation of knowledge and creation in all things is harmony".<sup>248</sup> Komenský believed that by scientifically observing the harmony of nature the Christian discovers evidence of his own responsibility to institute harmony in himself and in his society.<sup>249</sup> Komenský, like Masaryk, understood harmony as the ordering of individual and societal life that results from working to fulfill God's will in human affairs by scientific method.<sup>250</sup> Harmony is a metaphysical term in Masaryk's political philosophy in so far that it describes a vision of the whole order of being; it is also a theological term because such a vision of harmony is possible only when the parts of the whole – including the individual – are related to God.<sup>251</sup>

To better demonstrate the foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy in the theology and metaphysics of Komenský we will look at the concept of the individual as "microcosmos",

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<sup>246</sup> Jan Patočka et al., *Jan Amos Komenský: Nástin života a díla* (Prague: Státní Pedagogické Nakladatelství, 1957) 106.

<sup>247</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 239.

<sup>248</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1997) 258.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie II* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1998) 341.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

which is at once specific to Komenský's seventeenth century metaphysics and related to Masaryk's use of the term. In his conversation with Karel Čapek Masaryk said: "every person is a whole world – a microcosmos – and yet no two people are the same".<sup>252</sup> With such statements Masaryk implicitly referred to Komenský's metaphysics, which included a broad range of influences from late-renaissance metaphysics, including Paracelsus's "correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm"<sup>253</sup> and Cusa's idea of cosmic-microcosmic redemption:

Because he is the representative of the universe and the essence of all its powers, man cannot be raised to the divine without simultaneously raising the rest of the universe by virtue of and within the process of man's own ascension.<sup>254</sup>

When Masaryk's political philosophy is criticised for its theological and metaphysical foundations then roots are revealed to be many and to go deep; but it remains the case that it was Komenský's metaphysics and theology that specifically informed Masaryk's own terminology and understanding of life and politics *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Masaryk consciously, but with very little true criticism, adhered to Komenský in so far as he let Komenský as a Czech national figure into his heart. But what he also accepted along with Komenský as a national symbol was the theological aspect of Komenský's image of God assisting man in improving society through practical science,<sup>255</sup> which is itself a revolutionary

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<sup>252</sup> Čapek, op. cit., 210.

<sup>253</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie II* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1998) 293. And Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1997) 15.

<sup>254</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963) 64.

<sup>255</sup> Dagmar Čapková, "Vztah vědy a víry u Komenského," *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 51, no.24 (1994): 101.

seventeenth century transformation of Christian theology as well as Platonic philosophy. Jan Patočka writes:

Masaryk saw his own [philosophical] issues...reflected in Komenský's thought. He [Masaryk] included them [Komenský's insights] in his *Concrete Logic* and...in his philosophy of history.<sup>256</sup>

Masaryk assumed Komenský's "harmony" and "cooperation", and his philosophy of history thereby did away with the conflict between the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*.<sup>257</sup> If Masaryk could have described in theoretical detail his suggestions for a new working order of European civilization that would replace medieval theocracy, and yet still adhere to God's will, then he may have come up with a systematic theology and program such as the one Komenský constructed in his *General Deliberation on the Improvement of Human Affairs*. Despite his lack of theological and metaphysical analysis – in part due to his associating theology with theocracy, in part because of the climate of opinion in the nineteenth century<sup>258</sup> – Masaryk, nevertheless, was able to carry a metaphysical-theological system from the seventeenth century into his own twentieth century political philosophy, and into the construction of Czechoslovakia 1918-1937. His underlying religious conviction based on a peculiar traditional theology and metaphysics was the motivating factor of both his theoretical thought and his political practice. His unshaken adherence to religion, notwithstanding all the modern intellectual debates, bears witness to the influence that the Bohemian Brethren had on Masaryk's piety generally, and that Komenský's theology and metaphysics had on Masaryk's political philosophy specifically. Modern republican

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<sup>256</sup> Jan Patočka, *Komeniologické studie I* (Prague: OIKOYMENH, 1997) 167.

<sup>257</sup> Dagmar Čapková, "Vztah vědy a víry u Komenského," *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 51, no.24 (1994): 101.

<sup>258</sup> Josef Novák, "Masaryk and the Brentano School," in *On Masaryk: Texts in English and German*, ed. Josef Novák (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988) 33.

democracy in central Europe was instituted not so much by a philosopher king as by a pastor president who feared not the *word* “theocracy” even while he fought against it as an institution in Europe.

