

A Response to Schmitt's Political Theology: 'Civil Religion' Reconsidered

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Philosophy Bachelor Thesis

27/01/2021

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1. Introduction

The broad concept of political theology appears to be falling on fertile ground, and this could be due to consequences of the “perceived failing of liberal democratic states” (Robbins 78). However, it is not clear what we mean by “Political Theology”. The term changes its meaning from author to author and from time to time, but the basic point that it seems to want to evidence is the fact that it is not that religion is resurging in the political sphere. In fact, religion has never really subsided; it has only changed its shape.

Carl Schmitt, the 20th century political jurist from the Weimar republic, observed the collapse of his liberal democratic state and what he considered the hidden tyranny of that model. On Schmitt's view, there was a legal-positivistic smoke screen that hid away the dictatorship that would arise the moment a state of emergency could set in (Schmitt 37). But all of this pointed to a more profound problem: the absolute void of metaphysical content that permeated the legal norms and vocabulary of his time. Schmitt argued that the politics of Weimar republic had remnants of theological politics and a metaphysical basis, despite liberalism's anti-metaphysical stance. For Schmitt, the sacred has never left politics: “All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concepts” (Schmitt 37).

Schmitt analysis and answer to the problem he saw in Liberalism is laid out in *Political Theology*, which can be considered the foundational text for arguably the entirety of Schmitt's legal and political thought (Meierhenrich and Simons, 250). At its core, political theology is usually a critical enquiry into the religious assumptions that underlay both political philosophy and political practice (Ribbons 107), which means that religion's rightful role in public life has yet to be determined.

While analysing and recognising the strength of Schmitt's foundational claims, however, this paper aims to provide an alternative Schmitt's a sovereign dictatorship, which ultimately led him to his increased involvement with Nazism (Bendersky 195). With the strength of Schmitt's foundational claims, the quest to remove the fascism that results from his reasoning has received mixed reception. The inescapability of the totalitarian conclusion will be traced back to the Hobbesian presumptions that dominate Schmitt's work, especially clear in his distinction between friend and enemy (Hohendahl 4). Hohendahl criticises the interpretations and appropriations of Schmitt from both the Left and the Right but claims that the Left is particularly responsible for the "sanitisation" and "dehistoricised" ideas that led to the Nazi regime. This occurs because the majority of Leftist interpretations of Schmitt's thought have neglected focusing on the main Schmittian critique, which is a theological critique, that the liberal political concepts are just secularised religious concepts.

By introducing Machiavelli's concept of "civil religion", the political aspects of religion, as well as his love for "ancient theology" for its ability to retain citizen's *virtu*, according to Korvela (63), we repoliticise theological concepts' role in maintaining a strong political regime. Machiavelli's understanding of virtue was based on respect for not only classical, but also Christian ethics (Clarke 317). This is further emphasised by Machiavelli's predecessor, the 14th-century philosopher Abū Zayd ibn Khaldūn, a political philosopher who was concerned with the questions of political unity among states. Yet unlike Carl Schmitt, his analysis leads us to a different outcome than Schmitt's Hobbesian ontology of the political. Ibn Khaldun sees the survival of any political group based on social solidarity, or '*Assabiyah*', the ability to live or die for the good of a group (Malesevic 87). Machiavelli also points out the instrumental value that religion has in creating a cohesive political community. With that, both Machiavelli and ibn Khaldun saw religion highly instrumentally, unlike their contemporaries. Could their perspectives perhaps pose as a possible response to Carl

Schmitt's problematisation of the political theology of liberal constitutionalism? This paper tries to extract the thought-provoking critique of Carl Schmitt's political theology while attempting to eliminate the necessity of despotism as a solution. This will be done by finding new ways to reimagine the conceptual place for religion in political thought based on these two Medieval and Early-Modern philosophers.

Both Machiavelli and ibn Khaldun strike a balance between the realism that inspired Schmitt's critique and the idealism that is implied with liberalism, as they both diverged from the religious fundamentals of their own times. Both thinkers were empiricists and naturalists, which resulted in a clear outlook of political realism running throughout their work.

Kalpakian (363) describes ibn Khaldun as an alternative primogenitor of realism, while Hodigwe (20) claims that "Machiavelli's conception of International relations as articulated in the Discourses of the First Ten Books of Titus Livius" demonstrate claims of realism. The introduction of ibn Khaldun offers a complementary analysis and nuances Machiavelli's republicanism by introducing the *Assabiyah* concept (Safar, Yahya, Usman, and Ismail 2). With this new concept, opposition to Schmitt's distinction between enemy and friend becomes conceivable. Machiavelli, on the other end, offers perspectives on his study of Roman constitutionalism and provides a solid alternative to Schmitt's conclusion based on the structure of political regimes such as Roman republics that hold the best balance of powers (Korvela 9). Overall, it will be contended that both thinkers show significant overlap in how a state should be run, particularly on the grounds of religion. This is an important point, as the re-establishment of a civil religion could perhaps re-invigorate the "dead" secularised concepts as criticised in Schmitt's political theology. However, this paper will demonstrate that while the metaphysical qualities of religious doctrines are not relevant for this argument, it is important to utilise the properties of religion that can bind a group together, hence result in political longevity and stability.

