

Religion and Democracy¹

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Abstract:

This article addresses mainly two widespread prejudices. The first claims that democracy flourishes only in a Christian culture, the second wants to keep religion out of politics to protect democracy. A short look at the history of Austria shows that the Catholic Church did not support democracy over a long period of time. With the help of Amartya Sen, we can also find essential prerequisites for democracy in cultures outside ancient Greece and Christianity. Democracy does not depend on a specific cultural or religious background. It requires the public use of reason and a tolerant attitude that values other beliefs. The second prejudice is rejected by showing that religion can hinder or strengthen democracy. The problematic side is addressed by referring to religious support of populism, the positive side by discussing fraternity as an important prerequisite for democracy.

Keywords: *Religion, democracy, Austria, the Catholic church*

The relationship between religion and democracy is a complex topic if we choose a broader view. In the enlightenment tradition, I would like to free this topic from two prejudices that are particularly widespread in Austria. The first prejudice is that modern democracy originated from Christian and perhaps Greek roots and can therefore only flourish in a Christian culture. Immigrants from other cultures find it very difficult to embrace democracy for this reason alone. This position is found both among representatives of Christian guiding culture and among those cultural Christians who usually have little to do with the Christian message and have only recently discovered Christianity for themselves to be able to set themselves apart from Islam. The second prejudice is found among more liberal-minded people who cannot imagine a positive coexistence of religion and democracy and to protect democracy want to keep religions out of all politics. The fighting formula of this position is “religion is a private matter”. The first prejudice can be

1 This article is based on an earlier German version and has been supplemented: Wolfgang Palaver, „Religion und Demokratie,“ in *Glaube – Klima – Hoffnung: Religion und Klimawandel als Herausforderungen für die politische Bildung*, ed. Kathrin Stainer-Hämmerle (Berlin: Wochenschau Verlag, 2021), 87-99.

rejected relatively easily and quickly, at least by looking at Austrian history. As a first step therefore, I would like to look at the Catholic Church's long journey towards a positive relationship with democracy.

The Arduous Path of the Catholic Church in Austria

Looking back at the relationship between the Catholic Church and democracy in Austria in the first half of the 20th century, we can see how difficult it was to be open to democracy. It was neither a supporting pillar of democracy nor compelling force of resistance against fascism or National Socialism. In 1962, the Catholic sociologist August Maria Knoll pointedly held up a mirror to the Church:

“The Church and ‘natural law’ said ‘yes’ to the monarchy of the House of Austria at the beginning and end of the First World War, on July 28, 1914, and on August 4, 1918; they said ‘yes’ to the First Republic on November 12, 1918, and to democracy on January 23, 1919; they said ‘yes’ to the downfall of the First Republic on December 21, 1933, and to the authoritarian corporative state on December 22, 1934. And what was done in 1914, 1918 and 1934 on the part of the Church and natural law had to be done in 1938 as well. There followed a ‘yes’ to the downfall of Austria, a solemn ‘yes’ to the ‘Third Reich’. It happened on March 21, 1938.”²

The ecclesiastical opportunism diagnosed by Knoll was fed by the close relationship between the Catholic Church and the state, the general skepticism of the Catholic Church toward modern democracy (French Revolution), and above all by the self-serving interest in state privileges. In his book *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie*, published in 1929, the law-scholar Hans Kelsen, who contributed significantly to the Austrian Constitution of 1920, saw no possibility for the Catholic Church to open itself to democracy. According to Kelsen, the “imposing

2 August Maria Knoll, *Katholische Kirche und scholastisches Naturrecht. Zur Frage der Freiheit* (Wien: Europa Verlag, 1962), 38f.

body of metaphysical thought of medieval scholasticism cannot be systematically separated from its autocratic politics.”³

Liberation from these political aberrations occurred only after the Second World War. With the “Mariazeller Manifest” (Mariazell Manifesto) of 1952, the Austrian Catholic Church said goodbye to close ties with the state and rejected both any “alliance of throne and altar” and any “protectorate of a party over the church.”⁴ With the Declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, such an attitude became established in the Second Vatican Council in the World Church. The Council also made democracy the norm to strive for in the state. Today, the Catholic Church is clearly committed to democracy: “The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate.”⁵

Thus, a look at the Catholic Church clearly shows that the assertion that democracy is essentially a fruit of Christianity cannot be upheld. However, if we broaden our view, we can see a connection between the Judeo-Christian heritage and democracy. In this connection, we can refer, for example, to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who very clearly pointed out the lasting influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition on modern democracy:

“Christianity has functioned for the normative self-understanding of modernity as more than a mere precursor or a catalyst. Egalitarian universalism, from which sprang the ideas of freedom and social solidarity, of an autonomous conduct of life and emanci-

3 Hans Kelsen, *The Essence and Value of Democracy*, trans. Brian Graf (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 105.

