penditures, and toward similar treatment for similar cases within consistently defined categories.[139] Reviewing recent books,[140] Cynthia Cohen observes that, resources being limited, the "new Orthodoxy" of patient autonomy may be about to topple.[141] Tristram Englehardt and Michael Rie, in a more radical proposal, are willing to permit unequal treatment, at socially-agreed-upon levels, for those who have lost out in the "natural and social lotteries" of health, ability, and wealth.[142]

It is clear from the number and variety of recent contributions on forgoing life-sustaining treatment that future analyses, to be fruitful, will need to transcend some persistent polarities and aim for an integrated approach which (1) overcomes individualism, whether of the "sanctity of life" or "autonomous choice" variety; (2) distinguishes as clearly as possible between quality-of-life considerations and utilitarian views of the person; (3) explores and balances the multiple factors associated with traditional Catholic definitions of extraordinary means, especially burden to self, expense, and burden to others; (4) focuses on the extent of individual rights and duties in relation to the common good; (5) cooperates, in an atmosphere as free as possible from inflammatory rhetoric, toward social policies which distribute health care and other social goods equitably; (6) maintains respect for and fairness toward those who for reasons of social justice will not have access to the highest levels of medical technology.

Boston College   LISA SOWLE CAHILL

VIRTUE AND AMERICAN CULTURE

Can Americans make sense when discussing moral issues? Recently two major works have posed this fundamental question. Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre comes to a negative conclusion in *After Virtue*.[143] In *Habits of the Heart* sociologist Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues report the disarray of our moral language, but believe it can be renewed by

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[139] Albert R. Jonsen advises, without much optimism, against the development of the costly artificial heart: "The Artificial Heart's Threat to Others," *Hastings Center Report* 16, no. 1 (1986) 9–11.

[140] Moskop and Kopelman, *Ethics and Critical Care Medicine* (n. 79 above); and James P. Orlowski and George A. Kanoti, eds., "Ethical Moments in Critical Care Medicine," symposium issue of *Critical Care Clinics* 2/1 (Philadelphia: W. D. Saunders, 1986).

[141] Cynthia Cohen, "Can Autonomy and Equity Coexist in the ICU?" *Hastings Center Report* 16, no. 5 (1986) 39–41.

[142] H. Tristram Engelhardt, M.D., and Michael A. Rie, M.D., "Intensive Care Units, Scarce Resources, and Conflicting Principles of Justice," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255 (1986) 1159; cf. 1160, 1163–64.

[143] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1981).

reviving elements of the biblical and republican traditions which remain in American culture.[144] Both works generated considerable popular and scholarly reaction to their judgments on the possibility of public moral language and virtue in America today. Their discussion is not merely academic: if no common moral language exists in this nation, efforts to appeal to national moral consciousness such as the bishops' letters on the nuclear question or the economy would be futile. (Presumably, writing "Notes on Moral Theology" would be an equal folly.)

After Virtue Comes Confusion

MacIntyre's pessimistic judgment on contemporary culture's moral discourse derives from a philosophical history that extends from Homer to the present. Western ethics has lost its foundations in Aristotelian thought and Judeo-Christian divine-law traditions, which have been undermined since the Enlightenment. Attempts at constructing alternative foundations in logic, social utility, or technical rationality have left us with a "liberal" culture where individualism reigns supreme. (The discussants are not referring to liberalism in its most common meaning, as in "New Deal liberalism." Rather, it means a theory of autonomous, self-interested individuals connected only by freely-chosen contractual relations, in a state whose main function is to preserve order for private initiative.)

Without any notion of what constitutes the good human life, we have no basis for common moral standards or agreed-upon virtues. Instead, we wander in the wastelands of relativism and speak in the private language of emotivism, which "is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character."[145] Although we continue to debate moral issues as if our judgments had some objective character, these debates are fruitless in an emotivist culture where moral assertions are neither valid nor invalid but only matters of private taste.