RESEARCH QUESTION: *Based on Schmitt's use of political theology to critique liberalism, could the Medieval and Early-Modern perspectives from Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun provide a theoretical alternative to fascism with the use of civil religion?*

THESIS: *This thesis argues that Medieval and Early-Modern political theory from Eastern and Western perspectives can conceptually solve Schmitt's problematisation of liberalism with a realist and instrumental use of religion, while avoiding Schmitt's fascist solution of a sovereign dictatorship.*

2. Schmitt's Problematisation

The definition of sovereignty presented in Schmitt's first thesis exposes a decisionist position, according to which law as a legal order could not emerge as a closed totality over itself (Schmitt 36). For decisionism, the law always points, as a condition of the possibility of its effectiveness as a right, to the non-normative scope, to the factual scope of a decision that can establish order or the "normal situation". The exception arises, according to Schmitt, precisely as the concrete situation that allows this separation between order and legal order: in an exceptional and urgent situation, order, and condition of order (the state) have priority over the legal order, and the decision expresses, within the legal scope, its irreducibility to the norm (Schmitt 36). The second statement appears in the context of Schmitt's criticism, following Donoso Cortés, of the idea that liberalism manages to take a "neutral" point of view in relation to theological, moral, ideological, and political conflicts. Schmitt will argue that this pretense neutrality only leads to endless procedural debates that only avoid any decision making. Schmitt observes this already in the monarchy that preceded the French revolution:

The insecurity and immaturity of the liberal bourgeoisie of the July Monarchy can be recognised everywhere. Its liberal constitutionalism attempted to

paralyse the king through parliament but permitted him to remain on the throne, an inconsistency committed by deism when it excluded God from the world but held onto his existence. Although the liberal bourgeoisie wanted a god, its god could not become active; it wanted a monarch, but he had to be powerless; it demanded freedom and equality but limited voting rights to the propertied classes in order to ensure the influence of education and property on legislation, as if education and property entitled that class to repress the poor and uneducated; it abolished the aristocracy of blood and family but permitted the impudent rule of the moneyed aristocracy, the most ignorant and the most ordinary form of an aristocracy; it wanted neither the sovereignty of the king nor that of the people (Schmitt 59-60).

This liberal tendency to postpone and avoid decisions would have the effect of diluting the metaphysical truths in the debate, so that the postulates such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, trade and commerce - the central commitments of the bourgeois class - would have their metaphysical nucleus completely mined out of real content (Schmitt 62-63).

Political theology - A Critique of Liberalism

It is on the basis of those two premises that Schmitt establishes his criticism of liberalism. Schmitt sees liberalism as an ideology whose internal logic has got to be exposed, since it is a supposedly apolitical system that attempts to neutralise and depoliticise political existence.

According to Bielefeldt (69), Schmitt seeks to discredit liberalism in two ways. First, the principles of neutrality and the rule of law, as well as the liberal project of a constitutional democracy, are supported by contradictory premises. In this way, they constitute a presumptuous type of self-deception. Secondly, Bielefeldt (69) notes that Schmitt accuses liberals of hypocrisy: by invoking supposedly universal principles, liberals are merely

concealing their private agendas and selfish economic goals. In Schmitt's view, it is now the case that the individual freedom which pre-exists the social contract has become the end in itself and so there is no longer a common transcendent framework of meaning that can adjudicate opposition.

It is worth noting that Schmitt's definition of a politician is based on distinction between "friend" and "enemy" (Levi 27). According to Schmitt, the distinction of a friend from an enemy is the utmost level of intensity of either association or dissociation (CP 26, 38). This implies, high level of dissociation illustrates enmity, whereas high level of association occurs between friends. This leads him to postulate that the properly political phenomena occur in the sphere that has the *jus belli* (Schmitt 57), the prerogative to proclaim violent confrontation and demand from its members the sacrifice of life, as combatants, with a view to the elimination of the other. Thus, in his view, there is no such thing as a liberal policy but only a liberal critique of politics, liberal thinking bypasses political phenomena. This represents a contradiction because it is an ideology that places individual freedom as a central axiom, but in order to coexist with the state, it has to admit the possibility of the individual surrendering to someone other than himself. In this way, liberal thought systematically denies politics and the state, and moves between two heterogeneous spheres of polarity: that of ethics and that of economics. The effect would be a "demilitarised" resignification of terms that would be typical of politics (Schmitt 71). Such reinterpretations would have the effect of subjecting the State and politics to an individualistic morality that cannot be determined neither by ethics, nor by aesthetics, nor by religion, nor by politics - the autonomy of the laws of the market being an indisputable dogma of liberalism.

The concept of "rule of law" - central to liberal constitutionalism - would, for Schmitt, be another example of such contradictions and hypocrisies. The rule of law, according to Stacey (589) advocates the primacy of normative principles over concrete political positions

and decisions. However, normative principles cannot have an effect on a society unless they are interpreted by particular agents and applied to particular circumstances. Particular perspectives would, therefore, always be involved in the implementation of normative principles and weaken their claim to universal validity. Constitutionalism, in turn, would only consist of a series of regulations and mechanisms designed to avoid political sovereignty, avoiding the formation of identity that would be typical of democracy as a political regime, through purely normative universalism (Spang 591).

Political theology can be used in a wide variety of contexts, but the critique this paper focuses on is based on Carl Schmitt's political theology. "This is exactly what is at stake in my Political Theology. The scientific conceptual structure of both of these faculties has systematically produced areas in which concepts can be transposed, among which harmonious exchanges are permitted and meaningful" (Schmitt 108). Considered in the light of this polemical usage, the term political theology refers to the age-old question of religious legitimation of political power, or what Peterson (2011) called monotheism as a political problem (see also Metz et al. 1970)

Problems with Leftist interpretations of Schmitt

Margaret Canovan analyses the ideology of the 'the people' in the existing political theory. Her analysis which acclimatizes myth besides theologically appealing to both faith and restoration in the world's politics was influenced by Hannah Arendt and council communism instead of political realism by Schmitt and Lenin (Canovan 138). Canovan's theory can be described as a theory of unexpected collapse of freedom. According to this theory, the revolutionary breaks cannot be facilitated and there is insignificant likelihood of institutionalisation or bypassing the restrictions characterising normal politics.