4 Cf. Roman A. Siebenrock, „Eine freie Kirche in einer freien Gesellschaft‘: Kirche und politische Gemeinschaft. Zum politischen Handeln der „römisch“-katholischen Kirche in Geschichte und Gegenwart,“ in *Öffentliche Religionen in Österreich: Politikverständnis und zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement*, ed. Jürgen Nautz, Kristina Stöckl, and Roman Siebenrock, *Edition Weltordnung – Religion – Gewalt* (Innsbruck: IUP – Innsbruck University Press, 2013), 69-90.

5 John Paul II, *Centesimus annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum novarum*, *Publication / Office for Publishing and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference*, vol. no 436-8 (Washington, D.C.: Office for Publishing and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1991), #46, cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), #406.

pation, of the individual morality of conscience, human rights, and democracy, is the direct heir to the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical appropriation and reinterpretation. To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a post-national constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.”⁶

In the following, I would like to follow this trace in a second step with regard to the influence of the biblical idea of equality.

The Bible’s Equality Impulse

Along with liberty and fraternity, equality is one of the fundamental principles of modern democracy as we have known it since the French Revolution. An important impetus for democracy can be recognized in the biblically emphasized equality of all people before God. In the Catholic Church, however, the equality of human beings before God was, for a long time, explicitly excluded from any application to political conditions. On the left fringe of the Reformation, on the other hand, we can observe, especially in the context of the English Revolution of the 17th century, how Christian communities first practiced the general priesthood of all believers in their church communities and how some groups gradually transferred this to political structures as well.⁷ Starting in England, this also influenced the development of democracy in the United States. Especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, we can observe that to this day there is a much closer relationship between Christianity and democracy. Democratic currents in Protestantism are among the pillars of U.S. democracy, while on the European continent there was a radical break between the democratic movement and the Catholic Church in the wake of the French Revolution.

6 Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, trans. Ciaran Cronin and Max Pensky (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2006), 150-51.

7 Cf. Wolfgang Palaver, „Gleichheit als Sprengkraft? Zum Einfluß des Christentums auf die Entwicklung der Demokratie,“ in *Verweigerte Mündigkeit? Politische Kultur und Kirche*, ed. Józef Niewiadomski, *theologische trends* (Thaur: Kulturverlag, 1989), 203-09.

Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the harshest critics of democracy, unmistakably referred to the connection between biblical equality before God and democracy. The concept of the “equality of souls before God” is according to Nietzsche “the prototype of all theories of equal rights: mankind was first taught to stammer the proposition of equality in a religious context, and only later was it made into morality: no wonder that man ended by taking it seriously, taking it practically! – that is to say, politically, democratically, socialistically, in the spirit of the pessimism of indignation.”⁸

So, there is indeed a connection between the Judeo-Christian Bible and democracy, but it is not direct and does not require a Christian guiding culture to support it.

Democracy Knows Not Only Biblical or Greek Roots

Even though most free democratic states today have a Christian background,⁹ it would be wrong to claim democratic potential only for Christianity. Those who do not limit their view of democracy to its Western manifestation will recognize important democratic approaches in other cultures and religions as well. Today, Islam in particular is suspected of being at odds with democracy. In the 9th century, the sociologist and historian Alexis de Tocqueville claimed that Islam and democracy were incompatible.¹⁰ Ian Buruma, a Dutch writer and Asia specialist, has clearly rejected such a thesis in his book *Taming the Gods: Religion and Democracy on Three Continents*. Tocqueville was far too unfamiliar with Islam in its concrete diversity to provide reliable information here. According to Buruma, democracy is neither foreign nor new to many Muslims, and referring to India, Indonesia and Turkey, he states:

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 401 [§ 765].