Masaryk’s piety included yet another aspect of theology that related his thought to Komenský’s. When it came to biblical interpretation as a tool for presenting his political philosophy Masaryk concentrated on the historical Jesus, whose ethics he held up for emulation by Czechs and other Christian Europeans; he believed they were the practical means by which improvements could be made to spiritual and political life. Masaryk therefore did not refer to Paul’s pathos of recognizing Christ as the resurrected, but instead he shared with Komenský the experience of Jesus as, first and foremost, a teacher.<sup>259</sup> From this interpretation of Jesus comes Komenský’s – and by extension Masaryk’s – belief that democratic equality resides in the prerogative to educate all people so that God’s plan can be manifest on Earth.<sup>260</sup> The historical example of Jesus’ love had to have practical import. Love was meant to be extended to humanity and was, as such, the program of Masaryk’s democracy.<sup>261</sup>

Both Masaryk and Komenský presented not only Czech rule in Bohemia but peace in Europe as the goal of their respective diplomatic agendas. Komenský was renowned in the seventeenth century for his attempts at an ecumenical reunification of Christian Europe. Masaryk, who was best known as a diplomat and statesman on the side of the allies and a democrat, was also seeking such a reunification with the necessary changes made to suit modern

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<sup>259</sup> Palouš, *op. cit.*, 9.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 374.

Europe. The parallels between Masaryk and Komenský should not be considered coincidental, but rather due to a like religious conviction grounded in a specific theology. Komenský's theology combined prophecy and science and concluded with a belief in the coming of Christ to Earth. Masaryk, though sensitive to questions of prophecy, refrained from eschatology and a belief in the millennium. Nevertheless, Masaryk's political philosophy, with its notion of improving human affairs with God's help by embracing democracy, was a way of looking at philosophy, politics, society, history and the individual life that owed much less to Liberalism and modern moral philosophy than it did to the Bohemian Brethren and Komenský's theology.

Other authors who discussed Masaryk's political philosophy, especially considering its religious element, found it hard to ignore Masaryk's saying that "Jesus not Caesar is the meaning of our history and democracy".<sup>262</sup> Some have even noted the just as potent "I conceive the state, national life, politics, like the whole of life, in truth *sub specie aeternitatis*",<sup>263</sup> which we have also referred to in our analysis of Masaryk's political philosophy; however, a more accurate estimation of Masaryk's political philosophy must specifically refer to Komenský's theology and its relationship to Masaryk's political philosophy. The roots of Masaryk's thought were not impervious to this particularly influential national inheritance.

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<sup>262</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *Světová revoluce* (Prague: Masarykův Ústav, 2005) 406. Pelikan, op. cit., 3.

<sup>263</sup> Warren, op. cit., 226.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

We are not the first to have analysed similarities between Masaryk and Komenský. As recently as 2007 Vítězslav Houška reconsidered the theme; he noted that Masaryk became acquainted with Komenský's works as early as 1882, when Masaryk came to teach at Prague University.<sup>264</sup> Masaryk began to study Komenský with the intention of developing a philosophy of history. Komenský's place in Masaryk's philosophy of history is grandiose in the scheme of Czech history as Masaryk's philosophy of history demonstrates, but it is not significant for Komenský's systematic theology and metaphysics that nevertheless underlies Masaryk's philosophy. Always referring to the practical Masaryk was primarily interested in Komenský for Komenský's exile and political life. Masaryk never isolated Komenský's thought as theology and metaphysics from the image of Komenský the national symbol. Nonetheless, Masaryk appreciated Komenský the national symbol most for Komenský's philosophical and moral legacy.<sup>265</sup> However, as we have demonstrated, Komenský's philosophical and moral legacy does not come without the theoretical foundations of theology and metaphysics, and neither does Masaryk's. Komenský as theologian *and* national symbol necessarily spoke to Masaryk's thoughts on religion and the inheritance of Czech history, which together constituted the basis of his entire political philosophy, as well as his political program. But it is only as a theological thinker that Komenský speaks to Masaryk's political philosophy understood *sub specie*

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<sup>264</sup> Vítězslav Houška, *T. G. Masaryk: Myslitel a státník* (Karvina: Paris, 2007) 183.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

*aeternitatis*. It is as theological thought that Komenský's, but also Masaryk's, ideas on life and politics are most significant.