Although Canovan's concept was derived from Hannah Arendt, it can be linked to Walter Benjamin, who unlike Arendt was a political theologian. Benjamin claimed that

humanitarian ideals rarely resist the onslaught of not only nationalism, fear and mediocracy as well as racism (Bernstein 2). According to Canovan (118), it was recommendable to normalise the function of the extraordinary in the procedural model of transformation. Rejection of such proceduralism with the intention of adopting an interventionist political stature, as stated by Schmitt and Laclau, can result in authoritarian implications of political theology. This is evidenced by Schmitt's support of Catholic authoritarianism (Hohendahl 187). According to Canovan, giving status to human actors as demonstrated by use of common words like "the people", "the leader" as well as "the class" that was mainly associated with theological categorisations such as "God", "Christ" as well as "pope" signifies endowment of the human actors with not only the value of sacredness but also awards them supernatural traits, which are not compatible with empirical attributes (Canovan 121). Use of such constructs is often associated with deprivation of individuals who are considered enemies besides disconnecting true agent from its reality. This often arises from "left-liberal critic of liberal models" (Hohendahl 180) that is characterised with inconsideration of other people's views and beliefs. Apart from creation of external enemies, the ideology generates internal enemies that are suppressed authoritatively. The suppression is enforced by the leader and his group. This kind of political theology that justifies dictatorships, according to Herrero (14) illustrates what was presented by Ernesto Laclau. As an illustration, Delphin (4) indicates that Machiavelli's principles were believed to foster totalitarian leadership. According to Delphin (4), however, these principles were merely meant to be employed as analytical tool to comprehend the downfall of authoritarian leaders.

Problem to solve and opportunity to link to either ibn Khaldun or Machiavelli

Schmitt's ideology of sovereignty can be defended only when it will have a democratic interpretation. Unfortunately, this is impossible due to the existence of a popular sovereign (Waas and Jaghai 414). Based on this argument, it is evident that it is impossible

for a Schmidtian sovereign to be treated as a popular sovereign since it will require making decisions based on the prevailing constitutional rules that define how the collectiveness of people results in a unified will.

3. *‘Assabiyah and virtu– Alternative Ontology to the Political*

The way Schmitt distinguishes a friend from an enemy tends to be public instead of private. Although having personal enemies at an individual level is possible, it does not amplify personal enmity to a political phenomenon. This is evidenced by the fact that politics is characterised as different groups that compete as mutual enemies (CP 28-9). Premised on this, two groups are confronted by a circumstance of mutual enmity only when there is likelihood of war as well as mutual killing between themselves. Thus, extreme level of intensity of either association or dissociation defines the variation of a friend from an enemy (CP 26, 38). The highest level of association involves willingness to not only fight, but also die for as well as together with other group members. On the other hand, the highest level of dissociation involves easiness to kill members of other groups based on the claim that they are hostile (CP 32-3). Contrary to Schmitt, Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun do not acknowledge the existence of an enemy and a friend in a state. These individuals emphasise the “togetherness” of people as an appropriate way of promoting unity in a state.

Machiavelli’s use and discussion of *virtu* presents it to an end (Mansfield 6). As an illustration, in *The Prince* Machiavelli recognises “those who have attained a principality through crimes” (Mansfield 6). This implies that the success of the wicked is accompanied by *virtu*. According to Machiavelli, killing one’s citizens, betraying one’s friends, being faithless, without mercy or without religion cannot be considered virtue (Mansfield 6). Contrary to Mansfield, Crick (19) insinuates that Machiavelli understood *virtu* as a civil spirit. The decline of *virtu* due to indolence, corruption as well as fear and decadence, according to Machiavelli leads to the replacement of a republic with autocracy (Crick 19).

Based on this argument, it can be deduced that *virtu* refers to morality. Ritters argue that Machiavelli's assessment that armed prophets thrive while disarmed ones fall victim to power is very similar to Ibn Khaldun's idea that religious messages fail without the back up by the force of arms provided by tribal forces united through *Asabiyyah*, which the Ritters equate with Machiavelli's *virtu* (Ritters 2). Machiavelli's *virtu* was not based on Christian virtues since he considered courage, fortitude together with audacity in societal affairs as the characteristics of a courageous man (Crick 19).

While Schmitt employed a Hobbesian framework in advocating the return to the state of nature's brutality, ibn Khaldun suggests an opposing metaphysics with the concept of *Asabiyyah*. Khaldun's concept refers to a strongly bonded group depicting unity and loyalty as well as willingness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of other members of the group. This kind of *Asabiyyah* or social solidarity is often demonstrated by individuals who have undergone common hardship or have struggled together as a military (Esposito, Oxford Dictionary of Islam). A proto-sociologist of civilisations, in his first volume of *Al-Muqaddimah*, ibn Khaldun observes that when a Bedouin or nomad group grows, the original sense of cohesion or group solidarity (or *Asabiyyah* in Arabic) that came with the hardships of struggling under similar circumstances can no longer be maintained once the group becomes large enough. This is because more individuals in a group also implies more individual differences, and less contact between everyone in a group. So how could a successful civilisation, or political regime, become established and succeed for so long? The answer is a civil religion shared by all members of the group that once again re-establishes *Asabiyyah*. According to Khaldun (111), the group feeling that is sustained by a common religion triggers an individual's capability to not only defend and protect oneself but the rights of the entire group. Ibn Khaldun also argued that a great empire as well as a great civilisation cannot be established for long without the support of a shared religious identity

(Mahdi 201). Compared to other social cause, religion arise individuals “with strong solidarity that propagates it by fighting for it” (Mahdi 201). Thus, Ibn Khaldun believes that religion was critical for people to sustain *Asabiyyah*. Crucially, ibn Khaldun asserted that social cohesion was a natural property that had a biological basis in human nature, antithetical to Hobbes’ view on political humans. However, based on Machiavelli’s concept of *virtu*, there are notable differences. For instance, *Asabiyyah* is mainly based on Christian virtues whereas Machiavelli’s *virtu* emphasises on the importance of specific human traits that had more to do with pragmatism, shrewdness, and opportunism. However, both will be combined to argue for a reasonable justification for civil religion based on republicanism.