Since we can expect neither a revival of the biology on which Aristotle based his notion of human flourishing nor the resurgence of institutional religion as a buttress for moral practice, the picture is bleak indeed. At best we can only huddle in quasi-monastic refuges to wait out the crisis. "What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of com-

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[144] Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1985). Although all five authors collaborated on the research, the final draft was written by Bellah.

[145] MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 11.

munity within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. . . . This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time."[146]

David Hollenbach, S.J., notes MacIntyre's special urgency on the breakdown of a common notion of justice, the central virtue of political life. He comments on this strategy for retrieving a notion of justice: "Only in more intimate communities of this sort can we hope to recoup the intellectual and moral resources needed for genuinely civil existence. Before attempting to discern the meaning of justice 'writ-large,' i.e., justice in the life of society as a whole, the meaning and reality of justice 'writ-small' must be cultivated, i.e., justice as a virtue of persons and small groups."[147]

Individuals are not to blame for this erosion of moral language, nor can they provide the cultural cure for it. Rather, MacIntyre indicts a culture which has lost its roots: "modern moral utterance and practice can only be understood as a series of fragmented survivals from an older past and . . . the insoluble problems which they have generated for modern moral theorists will remain insoluble until this is well understood."[148] Like spendthrifts whose capital has evaporated but whose credit cards have yet to be revoked, we use moral language *as if* it made claims to be valid, since the culture no longer recognizes moral statements as anything but emotivist assertions. In cultures such as the Athens of Plato and Aristotle or the Middle Ages, statements about what is right and good were held to be factual as well as evaluative. William K. Frankena observes in his review of *After Virtue*:

For these cultures the use (and meaning) of utterances like "X is good" or "X is right" was to make a certain factual statement, true or false, for example, that X fulfills the function of Xs, or, perhaps, that God commands X; in effect, for such cultures a kind of naturalism or definism is true (see pp. 51, 57, 139).[149]

Theologians who hold that God has a moral will or that human nature provides some inherent clues to human flourishing may not realize how heavily their moral discourse depends on fragments of traditions. However, their difficulties in communicating to contemporary audiences may stem from the fact that those traditions no longer ground moral discourse

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[146] Ibid. 245.

[147] David Hollenbach, S.J., "Justice As Participation: Public Moral Discourse and the U.S. Economy," unpublished chapter for a reader on *Habits of the Heart* to be published by Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, in spring 1987.

[148] *After Virtue* 104–5.

[149] William K. Frankena, "MacIntyre and Modern Morality," *Ethics* 93 (1983) 583.

for the culture at large.

MacIntyre indicts our "predecessor culture" of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment for destroying the notion that human beings possess a common direction of development, a *telos* rooted in their human nature. For Aristotle and the medievals, humanity was a functional concept. They understood "the concept of *man* . . . as having an essential nature and an essential purpose or function. . . . That is to say, 'man' stands to 'good man' as 'watch' stands to 'good watch' or 'farmer' to 'good farmer' within the classical tradition."[150] Actions or habits were termed "good" because they contributed to objective human flourishing. Thus, there is a factual relation between acting justly and being a good human being: acting justly is an essential ingredient of being fully human. Although Aristotle's biology helped define the human as a functional concept, its roots extend back to the social roles of Greek society; they outlined the forms that human life should take.

When human beings are conceived as individuals apart from social roles or a common humanity, then no common *telos* exists; hence no factual relation can be asserted between certain virtues or actions and humanity. "But once the notion of essential human purposes or functions disappears from morality, it begins to appear implausible to treat moral judgments as factual statements."[151]

The breakdown of Aristotelian metaphysical biology contributed to this erosion of a functional and regulative notion of humanity in morals. MacIntyre reviews a host of other cultural factors which reinforced the tendency to portray the person as an isolated individual. Values and goals became matters of subjective preference; moral discussion could center only on whether the means were expedient to attain them, not on the goals themselves. A teleology based on common humanity devolves into a teleology without a rational goal.[152]

Is it possible to retrieve some notion of humanity and virtue in our pluralistic culture? MacIntyre's critics find his constructive position ambiguous at this crucial point. Rather than specifying virtues as necessary ingredients of a total human life, he specifies them as ingredients of particular "practices" which are commonly accepted as worthwhile human activities. Practices are socially co-operative activities which

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[150] MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 56.