It should be clear that further work discussing Masaryk the philosopher king will be lacking in substance if it does not look to the theological foundations of his thought. We have therefore criticised Masaryk's religious conviction – evident in his political philosophy – for its theological and metaphysical roots in Komenský's theology.

Komenský was the originator of the metaphysical and theological foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy. Masaryk never analysed or criticised his own political philosophy as theology because his thought on religion was preoccupied with contemporary issues that were not theological or metaphysical; they included the epistemological debates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and then there was his political career. His preoccupation with moral philosophy and epistemology is evident from his study of Kant and Hume. Masaryk had religion nevertheless perform the task of constructing his world view and philosophy; it did so, however, without being explained as a theology or metaphysics, even though the place of metaphysics at the head of a hierarchy of knowledge was sensed by Masaryk. Also, metaphysical and theological criticism was barred from Masaryk's thought by his construction of a philosophy of history where theology played the role of handmaid to medieval Roman Catholic theocracy destined to be eclipsed by modern democracy.

Masaryk studied and commented upon various thinkers, but most of them, such as Kant, Hume, and Nietzsche, were modern. Masaryk's philosophy of history was influenced by Vico, Comte and Herder, and was constructed in response to contemporary intellectual and social issues. There is also Masaryk's training in sociology. He was therefore led to consider theology

as symbolic of medieval theocracy; modern science and democracy were meant to supplant both theology and theocracy – such was Masaryk’s teleological and positivist conception of history. We have noted Masaryk’s tentative approaches to metaphysics, especially in his *Concrete Logic*, where philosophy as metaphysics was placed at the head of a hierarchical categorization of the sciences. We have also noted Masaryk’s basic theological assumptions: his belief in the immortal soul, his concept of the individual’s relationship to God, and his belief in Providence. Our critique has led us to conclude that Masaryk answered questions relating to theology and metaphysics with simple confessions of faith or credo, but not with theological or metaphysical speculation. We therefore highlighted the fact that Masaryk did not analyse his own theological assumptions and performed the analysis ourselves, thereby illuminating the foundations of his thought for their relation to Komenský’s theology.

We may ask whether the aversion to theology and metaphysics, which Masaryk seemingly displayed, can be boiled down to the fact that he was not a systematic philosopher and therefore found no need to present the foundations of his thought. Masaryk never proclaimed himself as a philosopher or metaphysician.<sup>266</sup> But it is widely recognized that Masaryk was indeed a philosopher, whose philosophy was moreover based on a religious view of life. Nonetheless, studies devoted to Masaryk’s thought continue to treat his philosophy as an epistemology, and do not recognize in his attempt at a “synthesis of all the sciences” a philosophical approach that is not only concerned with a broader range of philosophical questions than simply epistemology, but is also very much in line with Komenský’s theology.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Jan Zouhar, “Filozofie, metafyzika a pozitivní vědění,” in *Cesta a Odkaz T. G. Masaryka*, ed. Jarmila Lakosilová (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2002) 104.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

As for Masaryk's religious thought, it also continues to be discussed; but reference to religious influences on Masaryk focus on his contemporary personal acquaintances.<sup>268</sup> Personal religious biography can however only give circumstantial evidence to the theological and metaphysical foundations of Masaryk's thought. Studies on Masaryk's religious conviction come to loggerheads in labelling him a theist, Protestant, Unitarian, someone who believes in Providence, etc.<sup>269</sup>

In his time Masaryk was just as much a defender of religion as he was of democracy, even though his concept of democracy as an institution is easier to define than is his concept of religion as an institution. In so far as polity was concerned Masaryk was for a parliamentary democratic republic with universal suffrage and a separation of church and state. When it came to religion he saw it being instituted in individual morality. Masaryk's regenerate religion in Europe could do without a description of an institutionalized church because democracy sufficed as the moral and material abode for European individuals who remained, nevertheless, Christians. Otakar Funda writes about Masaryk's concept of religion: "In the individual and social sphere religion reveals itself as humanity; in the political sphere it [religion] reveals itself as democracy".<sup>270</sup> We however disagree with Funda's contention that Masaryk's concept of "co-operation" with God, which we have recognized as Masaryk's "synergism" and "harmony" and examined for their relationship to Komenský's theology, relates his religious thinking to

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<sup>268</sup> Otakar A. Funda, "Náboženství – Téma pro české myšlení," in *Cesta a Odkaz T. G. Masaryka*, ed. Jarmila Lakosilová (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2002) 133 ff.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 133, 135.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

Catholicism rather than Protestantism.<sup>271</sup> In our disagreement with Funda we do not argue for Masaryk's Protestantism, or for Protestant theology in general, but merely insist that the foundations of Masaryk's thought, revealing themselves in concepts such as "synergism", "co-operation", "harmony" and "microcosm" are direct inheritances of Komenský's theology and metaphysics, which happened to be constructed by a Protestant.