4. Laws & Constitutionalism

In Schmitt’s view, there can be no functioning legal order without a sovereign authority (Dyzenhaus 43). In order for the law to become effective, there needs to be an authority that decides how to apply general legal rules to concrete cases and how to deal with problems of contested interpretation or under-determination. However, the material content of the law does not itself determine who is to interpret and to apply it. Hence, a sovereign authority prior to the law is needed to decide how to apply general legal norms to particular cases (PT 29–35). Schmitt is right to appeal to Hobbes’s dictum that it is authority and not truth that makes the law (PT 33–4). According to Hobbes, the laws of nature compel individuals to establish central power as well as confer all the power to one individual to serve as the authority for every person in the society (Grcic 375). This argument by Hobbes implies that words in form of truth cannot make the law without a fear of the consequences that are enforced by authority.

No legal norm, in Schmitt’s view, can govern an extreme case of emergency or an absolute state of exception. In a completely abnormal situation, the continued application of the law through the normal administrative and judiciary channels is going to lead to

haphazard and unpredictable results, while preventing effective action to end the emergency (PT 13; Scheuerman 1996). If there is some person or institution, in each polity, capable of bringing about a total suspension of the law and then to use extra-legal force to normalise the situation, then that person or institution is the sovereign in that polity (PT 5). Any legal order, Schmitt bluntly concludes, is based on a sovereign decision and not on a legal norm (PT 10, 12–3). This attack extends to constitutionalism, where he notes liberal’s unabashed belief in the “rationality of their constitutional ideals”, contrasted by the situational and illiberal “power-decisions” that happen outside of the constitution – often in ironic discretion – that are inherent to the failure of liberal normativity (Scheuerman 302). Referring to the constitutional *Verfall* (decay), Schmitt’s critique is symptomatic of Kelsen’s choice to separate moral (natural) law in favour of legal positivism, which in turn delegitimises the formation of the regulations and hierarchies of constitutional norms in his theory (303). The moral relativism built through unsystematised plurality fails to provide a basis for jurists to arrange moral values in order of a hierarchy, and neither does it give its empty formalisms an underlying metaphysical substance. For Schmitt, such positivistic legal frameworks can never constitute a people (Urbinati and Accetti 17). Instead, it is the ability to defend against an external threat, unbounded by formal positivism (Scheuerman, 1996, p.305). This reasoning underlies Schmitt’s concept of politics as the distinction between friend and enemy in a struggle for power (Dyzenhaus 1). Yet liberalism’s internal contradictions stemming from normativity will be unable to resolve such conflicts paramount to the self-preservation of the people (Scheuerman 306).

Machiavelli agrees with the Constitution as the founding document of a republic. This is illustrated by his attempt to draft the republican task of what Vatter describes as the constitution task of not only free, but also equal people through use of a civil prince with sovereignty that, however, was created in a state of exemption to laws (243). That is,

Machiavelli believes that provision of freedom to 'the people' is a demonstration of value of the constitution. According to Machiavelli, where a thing works well on its own without the law, the law is not necessary; but when some good custom is lacking, at once the law is necessary. Following the lead of the political writers of humanism, Machiavelli stresses that religion is more effective than laws in moderating the customs of a people. Unlike contemporary laws, religion does not cause disunion between classes of people in the society that is characterised with use of unequal laws (Vatter 245). This is evidenced by emergence of new loyalty that is characterised by "absolute belief in, and obedience to, the demands of the Law and religious leader" (Mahdi 201). That is, the adopted religious laws discourage competitiveness as well as envy associated with satisfying worldly purposes. The religious laws encourage people to act from inner compulsion knowing their rewards will be reaped "in the world to come" (Mahdi 201). Although religion can be used in realising the state's ends, Machiavelli argued that religious considerations cannot bind the functions of a state (Power and State 5). In the Discourses, Machiavelli indicates "princes who want to maintain themselves respect and preserve the purity of all religions" (Power and State 8). This implies that Machiavelli acknowledged religion as a promoter of unity and social harmony but emphasised on not non-involvement of religion in influencing politics as well as controlling the state. Machiavelli also argued that when religion is not used well it promotes the interests of a specific sect instead of a common good (Mansfield 19). From Machiavelli's argument, it can be deduced that state religion that is unique and excludes all the others can lead to disunity (Power and State 8). State imposed religious laws can cause disunity among people of other religions, especially Christianity and Islam's attitude towards polytheists, because of their religious exclusivity.

Religious law is claimed by Machiavelli to be a better alternative to dictatorship. This is evidenced by God's view of pride and arrogance associated with dictatorship (Virolli 63).

Likewise, religious law supplies the critical social good that includes causing good orders that result in good fortune and happy success. In support of this claim, religion is more necessary in republics than in monarchies because in republics the people are master of the laws, and therefore there is no fear of a prince to restrain men from their natural insolence (Virolli 178). Although this is the case, Machiavelli realism seeps in as he notes that religious laws often need to be broken by perpetuating cruelty to serve people (Virolli 63). This assertion is justified by the conduct of religious persons such as Moses in the Bible who punished the Israelites besides issuing the terrible commandment that required the children of Levi to slay all the men in the camp (Virolli 63). According to Machiavelli, this was an illustration that religious law can sometimes be ignored by adopting dictatorship to effectively lead the people. Suda (18) also notes that Machiavelli's value of religion was instrumental since it lacked intrinsic value and Machiavelli only employed it pursue a specific end in his leadership. That is, Machiavelli believed that religious laws were more effective than dictatorial rule as they emphasised on equality and togetherness that were central in the success of leadership. Although this is the case, it is imperative to note that Machiavelli acknowledged religious law as more important and effective compared to dictatorship. Ibn Khaldun also detests taxation and purely instrumental-rational bureaucratic laws that use economic and legal punishment to enforce themselves (Abdullah 1327). According to Ibn Khaldun, good governance is characterised by minimum bureaucracy, minimum taxation, and minimum mercenary armies for keeping law and order (Abdullah 1327). He also prefers the use of religious laws over rational-bureaucratic laws, and even attributes taxations and bureaucracy as signs of a dying empire. According to Ibn Khaldun, Sharia was the main basis of the Caliph's authority and it was the final authority that could guide all other secular operations within the empire, which implies that all decisions by Caliph would have to be based purely on the Shariah, or divinely ordained law (Rabi 145). Ibn Khaldun also opposed