9 Manfred Brocker, and Tine Stein, eds., *Christentum und Demokratie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 8.

10 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, Francis Bowen, and Phillips Bradley, 2 vols., *Vintage classics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 2:23 [II.1.5].

“Democracy is [...] neither new nor strange to many Muslims. The Indian population includes around 150 million Muslims. Like most democracies, the Indian system of government is far from perfect, but its flaws — corruption, demagoguery, crime, caste-based fury, and so on — have nothing to do with the contents of the Koran. Turkish democracy is equally imperfect, but the ideological ‘secularists’ are as much to blame for its defects as the Islamists, possibly more so. And Indonesia, the largest Muslim majority nation in the world, is now one of the few functioning democracies in Southeast Asia.”¹¹

In order to show the extent to which basic democratic principles are also present in other cultures, I draw on considerations by the Nobel Prize winner for economics Amartya Sen, which he presented in his book *The Idea of Justice*. In it he draws on ancient Indian concepts of justice with their distinction between *niti* (“organizational propriety and behavioral correctness”) and *nyaya* (“a comprehensive concept of realized justice”).¹² Applied to the field of democracy, it is a matter of distinguishing between a narrow understanding of democracy, which is limited to institutional elements such as free elections and voting, and a broad understanding of democracy, which sees democracy much more comprehensively as a form of “government by discussion”.¹³ *Niti* without *nyaya* is not sufficient in the realm of democracy as Sen underscores with the following statement: “Bal-loting alone can be thoroughly inadequate on its own, as is abundantly illustrated by the astounding electoral victories of ruling tyrannies in authoritarian regimes in the past as well as those in the present, for example in today’s North Korea.”¹⁴

11 Ian Buruma, *Taming the Gods: Religion and Democracy on Three Continents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 86. With regard to Turkey, it should be noted that Buruma wrote this before 2013 and Erdogan’s authoritarian interventions which have intensified since then. However, he rightly points to the previously prevailing authoritarian secularism in Turkey, which indirectly contributed to the AKP’s reaction against secularism. The German religious political scientist Oliver Hidalgo notes that currently only two countries with a Muslim majority population, Tunisia and Senegal, are considered democratic, and Indonesia and Turkey have since lost this status. At the same time, however, he firmly rejects the thesis that democracy and Islam are mutually exclusive: <https://www.gmx.ch/magazine/politik/demokratie-und-islam-34276636>

12 Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 20.

13 Sen, *Idea of Justice*, 324.

14 Sen, *Idea of Justice*, 327.

From the perspective of a broad understanding of democracy it becomes apparent that democracy has two indispensable prerequisites. One is the already mentioned “government by discussion”, which Sen also calls a public use of reason. As a second prerequisite he mentions tolerance by which he does not mean the mere toleration of other opinions but explicitly speaks of valuing other beliefs. As an example, he refers to the Indian emperor Ashoka (3rd century B.C.), who converted to Buddhism, and who expressed such a form of tolerance as follows: “He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own sect, in reality inflicts, by such conduct, *the severest injury on his own sect*.”¹⁵ In addition to this ancient example of tolerance, Sen cites others that make it clear that this pillar of democracy extends far beyond Western or Christian cultures. One of the first examples comes from the Islamic world:

“When the Jewish philosopher Maimonides was forced to emigrate from Spain in the twelfth century (when more tolerant Muslim regimes had given way to a far less tolerant Islamic regimes), he sought shelter not in Europe but in a tolerant Muslim kingdom in the Arab world and was given an honoured and influential position at the court of Emperor Saladin in Cairo. Saladin was certainly a strong Muslim; indeed, he fought hard for Islam in the Crusades and Richard the Lionheart was one of his distinguished opponents. But it was in Saladin’s kingdom where Maimonides found his new base and a renewed voice. Tolerance of dissent is, of course, central to the opportunity to exercise public reasoning, and the tolerant Muslim regimes in their heyday offered a freedom that Inquisition-ridden Europe sometimes withheld.”¹⁶

Sen also encounters an Islamic example of tolerance in ancient India which shows how some Muslims were morally superior to Europeans at the time:

“When in the 1590s the great Mughal emperor Akbar was making his pronouncements in India on the need for religious and political toleration, and when he was busy arranging organized dialogues between holders of different faiths (including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, Jains, Jews and even atheists), the Inquisitions were still very