Our analysis was concerned with the foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy and revealing them for what they are: theological and metaphysical and based on the seventeenth century theology of Komenský. Our finding does not intend to be significant for questions concerning the Catholic-Protestant divide, but for the fact that a political philosophy with roots deep in a specific Christian theology informed the creation of a modern secular democratic republic in Europe. We saw that the theological foundations of Masaryk's political philosophy revealed themselves in his answer to the question of Europe's crisis namely, morality. Jaroslav Opat, who has re-visited the subject of morality in Masaryk's thought, noted that Masaryk's adherence to morality and his religious conviction was without interruption from his youth to old age.<sup>272</sup> We can conclude that Masaryk's religious thought was consistent because it was also firmly rooted in theological and metaphysical foundations already worked out by Jan Amos Komenský in the seventeenth century.

We believe that our thesis has been demonstrated. But this does not mean that our other question as to the force of ideas in political history has been answered. By studying Masaryk's political philosophy for its theological and metaphysical foundations we could not but refer to

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>272</sup> Opat, *op. cit.*, 486.

consequences in political history. The case of Masaryk begs a correlation of the theoretical with the practical elements of his life. Masaryk established a democratic state, was its president and was able to accurately estimate the political forces of Europe and the world during the dramatic events of his day with perspicacious insight; this compels the analyst to search for the foundations of his thought in the hope of discovering the sources of intellectual and spiritual inspiration that informed Masaryk's judgements and motivated his actions; they were not so difficult to discover, as Masaryk confessed to his sources of inspiration. What we have brought to light is not the fact that Komenský was an inspiration to Masaryk, but the extent to which Komenský's theology informed Masaryk and Masaryk's political philosophy. We find that Komenský's influence on Masaryk was stronger than what is generally esteemed in current academic literature; it also runs deeper (into theology and metaphysics) than Masaryk himself admitted. Komenský was no doubt a Czech national symbol, and was treated as such by Masaryk; so much one can read from Masaryk's philosophy of history and personal memoirs. But in looking to the theological foundations of Masaryk's philosophy we have revealed a relationship that goes beyond what Masaryk made explicit in his works and words. Komenský was the originator of Masaryk's religious thought at least in so far as that thought sought to view all of life, including politics, *sub specie aeternitatis* and to apply this vision for the sake of improving human affairs. So much do we find Masaryk related to Komenský in thought that we begin to wonder whether they were not also related in spirit? We are not alone in finding the coincidences of history that seemingly relate Komenský to Masaryk to be uncanny.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Houška, op. cit., 182.

Now that we have sufficiently demonstrated the connection between Masaryk's political philosophy and Komenský's theology, thereby fulfilling our scientific requirements, we will conclude by making a conjecture. Masaryk may have been inspired by other figures from Czech history throughout his life, but no figure was so closely tied not only to his philosophical thought but to his political endeavour as Komenský. It is as if Masaryk, forsaking a purely theoretical life for one that is practical and political, fulfilled not only Komenský's educative endeavour, but also Komenský's political hope. By restoring leadership in Bohemia to the Czechs for the first time since 1618 Masaryk completed Komenský's mission which was to return the situation in Bohemia to *status quo ante bellum* (1618). In 1918, exactly three hundred years after the beginning of the Thirty Years War that sent Komenský into exile and ended Czech Protestant rule in Bohemia, Masaryk established Czechoslovakia and delivered a speech in which he repeated words once used by Komenský to address Protestant exiles, heartening his listeners with the prospect of a return of Czech rule to Bohemia.<sup>274</sup> Masaryk's creation of a democratic Czechoslovakia in 1918 could be seen as the completion of the story of moral regeneration that was Masaryk's idea of Czech history and the whole of life seen *sub specie aeternitatis*.

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<sup>274</sup> Opat, op. cit., 487.

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