kingship that maltreated people, which would inevitably lead to anarchy as well as cause the destruction of all existing powers (Rabi 145). This implies that Khaldun concurred with Machiavelli's view that religious law was more effective and appropriate to use compared to a pure dictatorship.

Machiavelli insinuates that Roman republicanism is the primary solution to a stable political regime. In the *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli advises leaders to "imitate the Roman Empire's ceaseless struggles for ever-greater 'greatness' experience" (Benner 33). Similarly, Machiavelli illustrates in the 'First Ten Books' that the Roman Republic's beginning was not attached to any external servitude. It governed itself through its own will as a Principality with diverse laws together with institutions (Machiavelli 7). According to Machiavelli, the laws of the Roman Republic were given to the Romans through one authorised man at one time (7). This argument implies that Machiavelli was in support of existence of authority in providing leadership. That is, a republic can be considered fortunate when it has a central authority. From these discourses, it can be deduced that Machiavelli viewed Roman republicanism as a solution to political instability. He also adopted many characteristics of the mixed form of government that was first documented by Polybius during the early Roman empire, which included the sharing of powers (Burroughs 139). The mixed form of government of the Roman republic included aristocracy, monarchy, and democracy. Use of a mixed method help mitigate the challenges associated with specific type of governing structure. For instance, democracy stability is often threatened by external domination, civil conflict, usurpation in which one group seizes power, and perversion that is characterised with the retaining of formal democratic institutions to conceal oligarchy or tyranny (Burroughs 144). Aristocracy and monarchy, on the other hand, rarely promote virtue as well as equal political participation that characterise democracy. Use of republicanism, that is emphasised by Machiavelli promote both of these democratic characteristics. Based on

Machiavelli's ideas, Ramgotra indicates that republican constitutions integrate "the authority of the nobles, the freedom of the people and the political power of one man" (2). Despite Machiavelli's misunderstood reputation, he mentions in Chapter 19 of the Discourses on Livy, that "it appears in governing a multitude, it is better to be humane rather than proud, merciful rather than cruel." These characteristics are similar to what is advocated by ibn Khaldun, who writes in length about the desired characteristics of a political leader. An essential element of Machiavelli's praise of republicanism as a solution to political stability is the role played by civil religion.

5. Dictatorship & The Sovereign

Modern liberal constitutions attempt to disregard sovereignty. However, Schmitt illustrates that functioning legal order will not take place in the absence of a sovereign authority (Kahn 40). Schmitt argues that liberal constitutionalists believe that legitimate acts of a nation must employ general legal norms to subject people to the determinate and demands of the law instead of the arbitrary authority of specific individuals (18). Although Machiavelli acknowledges the need of sovereign authority in his discourses (Slomp 3) to solve crises, he emphasises on the significance of using the law in decision-making. According to Machiavelli, prudence is incapable of managing, controlling, or predicting. In defence of the assigned sovereign authority during the time of crisis or emergency, Machiavelli indicates that the law restricts what can be decided in a crisis and it can also decide who will be assigned the responsibility of handling emergencies (Slomp 3).

Both Schmitt and Machiavelli refer to Livy's account of the Roman dictatorship. Schmitt links directly one of the primary concepts that he discussed in *Die Diktatur*, commissarial dictatorship, to the Roman republican practice instead of theology, arguing that commissarial solution was impractical within the notion of political power (Loevy 35). His association of dictatorship ideology with Roman is valid since it can be traced to traditional

treatment of what Livy describes to as the *decem vir* episode in Rome. This claim is also supported by Telford (80) who describes the dictatorship of Sulla in chapter 6. Schmitt also employed the ideology of constituent power that he had addressed in *Die Diktatur* in the *Verfassungslehre*. This ideology was linked to political theology as well as sovereign dictatorship.

Ibn Khaldun on Leadership & Sovereignty

Schmitt's ontology of the political does not necessary bolster expansionism, because it creates itself based on any distinction with an opposing group, and it only forms under the necessity of killing or dying for any group distinction. Lamus (12) claims that religion has the power to expand based on an appeal to moral grounds. Contrary to Schmitt, who believed in usage of military in enhancing expansion, Machiavelli and Khaldun thought religion was the most effective tool for guaranteeing greater success in expansionism. As an illustration, the *Discourses on Livy* illustrate how the Romans used religion to build confidence in their armies (Machiavelli 285). Religion made the army to trust in willing. Similarly, Viroli (154) illustrates that religion infused Republicans with courage that enabled them to withstand external aggressions. Remarkably, this fits into ibn Khaldun's metaphysics of *Assabiyah*.