[151] Ibid. 57.

[152] For an interesting comparison between this work and a seminal article by G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33 (1958) 1–19 (also in J. J. Thompson and G. Dworkin, eds., *Ethics* [New York: Harper and Row, 1968] 186–210), see A. van den Beld, "Ethics and Virtue in MacIntyre's *After Virtue*," *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 37 (1983) 136–49.

embody "internal goods" and have their own standards of excellence. They range from playing chess to writing history. Virtues are the qualities which enable us to attain excellence in human practices. *"A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods."*[153] Disagreements over the meaning of life as a whole can be bypassed by concentrating on meaningful practices: whatever one holds about the universe or human flourishing, one should agree that "truthfulness, justice and courage," for example, are necessary to sustain the relationships which make these enjoyable practices possible.[154] Unfortunately, no exhaustive list of practices or virtues is provided for the curious reader.

MacIntyre returns to the notion of the *telos* which would regulate the virtues and makes two moves. The first is to make the very quest for life's meaning the purpose of life, thereby justifying the virtues necessary to sustain that quest.[155] The second is to turn to particular traditions for a "narrative" which will provide a sense of unity to one's life. He does not take traditions as settled repositories of wisdom, because "traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict."[156] However, as Richard J. Bernstein notes, we are not informed how traditions should be judged: "But this only brings us back to a question that MacIntyre does not squarely confront: how are we to distinguish *true* or *correct* narrative histories from those which are only fictions or illusions?"[157]

Stanley Hauerwas, a prominent proponent of ethics based on narrative, agrees that virtues and tradition are interrelated in a circular fashion. We cannot know what the virtues are apart from some tradition; yet no tradition can be sustained without virtues. He faults *After Virtue* on the relation between virtues and practices and suggests that the vagueness stems from MacIntrye's "attempt to treat them abstracted from any *specific* narrative account and/or tradition."[158] The bleak conclusion

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[153] Ibid. 178.

[154] Ibid. 179.

[155] Ibid. 204.

[156] Ibid. 206.

[157] Richard J. Bernstein, "Nietzsche or Aristotle? Reflections on Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*," *Soundings* 67 (1984) 20. See Alasdair MacIntyre, "Bernstein's Distorting Mirrors: A Rejoinder," ibid. 30–41. Also, Abraham Edel's review in *Zygon* 18 (1983) 343–49; Douglas Schuurman, "Principle or Virtues? A Review Article," *Reformed Journal* 33, no. 9 (Sept. 1983) 18–22.

[158] Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Wadell, review of *After Virtue*, *Thomist* 46 (1984) 320. See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1983).

which recommends huddling together in small pockets of communal resistance to the barbarians may result from the author's unwillingness to

explicitly identify the Christian story as his own. . . . Without some specification of what narrative MacIntyre espouses, his community offers little hope, and that's because, without a sense of who we are and what we ought to become, it is difficult to determine what we ought to do. Until then, *After Virtue* remains trapped in the very tragedy it fears. . . ."[159]

Hauerwas criticizes mainstream Christian churches for assuming responsibility for the institutions of American culture rather than concentrating on the church's witness as an alternative to the dominant society. The turn to church community offers the major hope for preserving the values of the Western tradition: "I do not believe that the universalism that is intrinsic to the Christian faith is carried by the culture of the west, but instead is to be found first and foremost in the church."[160]