15 Quoted in: Sen, *Idea of Justice*, 75.

16 Sen, *Idea of Justice*, 333.

active in Europe. Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake in Rome for heresy in 1600, even when Akbar was lecturing in Agra on toleration and the need for dialogue across the borders of religions and ethnicities.”¹⁷

In addition to tolerance, as already mentioned, government through discussion is a basic requirement of any democracy. Sen cites Buddhist councils in India to settle disputes between differing views on social and religious matters. For example, the aforementioned Emperor Ashoka hosted the third and largest Buddhist council. Finally, reference can be made to the 7th century Buddhist prince Shotoku in Japan who explicitly pointed out the importance of public reasoning: “Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many.”¹⁸

Populism and Religion

Religions can promote and strengthen democratic developments but they can also extinguish the spirit of democracy and instead foment hatred and enmity. Today, negative alliances are especially evident with right-wing populists and their friend-enemy-thinking.¹⁹ Inciting religious support, these populists urge for a clash of civilizations. Can criteria be named to distinguish between these tendencies? At the beginning of the 20th century, the French philosopher Henri Bergson already distinguished between closed societies and the open society.²⁰ He sees both forms connected with different types of religion. Closed societies are based on a static form of religion, as we know it from early tribal religions and as it still characterizes Samuel Huntington’s concept of a “clash of civilizations.”²¹ In con-

17 Sen, *Idea of Justice*, 334.

18 Quoted in: Sen, *Idea of Justice*, 331.

19 Wolfgang Palaver, „Rechtspopulismus in Europa als Herausforderung für die christliche Sozialethik,“ *Amosinternational* 6, no. 4 (2012): 27-35.

20 Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra, Cloudesley Brereton, and W. Horsfall Carter (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), cf. Wolfgang Palaver, “Fraternity versus Parochialism: On Religion and Populism,” *Religions* 11, no. 7 (2020).

21 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York:

trast to this is the open society which Bergson associates with a dynamic form of religion with its mystical core as he believes to recognize it in the example of the Jewish prophets and their struggle for social justice and, above all, in Jesus Christ and his call to love one's enemies in the Sermon on the Mount.

For our present discussion, the Muslim and Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne builds on Bergson's reflections to counter Huntington's static understanding of religion with its tendency toward enemy-thinking with a dynamic form of spirituality that can help us to strengthen fraternity among human beings. Whereas Huntington understands "identity" as "essentially religious and that it is in the nature of religion to secrete this *petrification* that inescapably leads groups to oppose forms of identification," Diagne discovers a "'decentring' principle," a "fluidity" as the "spiritual dimension" of religion.²² According to Diagne, all world religions are characterized by this dynamic spirituality that can lead us out of the dead end of culture wars:

"Spirituality is the art of distancing oneself from self, from the dogmatism, intolerance or violence that passionate conviction can engender. In this way, it is profoundly linked to the value of tolerance because it teaches us to be receptive to the varied ways in which truth is mirrored in all things. I should therefore like to propose this theme of truth being reflected in all things as a way of transcending the antithesis between relativism and universalism. [...] To perceive spirituality in religion is to escape from the alternative within which the religious paradigm encloses us: a war *of* religions, or else a war *on* religions."²³

The last sentence also addresses the second prejudice that I want to reject. It is the war against religions which today often goes hand in hand with the secular slogan "religion is a private matter." Finally, I therefore, want to point out a connection between religion and democracy which shows religions as a support of democracy.

Simon & Schuster, 1996).

22 Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Religion and the Challenge of Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Future of Values: 21st-Century Talks*, ed. Jérôme Bindé (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 101.

23 Diagne, "Religion," 101.

Fraternity as a Pre-Political Requirement of Democracy

With Amartya Sen's distinction between *niti* and *nyaya*, I have already referred to cultural or pre-political preconditions of democracy. In the German-speaking world, this insight also finds expression in the famous Böckenförde dictum, according to which the "liberal, secularized state is sustained by conditions it cannot itself guarantee."²⁴ Hartmut Rosa emphasizes today from a sociological point of view that democracy is based on "a *prior* basis of resonance" that makes a fruitful political struggle possible in the first place.²⁵ In a lecture during the Salzburger Hochschulwochen (Salzburg University Weeks) of 2017, he explicitly emphasized the religious dimension of this basis of resonance. According to Rosa, the "democratic public sphere [...] only functions on the basis of a fundamental religious attitude."²⁶ Rosa has a very broad understanding of the term "religious" because he explicitly does not exclude secular attitudes from it. Democracy thrives on a spiritual culture that emphasizes togetherness and thus creates a solid basis for political conflict.