Religion and promotion of unity

In the ideal and extreme case of pure identity or homogeneity (between rulers and ruled as in direct democracy) there can be no representation. Representation is possible only when unity is forged out of oppositions, out of contradictions, and thus where a decision is always required. The decision can come only from a juridical person or leader who decides for the whole people or community (Political Theology 13). The representative must stand for a people because "there is no state without people, and that a people, therefore, must always actually be existing as an entity present at hand" (Meierhenrich and Simons 252). Contrary to this argument, Ibn Khaldun notes that unity can be achieved through development of a sense

of belonging (Abdullah 1325). Khaldun's ontology varies significantly from Carl Schmitt's, although they both address unity, by acknowledging the contribution of religion. While Machiavelli is a proponent of power politics, he also considers religion just like Al Khaldun to be the adhesive that can hold a republic together (Mansfield 27). However, Machiavelli pointed out that religion can strengthen as well as promote unity when it is used appropriately (Mansfield 27). The form of religion advocated in both Machiavelli and ibn Khaldun's texts is that they are not based on any metaphysical reality, but rather, an effective to build 'assabiya' (Abdullah 1325) and give the Prince a way to mobilise troops to support each other as well as their governments. This is a way to maintain a political regime.

Machiavelli on Religion

Machiavelli's concept of civil religion, or the "political" use of religion, was understood as a foundation aspect of his political science, rather than metaphysics (Discourses 2.2). Civil religion was then considered fundamental for the well-being of the commonwealth. What was more interesting is that he appealed to a certain "ancient theology" to avoid supporting men's worldly pursuits the way that Christianity glorified humbleness. However, Machiavelli also presents an alternative opinion regarding Christianity in 'Machiavelli's God'. Although he considered pureness of Christianity dictates one's responsibility with a requirement for leading a free life (Viroli 181), he declared that mixed pagan religions which pre-existed Christianity were better. This assertion suggests that Machiavelli could have been a pluralist.

Machiavelli also contrasts his claim regarding the pureness of Christianity by indicating that it suppresses not only its orders and ceremonies, but also eliminates every memory relating to ancient theology. This claim is contradictory, considering that Machiavelli argued that orders and ceremonies together with theology are protected by religion (Machiavelli 182). However, it is important to acknowledge that Machiavelli appreciates the contribution of Christianity in creating shameful feeling that makes

individuals guilty. That is, religion makes people resist the wish of doing evil based on the innate unsettledness caused by understanding that they would violated the principles that are considered right by God and oneself. This argument suggests that Machiavelli believes that religion acts as a regulatory tool for the behaviours and conducts of people just like the ancient Romans' pagan religion as well as modern Germans' Christianity (Machiavelli 183).

It is important to note that the religion that is advocated by Machiavelli causes shame to the wicked as well as encourages people to persevere treatments from the powerful persons who value using force in controlling without influencing them to become oppressors. That is, a religion of doing good and withstanding suffering without doing wrong in return. Despite this, Machiavelli illustrates his distaste for corrupt Christian religion that overvalues humility together with abjectness besides emphasising on suffering instead of focusing on personal strength (Machiavelli 131).

More similarities from Machiavelli with Ibn Khaldun

Religion can emphasise and sustain civil virtue besides ensuring the existence of good armies. In support, Machiavelli (185) argues that the existence of religion is characterised by the easy introduction of arms, but lack of religion makes the introduction of arms difficult. Machiavelli (182) defends this assertion by claiming that religion facilitates the establishment and preservation of good arms that are required to safeguard people's lives in a nation. Lack of religion or practice of poor religion often limits the survival of a nation.

Ibn Khaldun presents a similar argument by indicating that virtuous leadership can lead to extension of sovereign powers (Onder and Ulasan 234). As an illustration, in the *Muqaddimah*, Khaldun notes "The affection everyone has for his clients and allies results from the feeling of shame that comes to a person when one of his neighbours, relatives, or a blood relation is in any way humiliated" (Ibn Khaldun 98). According to Ibn Khaldun, religion results in *Assabiyah* that influences individuals to promote good for all in the society.

Both Machiavelli and Khaldun acknowledge that religion is powerful since it results in unity. Although the concepts of Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun seem identical, these sociologists' way of thinking varies significantly. According to Ahmed (593), moral imperative is demonstrated in Khaldun's description of *Assabiyah* (cooperativeness) as the structural principle of society. However, Khaldun believes that it can be used in ruling. According to Khaldun, *Assabiyyah* arises naturally not only in people with common ancestry, but also in those with social ties that exceed common descent such as political units (Gierer 3). Contingent on this argument, it can be deduced that Khaldun advocates use of *Assabiyyah* in promoting human cooperativeness as well as group solidarity. Despite some variation in Machiavelli's and Ibn Khaldun's understanding of the use of religion, the analytical functions of religion in enhancing the durability of political regimes are nearly identical.

Carl Schmitt vs Machiavelli on Catholicism

Although Machiavelli acknowledged the contribution of religion in promoting unity (Machiavelli 182), an event associated with the Catholic Church demonstrates the inability of religion to foster unity. While Carl Schmitt and Machiavelli saw in Catholicism the fundamental aspect of representation, they both ultimately saw it as a problem for various reasons. For one, Machiavelli thoroughly criticised the institution of the Catholic Church for being unable to unify Italy within his own period, contrasting it with the earliest strands of Christianity. This assertion is supported by Korvela who notes that the Roman church kept Italy politically fractured (189). According to Machiavelli, Italy did not have the identical situation in comparison to the one the French and Spanish were in because of the Roman church. The church was excessively weak to assume the primary authority in Italy, but extremely strong to prevent anyone from taking that position (Korvela 190). The weakness portrayed by the Catholic Church implies that religion cannot help promoting stability of a state, leading to justification of Schmitt's authoritarian leadership. According to Machiavelli,

the weaknesses demonstrated by the Catholicism can be attributed to change in religion since, by battling old religion, Christianity provoked commotions around the world. The experienced tumults would have been minimal if Christianity itself remained as one instead of being split into groups such as the Greek, Ravenna as well as Catholic churches (Korvela 190). Contrary to Machiavelli who associated Catholicism with failure to unite Italy, Schmitt viewed Catholicism as an obstacle to intellectual developments as well as views (Fox 8). According to Fox, Schmitt viewed jurist “as far more wolf in sheep’s clothing amongst Weimar’s Catholic intellectual integrity” (8). This view about the leadership of Catholicism was further implicated by the jurists’ association with Nazism (Fox 13).