Liberal Reaction to After Virtue

Defenders of American liberalism have responded vigorously to MacIntyre's sustained assault. Jeffrey Stout points out that liberal institutions are wary of attempts to establish too much social consensus: ". . . liberal society can be seen as justified by a self-limiting consensus on the good—an agreement that it would be a bad thing, that it would make life far worse for all of us, to press too hard or too far for agreement on all details in a given version of the good."[161] Liberal society may forfeit a unified notion of human flourishing, but it thereby gains "a kind of tolerance foreign to the classical teleological tradition." The pluralism of our moral discourse need not be reason for disparaging liberal cultures: "We have so little *sense* of common purpose in part because we have become so accustomed to a picture that hides the actual extent of our commonality from view. We need also to remember that preserving a healthy degree of individual freedom inheres in our common purpose and helps define our conception of justice."[162] Contemporary culture requires a variety of moral languages in order to hold together its wide diversity

[159] Hauerwas-Wadell 321. For a similar point of view, see Philip Turner's review, *Anglican Theological Review* 65 (1983) 113–18.

[160] Hauerwas, "A Christian Critique of Christian America," penultimate draft of an essay to be published in the reader to *Habits of the Heart* (n. 147 above).

[161] Jeffrey Stout, "Liberal Society and the Language of Morals," penultimate draft of an essay to be published in the reader to *Habits of the Heart*.

[162] Ibid. See Jeffrey Stout, "Virtue among the Ruins: An Essay on MacIntyre," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 26 (1984) 256–73.

of practices and institutions. No single language or theory is possible.

Bernard Yack of Princeton accuses communitarians such as MacIntyre and Bellah and his colleagues of a fundamental misinterpretation: they assume "that the theory and practice of an age embody each other."[163] Writing this form of philosophical history appears to be risky business:

In other words, MacIntyre uses an uncontroversial assumption about the *inter-penetration* of theory and practice as if it were equivalent to the extremely controversial and idealistic view that practice *mirrors* theory.... In the end, it is modern *theory's* hostility to tradition that leads him to insist that genuine moral practice has broken down in the modern world.... MacIntyre does nothing to show that modern moral practices share that hostility to tradition.[164]

Communitarians fail to recognize that the age of individualism has created an extensive sense of community, namely, modern nationalism. Does not American liberal individualism create a sense of identification with the national community which supports its rights to privacy and unhindered initiative?[165] Furthermore, communitarians misread liberal culture's stance toward community:

Bellah and his collaborators, like many social theorists before them, seem to assume that liberal individualism is a universal solvent of community. But they confuse the generic and specific meanings of community when they assume that liberal individualism's corrosive effect on older, more traditional, and localized forms of communal life makes it hostile to all forms of supra-individual identity.[166]

In lamenting the deterioration of forms of association, Yack maintains that communitarians confuse two forms of dissociation. The first meaning is the actual lack of association; the second is the lack of particular traditional forms of association which the communitarians are secretly espousing. Liberal forms of association may not stimulate the same sense

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[163] Bernard Yack, "Does Liberal Practice 'Live Down' to Liberal Theory? Liberalism and Its Communitarian Critics," penultimate draft of an essay to be published in the reader to *Habits of the Heart*.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Not everyone views the rise of nationalism as a positive sign. "As I write these words we Americans are in the midst of a period of civic rejuvenation many choose to call 'the new patriotism.' Much of it looks suspiciously like the old nationalism to me, an aggressive self-identity that invites arrogance through our identification with the state's awesome preserve of force and calls up dreams of a unified society—highly mobilized and ready to do battle, a chimera that invites nationalistic excess. The language of nationalism is like the language of war, drastically oversimplified ..." (Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Citizenship and Armed Civic Virtue: Some Critical Questions on the Commitment to Public Life," penultimate draft of an essay to be published in the reader on *Habits of the Heart*.