The American philosopher John Dewey, to whom Rosa also refers²⁷, and who continues to influence discussions of democratic theory in the USA with his pragmatic approach to democracy to this day, already rejected a narrow understanding of democracy as a mere form of government toward the end of the 19th century and in contrast spoke of an ethical and spiritual form of life: "Democracy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association."²⁸ Dewey's understanding of religion is, of course, quite different from the traditional

24 Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Religion, Law, and Democracy: Selected Writings Vol. II, Oxford constitutional theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 167.

25 Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of the Relationship to the World*, trans. James C. Wagner (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019), 418; cf. 215-25.

26 Hartmut Rosa, „Leerer Echoraum oder transformatives Antwortgeschehen? Resonanztheoretische Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Öffentlichkeit und Religion,“ in *Öffentlichkeiten*, ed. Martin Dürmberger (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2018), 241.

27 Rosa, *Resonance*, 216.

28 John Dewey, *The Ethics of Democracy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Andrews & Company Publishers, 1888), 18. Years later, Dewey summarized his broad understanding of democracy in the following often quoted formulation: "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1955), 101.

theism of Christian churches. But he addresses a spiritual dimension of democracy that must not be overlooked. He defines this spirituality in his social-philosophical lectures in China in 1919/20 as the recognition of every person “that his own welfare is intimately interrelated with that of his fellow men.”²⁹ He explicitly aims at the well-being of humankind and does not limit this spiritual basis of democracy within national borders. He refers to fraternity and even more directly to friendship in order to define the spiritual prerequisite of democracy substantially. Thus, by way of comparison, he cites the “relations of *friends*” to illustrate that democracy, despite its foundation in the individual as the “centre of conscious life,” presupposes friendly coexistence with others.³⁰ In 1939, the war triggered by Hitler made the eighty-year-old Dewey once again advocate democracy as a way of life that must be based on “amicable cooperation.”³¹

Closer to our present time and with reference to the USA, the then President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, in a speech at Stanford University in 1994, also pointed to spiritual prerequisites of democracy that go far beyond merely formal rules and institutions. In view of the dangers of a possible clash of civilizations, he refers – without abandoning his agnostic stance – to a transcendence to be understood in the broadest sense of the word as a spiritual precondition of democracy:

“The separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, the universal right to vote, the rule of law, freedom of expression, the inviolability of private ownership, and all the other aspects of democracy as a system that ought to be the least unjust and the least capable of violence – these are merely technical instruments that enable man to live in dignity, freedom, and responsibility. But in and of themselves, they cannot guarantee his dignity, freedom, and responsibility. The source of this basic human potential lies elsewhere: in man’s relationship to that which transcends him. I think the fathers of

29 John Dewey, *Lectures in China, 1919-1920*, trans. Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973), 180.

30 John Dewey, “Lectures in Social and Political Philosophy,” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* VII, no. 2 (23.12. 2015): 38. On fraternity, see Dewey, *Lectures in China*, 106, Dewey, “Lectures in Social and Political Philosophy,” 13, John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 2 ed., *The Terry Lectures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 77-78.

31 John Dewey, *The Essential Dewey: Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 342.

American democracy knew this very well. Were I to compare democracy to the sun's life-giving radiation, I would say that, though from the political point of view it is the only hope for humanity, it can have a beneficial impact on us if it resonates with our deepest inner nature. And if part of that nature is the experience of transcendence in the broadest sense of the word – that is, man's respect for that which transcends him, without which he would not exist, and of which he is an integral part – then democracy must be imbued with the spirit of that respect if it is to succeed.”³²

Interestingly, even in Hans Kelsen – intellectually close to Dewey³³ – we find a spiritual basis of democracy despite his sharp rejection of traditional Christian metaphysics with its vertical orientation towards God. He knows that democracy requires tolerance, i.e. a friendly relationship with our fellow human beings, which he expresses with the Sanskrit formula *tat tvam asi* from the Indian Upanishads when he asks about the human character necessary for democracy:³⁴