6. Discussion & Conclusion

The concepts of political theology play a critical role in understanding the contributions of religion in enhancing political stability. Although religious liberalism is believed to promote this stability, some political theorists such as Carl Schmitt have negative perceptions about the contributions and effectiveness of liberalism. Schmitt believes that adoption of a liberal approach is the main source of political instability. The current study purposed to criticise Schmitt’s political theology using the medieval and early modern perspectives from Ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli to demonstrate the key contributions of a civil religion’s instrumental power in fostering political stability that would become threatened with liberalism’s lack of metaphysical substance.

Carl Schmitt’s support for totalitarianism is premised on the limitations he associated with liberalism. According to Schmitt, liberal political concepts are secularised religious believes (Hohendahl 4). In his view, religion makes liberalism to employ a neutral point of view when addressing political conflicts (Schmitt 36). The liberal way of handling issues, according to Schmitt, often postpones or contributes to inconsideration of critical decisions that are central in settling conflicting issues (Bielefeldt 69). Schmitt also argued that

liberalism promotes hypocrisy through invoking universal principles that would expose individual agendas (Bielefeldt 69). Based on these limitations of liberalism, Schmitt argued that it was imperative to adopt totalitarianism that is characterised by individuals being answerable a central authority. However, Schmitt's interpretations advocate authoritarianism that is associated with collapse of freedom (Canovan 138). To illustrate, Schmitt supported Catholic authoritarianism (Hohendahl 187) by giving supernatural traits to human actors (Canovan 121). Research shows that assigning empowering status to human actors often leads to deprivation of other human rights, particularly those who are considered as enemies (Hohendahl 180). The dictatorship advocated by Schmitt's fascism also receives considerable amount of opposition from ibn Khaldun who was a proto sociologist, as well as Machiavelli, who is often misunderstood because of the over-emphasis on his magnum opus, *The Prince*.

The instrumental conception of religion advocated by ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli presents Schmitt's totalitarianism as a threat in a sovereign state (Waas and Jaghai 414). From Schmitt's description of an enemy and a friend, it can be deduced that Schmitt believed in existence of enmity in a political sphere that necessitated use of authoritarianism in promoting stability of a state (CP 28-9). Contrary to Schmitt, Ibn Khaldun's *Assabiyah* was an ontology that emphasises the significance of 'togetherness' and group solidarity in promoting stability and unity of a state, while Machiavelli's *virtu* maintained a certain statecraft that emphasises rational tactfulness rather than unnecessary brute force. In his perspective, Machiavelli discredited killing as one way of enforcing leadership that seemed to be supported by Schmitt. According to Machiavelli, unity can be realised through possession of a civil spirit. A similar view was shared by ibn Khaldun who argued that a strong bond was central in promoting unity, and when a civilisation reaches a certain size, a religion is a necessary adhesive to ensure cohesion (Ibn Khaldun 111). The civil spirit and strong unity emphasised by Khaldun's *Asabiyyah* and Machiavelli's *virtu* are sustained by a civil religion.

The sovereignty discussed by Schmitt, according to Bendersky (195), is a form of dictatorship. In support of this argument, Hohendahl (4) asserts that Schmitt way of thinking was a risk factor for the emergence of the Nazi regime. Contrary to Schmitt, who advocates what can be described as ‘autocratic religion’, Machiavelli emphasises on practice of civil religion based on the claim that ancient theology sustained citizen’s *virtu* that was central in promoting stable political regime (Korvela 63). According to Machiavelli, indolence, corruption, and decadence are key threats to political stability that can be solved by religion (Crick 19). Ibn Khaldun makes similar argument by advocating the *Asabiyyah* concept. Contrary to Machiavelli’s *virtu* concept, Ibn Khaldun’s *Asabiyyah* concept emphasises on establishment of strong bonds among people in a group that depict sacrificial support for each other (Malesevic 87; Safar, Yahya, Usman, and Ismail 2). Schmitt’s definition of a politician creates a significant distinction between the led and the leaders since it is compared to the relationship between an enemy and a friend (Levi 27). According to Schmitt, liberal thinking does not exist in political phenomena that are often characterised by violent confrontation in addition to peculiar demands such as the killing of others for political interests (71). Schmitt argues that politics require people to surrender their autonomy to others instead of self (71). In referring to Roman republicanism, Machiavelli appears to support Schmitt’s idea of having a sovereign authority. This assertion is evidenced by Machiavelli’s applause of this republic, arguing that an authorised man gave the Romans laws that they were required to follow (Benner 33; Machiavelli 7). However, Machiavelli distances his argument from Schmitt’s by indicating that the role and powers of the authorised man In Roman republic were curtailed by religious laws (Machiavelli 7; Slomp 3). This implies that religion played a critical role in the Roman republic (Slomp 3). Using the Roman republic as the reference point, Machiavelli illustrates that use of religion is a reliable solution to fascism that is advocated by Schmitt (Burroughs 144).

The concepts by Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun disapprove Schmitt's assertion by appreciating the use of force of arms in advancing religious messages (Ritter 2). Through the distinction of an 'enemy' and a 'friend', Schmitt is inclined on public outcome. This implies authoritarianism should be employed in handling individuals categorised as enemies (CP 28-9). Whereas Schmitt advocates use of unrestricted Hobbesian notion by supporting existence of autocratic power to regulate the conduct of other people, Ibn Khaldun holds that social solidarity advocated by religion is central in guaranteeing political stability. Likewise, Ibn Khaldun notes that people disregard imperial power, a reason for use of force by the superiors to enforce conformity (Ibn Khaldun 598). Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun further this claim by indicating that religion, unlike authoritative laws, can enhance expansionism of leadership through emphasising on practice of equality in the society (Lamu 12). According to Ibn Khaldun, extra morality in religion often leads to extension of sovereign powers (Onder and Ulasan 234).