[166] Ibid.

of association as small towns and traditional communities, but that does not mean that liberal society creates totally "unencumbered selves" without roots or loyalties: "Even alienated individuals are deeply encumbered selves. We must be careful not to confuse their diminished *sense of association* with a state of complete dissociation. Evidence of alienation among individuals is not necessarily evidence of the dissolution of social bonds."[167]

It seems to me that Yack's suspicions that either of our authors has a hidden agenda are not well founded. Neither MacIntyre nor Bellah et al. espouse any particular form of community as single alternatives to modern liberal culture. Yack's critique, however, does bear out the thesis that liberalism is not a culture without a narrative, but one whose story is so formed by Enlightenment opposition to traditional morality and religions that any cultural diagnosis which supports natural-law thinking or traditional religious values will likely evoke fears of intolerance and oppression among liberals.

Habits of the Heart *and Public Virtue*

Habits of the Heart, one of the few books in American public philosophy to reach the bestseller lists, attacks the individualism of liberal culture without despairing of its resources for remedying social fragmentation. Bellah and his colleagues interviewed hundreds of Americans (many of them Californians and almost all middle class) to discover how they conceive their private lives in relation to public commitments.

Since "cultures are dramatic conversations about things that matter to their participants," it is important that any society have languages that can carry such conversation.[168] The researchers discovered that many Americans could not express their goals or standards in moral terms. Even their altruistic actions were justified merely in emotivist terms: "It makes me feel good." The "first language" or moral vocabulary shared by Americans is individualism, which takes two main forms.[169] Expressive individualism dominates private life, where the quest for personal fulfilment is justified by the language of psychotherapy and pop psychology. Utilitarian individualism, on the other hand, is appropriate to the work world, where financial success is the unquestioned good. The same individual can invoke the one rationale on the job and the other for personal life.

This first language of individualism denigrates public life in its "quest

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[167] Ibid.
[168] Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* 27.
[169] Ibid. 20, 161.

for purely private fulfillment" and tends to isolate Americans from the very co-operative activities which would help constitute a richer life.[170] Since the limits of our moral imagination are often coterminous with the available moral vocabulary, the impoverished language of individualism can prevent us from recognizing that human fulfilment should include involvement in civic life and such public virtues as justice and social co-operation.

American culture, however, possesses two other moral languages which can be reclaimed to bridge the gap between private and public. The "second languages" of biblical and American republican traditions can move us beyond individualism to a more unified conception of life. By retrieving these traditions, it will be possible to rekindle "communities of memory" that do not forget their past. By retelling "its story, its constitutive narrative," a community of memory "offers examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community."[171] In so doing, a community of memory can provide the moral language and frame of reference to become a socially involved "community of hope." ("Community of memory and hope" is derived from Josiah Royce's classic *The Problem of Christianity*.[172])

William F. May agrees with the authors of *Habits* on the resources for public virtue in our national memory:

The republicans of the 18th century revolutionary period broke with the religious language of the Puritans but they insisted no less on the notion of the common good. A republic required from its citizens a readiness to sacrifice private want and interest to public good. . . . That is why the phrase "public virtue" ranked immediately after "liberty" as the term most often invoked in the revolutionary literature, and why the "pursuit of happiness" meant first and foremost, according to many commentators, not the pursuit of private gratification but the location of happiness in public pursuits.[173]

May is, however, less sanguine than Bellah et al. that the civic republican tradition maintained an appreciation of public virtue and the common good. He writes that since the Constitution American institutions have avoided claiming too much from the public virtues of citizens,

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[170] Ibid. 163.

[171] Ibid. 153.

[172] Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1968). For an excellent example of political philosophy in the Roycean tradition which criticizes liberalism, see the work by Bellah's collaborator William M. Sullivan, *Reconstructing Public Philosophy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1986).

