

The foundations of the Republic may be said to be religious—in *this* sense, that they presuppose (1) that there is an inclusive variable by reference to which all valuations, and therefore the valuations involved in public policies, are finally to be judged or evaluated; and (2) that this inclusive variable is somehow grounded in (appropriate to, authorized by), ultimate reality, and therefore is objective to and independent of human choice—being, as it were, delivered to human decision.

But the Republic's foundations, while being religious in this twofold sense, are also grounded in the Enlightenment—in *this* sense, that the question of what the inclusive variable is, insofar as politics and the public discussions of policy are concerned, is like all other substantive questions, and therefore is to be answered, finally, solely by appeal to common human experience and reason, all other putative authorities being subject to their unique authorizing power.

Thus to be an American in accordance with the foundations of the Republic is to be religious in some way or other—to the extent, at least, of somehow affirming its religious foundations—even as it is also to affirm somehow the fundamental principle of the Enlightenment.

Of course, this is not to prejudge the question of whether "religious" is helpfully used in the broad sense clarified by the first paragraph. If "religion" is properly defined as the primary form of culture through whose concepts and symbols the existential question is explicitly asked and answered; and if there is a distinction to be made between the necessary conditions of the possibility of asking (as well as answering) the existential question, on the one hand, and actually asking (as well as answering) it, on the other, then the foundations of the Republic may *not* be properly said to be "religious." What may and should be said, however, is that they are *matters of faith*—of the basically human and eminently rational faith in the ultimate meaning of life, which alone provides both the basic supposition and the open commitment necessary to the possibility of asking (as well as answering) the existential question.