“It is the type of personality whose basic experience is the *Tat tvam asi*, the man who, when he looks across at another, hears a voice within him saying: That is you. This kind of personality recognises himself again in the other, experiences the other a priori, not as something essentially alien, not as an enemy, but as an equal and therefore a friend, and does not feel himself to be something unique, altogether incomparable and beyond repetition. It is the type whose ego-feeling is relatively subdued, the type of the sympathising, peace-loving, non-aggressive man, the man whose primitive aggressive instincts are turned, not outward so much as inward, and are expressed here as an inclination to self-criticism and an enhanced tendency to feel guilt and a sense of responsibility.”³⁵

32 Václav Havel, *The Art of the Impossible: Politics as Morality in Practice: Speeches and Writings, 1990–1996*, trans. Paul Wilson and others (New York: Knopf, 1997), 180.

33 Cf. Dieter Thomä, *Puer robustus. Eine Philosophie des Störenfrieds* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), 389.

34 Easwaran Eknath, *The Upanishads*, 2 ed., *The classics of Indian spirituality* (Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 2007), 134 [The Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.7], Anantanand Rambachan, *Essays in Hindu Theology* (Minneapolis, Mn: Fortress Press, 2019), 159.

35 Hans Kelsen, *Essays in Legal and Moral Philosophy*, trans. Peter Heath, *Synthese library* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1974), 100.

Indirectly, Kelsen addresses fraternity in this paragraph, which has been one of the basic principles of democracy, along with liberty and equality, since the French Revolution. He even explicitly endorses this “triple star of the French Revolution” when he shows that contrary to an autocracy with its ideal of a leader and the “father” as its “archetype” democracy’s principle is “coordination, its most primitive form, the matriarchal fraternity-relation.”³⁶ With Kelsen’s emphasis on fraternity he comes – despite his general criticism of religion – close to a religious foundation of his world view.³⁷

In support of fraternity the religious communities – of course not exclusively and not only these – have an important task.³⁸ The “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” signed in Abu Dhabi in February 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb is a good example of this on a global level.³⁹ Pope Francis’ last social encyclical *Fratelli tutti* builds on this document, broadens our understanding of fraternity, and explains how it “enhances freedom and equality.”⁴⁰ He refers to the formula of the French Revolution and underlines the importance of fraternity in its relation with liberty and equality.⁴¹ The world religions have a special obligation to strengthen fraternity in our world: “The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.”⁴²

36 Kelsen, *Essays*, 105-06.

37 Clemens Jabloner, „Menschenbild und Friedenssicherung,“ in *Hans Kelsens Wege sozialphilosophischer Forschung: Ergebnisse eines internationalen Symposions in Wien, (14.–15. Oktober 1996)*, ed. Robert Walter and Clemens Jabloner, *Schriftenreihe des Hans-Kelsen-Instituts* (Wien: Manz Verlag, 1997), 66.

38 Hans Joas rightly remarks that Dewey’s “sacralization of democracy” is too weak to be able to permanently strengthen democracy pre-politically. Instead of relying on an “empty universalism of the democratic ideal,” what is needed is a strengthening of universal fraternity through concrete religious communities. Hans Joas, *The Genesis of Values* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 119-23.

39 Francis, and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, “A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” (2019), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

40 Francis, “Fratelli tutti: Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father on Fraternity and Social Friendship,” (2020): #103, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

41 Francis, “Fratelli tutti,” #103-05.

42 Francis, “Fratelli tutti,” #271.

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur has seen the effort for fraternity in the abiding of the theological-political which today can no longer be thought vertically for the legitimation of hierarchical order but has also not simply become meaningless:

“If something still remains, it is in the direction of wishing to live together that one must look, rather toward the vertical structure. I mean very precisely in the direction of wishing to live together as the practice of fraternity. I am convinced that there are in this regard, in the notion of the ‘people of God’ and in its composition of perfect ecclesial reciprocity, genuine resources for conceptualizing a political model.”⁴³

The socio-political commitment of Protestant Diakonie and Catholic Caritas in Austria are concrete examples of commitments to fraternity that help to strengthen the necessary basis for a humane democracy.

43 Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 105.

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