[173] William F. May, "Adversarialism in America and the Professions," penultimate draft of an essay to be published in the reader to *Habits of the Heart*.

reverting to the suspicion of government which stems from John Locke and the British empiricists:

Clearly, for Locke, the state derives not from a positive [intention], either human or divine, but from negative threats. Indeed, the state would overstep its negative functions if it appropriated to itself more positive goals ... whether to enhance the common good or to assist its citizens in the attainment of personal excellence.[174]

American ambivalence toward public institutions has fed the liberal notion that the citizen is "a passive beneficiary rather than an active participant in the political order."[175]

Bellah replied to May and other commentators in an essay which underscores *Habits'* central themes. Its authors would point out

that "prudent self-interest" has never been the whole story and the institutions that he cites as operating under that rubric [the professions, the marketplace, the university, etc.] have existed side by side with other institutions, religious and civic, that have modified the insistent emphasis on self-interest alone.[176]

Habits of the Heart is different from many other communitarian critiques of American life because it does not opt for a

sentimental "communitarianism" rooted in the ideal of *Gemeinschaft*. The practices that *Habits* advocates are not confined to small face-to-face groups nor do they imply lack of dissent. They include the public world of democratic politics and call for vigorous discussion and argument. In such a conversation tradition provides us with shared experience and ideals that orient us to the present, but not with answers to present problems.[177]

Bellah et al. strongly criticize the pseudo community of "life-style enclaves" which provide reinforcement from the like-minded and cannot be socially transformative.[178]

In response to fears that civic republicanism might be a threat to the values of minorities in America,[179] Bellah writes: "We paired biblical

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[174] Ibid. See John P. Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), for a critique of civic republican virtue.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Robert N. Bellah, "Response," in (as I write) a forthcoming issue of *Soundings* 69 (1986).

[177] Ibid.

[178] See *Habits of the Heart* 71-75.

[179] See, e.g., Barbara Ehrenreich, Deborah Meier, Lynn Sharon Schwartz, Michael Zuckerman, James Walkup, and Norman Birnbaum, "The Moral Bypass," *Nation* 241/242, (Dec. 28 1985/Jan. 4, 1986) 717-23.

religion with civic republicanism, not only because we think they have often gone together in America ... but because we see biblical religion moderating (unfortunately it has not always done so) the particularism of republicanism by insisting on an ethical universalism."[180] The authors do not advocate a single language of values for America but recognize that each of the four strands of moral language has its own proper sphere. "What we need then is not a new Esperanto as a first language, but to be genuinely multilingual, to speak all four languages well and to know when each is appropriate, and also when one takes priority over the other."[181]

One important example of retrieving biblical and republican languages to chart a new public consensus is the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the economy, *Economic Justice for All*.[182] David Hollenbach, S.J., a member of the staff which composed the letter, writes: "the sectarian retreat of MacIntyre and Hauerwas is ultimately, if unwittingly, a failure of nerve. It fails to appreciate new possibilities present today for expressing love of one's neighbor by engaging in the long march of cultural transformation."[183] Instead of retreating into a religious "life-style enclave," the bishops drew from the biblical emphasis on including the marginated into society and combined it with republic an language of human rights to propose a new experiment in economic democracy. "The biblical and republican traditions converge in understanding justice as a form of active participation in social life, while injustice is at root a kind of exclusion from human community."[184]

Human dignity depends on playing an active role in one's society; however, unless certain economic needs are guaranteed, people cannot participate in the public arena.

To be a person is to be a *member* of society, active within it in many ways through

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[180] Bellah, "Response."

[181] Ibid. Bellah envisions social consensus emerging only out of extensive dialog in our culture: "we believe that liberalism—and here we do not mean contemporary political liberalism, but classical liberalism: the idea of a minimal state, a minimal procedural consensus, and leaving virtually everything to free choice—does not describe our society. In fact, there is a thicker consensus than our liberal self-interpretation would imply. Classical liberalism implies a thinness of consensus which, while theoretically possible, is performatively impossible. On both sociological and ethical grounds, I argue that a more substantive consensus on ends is necessary. We will get that consensus through public discourse" (Robert Bellah, "Dialogue," *Center Magazine* 19, no. 6 [Nov./Dec. 1986] 23).