Similarly, Canovan (121) holds a dissenting opinion regarding the constructs by Schmitt, as he believes that theological constructs such as "the leader" and "the class" endows human with supernatural traits or excessive power that they exploit by depriving people who are viewed as enemies. These constructs, according to Canovan (121) can also lead to creation of enemies who are often suppressed authoritatively. From this argument, it can be deduced that Schmitt's critique of liberalism centres on promotion of dictatorship. In support of Canovan, Machiavelli illustrates that religious law is an excellent alternative to dictatorship that is characterised with pride and arrogance that are ungodly (Virolli 63; Suda 18). The use of religious laws is also acknowledged by Ibn Khaldun who notes that bureaucratic laws are risk factors of a collapsing empire (Rabi 145).

Schmitt also argues against use of the rule of law and constitutionalism. According to Schmitt, the rule of law that is central in liberal constitutionalism is an illustration of not only

contradiction but also hypocrisy (Minkkinen 591). Schmitt argues that the purpose of constitutionalism is to end political sovereignty and establishment of identity, which are features of democracy that liberals claim to promote through use of laws and constitution. As Schmitt believes, sovereign authority is essential in ensuring stability of a society.

Machiavelli presents a dissenting opinion that demonstrates the significance of religious laws in promoting morality of the state and people. According to Machiavelli, religious laws are effective in regulating behaviour of people (Machiavelli 183). Contrary to Schmitt, Machiavelli also asserts that the Constitution is a pillar of a republic that fosters freedom and equality of people (Vatter 243). According to Machiavelli, people need to exercise their freedom and the law should be applied only when it is considered necessary. In his view, people can coexist in a society without any problem if they have a common religion. That is, religion is more effective in promoting stability compared to the laws and authoritative leadership that are advocated by Schmitt. According to Machiavelli, religious laws are incomparable to the bureaucratic laws that cause disunion and classification of people as it was recognised by Schmitt (Vatter 245). In Schmitt's view, legal order cannot function in absence of sovereign authority (Dyzenhaus 43) since this authority helps interpret as well as enforce legal norms (PT 29-35). Hobbes concurs with Schmitt by indicating that truth without fear of authoritative consequence cannot result in a law (Grcic 375).

To nuance the argument regarding the effectiveness of using religion in promoting political stability, it is evident that monotheism, advocated by ibn Khaldun and instrumentalized by Machiavelli, will fail at attaining pluralism as a cost of stability. This is because the strength and longevity of these two monotheistic religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, also stem from the way in which they do not allow people to leave their religion. Thus, inconsideration of other religions through enforcement of rules associated with one religion can result in disunity (Machiavelli 42). Likewise, religion also uses all kinds of

methods to expand including coercion to ensure people convert (though not necessarily). Although this is the case, it was illustrated that the Catholic Church was unable to unify the Italians (Korvela 190). For this reason, this paper is not advocating for a return to religious rule, but rather demonstrating what has been excluded from most academic discourse, namely, the conceptual and instrumental benefits that a civil religion possessed to prevent fragmentation that liberalism can fail to achieve. Additionally, it refrains from grouping religion together with totalitarianism, as it can often serve the state and its people with greater political harmony, equality, and a checks-and-balance of its own.

Finally, both Machiavelli and ibn Khaldun did have their fair share of detractors. Most notable criticisms are what appears to be Machiavelli's inclinations towards ruthless leadership, that he not only advocates in *The Prince*, but also remain a recurrent interpretation of his *virtu* in *The Discourses* as an unavoidable means of doing politics. Moreover, Al-Azmeh (45) was less than optimistic about ibn Khaldun's originality, stating that in his interpretation of his own empire's past events, he provides a general theory that is highly context-based. What is more problematic for Al-Azmeh is that ibn Khaldun only provides a theory that cements the importance of revelation to politics and considers it a metaphysical certainty within his empirical groundwork. However, it can be argued that this paper only emphasises that a state religion fortifies a republic with shared cultures, practices and somewhat of an "Imagined Community" (to borrow from Benedict Anderson), that allows for a degree of inclusivity and coherence within a state that ultimately strengthens its survival. Ibn Khaldun's adherence to scripture or the reality of revelation can be completely forsaken to justify this paper's argument, as it could be stated that this paper makes an argument from the perspective of Machiavelli's *virtu*, or an emphasis on pragmatic and consequentialist statehood.

In conclusion, Schmitt asserts that liberalism is flawed since its neutrality is cloaked by legal-positivistic norms void of metaphysical substance. Use of such an approach minimises the likelihood of settling conflicts that cause instability. However, he suggests fascism is the only answer by arguing that authoritarianism in regulating the conduct and behaviours of people to promote stability. Schmitt's ontology disregards people's democracy by emphasising on use of a central authority in leading a state and oppression of individuals categorised as enemies. However, the ontology of the *Political* can be replaced with ibn Khaldun's ontology of *Asabiyyah*, whereas Machiavelli's concept of *virtu* can be employed by leaders. *Assabiyyah* is premised on group solidarity that employs civil religion as a unifying factor. Machiavelli's *virtu* emphasises on the contributions of civil religion by indicating that religion discourages practices that can cause instability. Civil religion also has moral norms that could work to influence individuals to avoid corruption, decadence, and fear that characterise an autocratic leadership. Generally, these perspectives on religion as realist and instrumental can provide an alternative to Schmitt's totalitarianism, and can at least conceptually solve the lack of metaphysical substance in liberalism.

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