[182] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (third draft) (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1986).

[183] Hollenbach, "Justice As Participation" (n. 147 above).

[184] Ibid.

diverse sets of relationships. The key question that the bishops would place on the national agenda rests on the premise that the meaning of justice rises from this link between personhood and social participation.... This means that fairness is not simply a matter of the *size* of the slices of the pie being distributed. More basic than the arguments about the size of the slices is the one about who should be at the table in the first place.[185]

Hollenbach writes that since the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 a number of serious proposals on the meaning of justice have appeared.[186] The emerging consensus on justice argues against MacIntyre's claim that the language of public virtue has been reduced to emotivism. We ought not to seek a single vision of the human good or a single moral language in our pluralistic culture, but rather follow the lead of John Courtney Murray on forging a public philosophy: "The alternative is the development of a fundamental consensus about the *premises* of public debate, shared convictions that enable us to replace confusion and prejudice with real arguments." In Murray's words:

The whole premise of the public argument, if it is to be civilized and civilizing, is that the consensus is real, that among the people everything is not in doubt, but that there is a core of agreement, accord, concurrence, acquiescence. We *hold* certain truths; therefore we can *argue* about them.[187]

The bishops' emphasis on justice as participation introduces a new element into the national discussion of justice and supplements the more familiar meanings of justice as equality, need, or merit. They make their case in language that is neither sectarian nor religiously neutral. In doing so they go beyond Murray, who strove to connect the civic republican tradition with natural-law thinking but rarely employed biblical images or themes.

Although the jury may still be out on the theoretical possibility of moral discourse in American public life, some actual experiments suggest that the verdict should be positive. One example of successful moral discourse lies in Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil-rights movement

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[185] "The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be actively treated or passively abandoned as if they were non-members of the human race" (NCCB, *Economic Justice for All*, draft 3, no. 76).

[186] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1971); also Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge Univ., 1982); Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Amy Gutmann, *Liberal Equality* (New York: Cambridge Univ., 1980).

[187] Quotation from John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960) 10 (emphasis added).

that appealed to the nation "by combining biblical and republican themes in a way that included, but transformed, the culture of individualism."[188] Secondly, the success of *Economic Justice for All* and the earlier pastoral *The Challenge of Peace* suggests that Catholics may influence national debate more by voicing biblical values and themes than by retreating behind the religious neutrality of natural-law argumentation alone. This culture may retain at least a residue of biblical moral language which could broaden the public discussion of justice beyond "equality" and "opportunity" to "preferential option for the poor." At the same time, the moral discourse forged in the American republican experience could point to legitimate safeguards for individual rights and due process in the Church.

   Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley   WILLIAM C. SPOHN, S.J.

THE PASTORAL ON THE ECONOMY: FROM DRAFTS TO POLICY

   The process of preparing and adopting the pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* has occupied the U.S. Catholic bishops for three years and was recently concluded with the acceptance of the final form of the letter at the annual meeting of the bishops' conference in Washington in November 1986. The acceptance marked the end of what all observers agree was an important step in the establishment of a new relation of U.S. Catholicism, the nation's largest and most prominent religious group, to American society and its major institutions; in the creative application of Catholic social teaching; and in the development of the teaching role of the bishops' conference.

   While the process was modeled on and influenced by the earlier process of preparing *The Challenge of Peace*, the pastoral letter on war and peace, there are some important differences between the two letters that help to account for the different levels of interest that the final stages of the two processes evoked. First, Catholic social teaching on the economy is more extensive and consists of an array of norms which allow for considerable flexibility in the design of institutions and in the formation and implementation of policies. Those positions that are clearly proscribed (totalitarian control of the economy, abolition of private property, radical individualism and libertarianism, complete neglect of the problems of the poor and the marginal) have almost no supporters in the Catholic community. As in most secular debates about economic policy in general, the debate around the pastoral and around the application of

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[188] *Habits of the Heart* 249.