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Chapter 18

Religion in the Civil Public Square

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INTRODUCTION

George Washington's home, Mount Vernon, is among America's most visited sites. But one of the most fascinating things at Mount Vernon is one of the least noticed--the key to the Bastille, the forbidding Paris fortress whose fall on July 14, 1789, became the symbol of the French Revolution. The key hangs in the hall at Mount Vernon, oversized for its classically proportioned surroundings and often overlooked. But it once spoke eloquently for the highest hopes in both nations. Six weeks after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in September 1787, Jefferson rejoiced at the meeting of the Estates General and the prospect of applying revolutionary American principles to France. In that same spirit, the Marquis de Lafayette took the key of the Bastille in 1789 and sent it to his good friend Washington as a symbol of their common vision of the future.

Jefferson's and Lafayette's hopes were to be dashed. Sobered by the reign of terror and the revolutionary ugliness from Robespierre and Danton to Napoleon, both Americans and French supporters of the United States revised their views. Gouverneur Morris, for example, the U.S. Ambassador to France, wrote home in disgust: "They want an American Constitution with the exception of a king instead of a President, without reflecting that they have no American citizens to uphold that constitution."¹

Two hundred years later, that discussion sounded astonishingly fresh as

the stirring events of 1989 unfolded. Old hopes and fears that the framers' generation would have understood were alive again. Issues that echo those discussed by Washington and Jefferson were in the air--how realistic is it to view democracy as a model set of political arrangements to be exported? What is the role of technology as a force for freedom and democratic change? For democracy to prosper, does a nation have to have certain ideals and assumptions, or is it enough to copy institutions and political arrangements, such as free, recurrent elections, separation of the executive and judiciary branches, and respect for civil liberties?

Opinions differ sharply over the answers to these questions. But what seems odd in a century clouded by state repression and sectarian violence is that no part of the American experiment stands out more clearly yet is less appreciated or copied as a key to modern troubles than the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment. For in the tensions and challenges now surrounding the clauses are some of the deepest and most significant issues of our time. Above all, there is the simple but vital question: How do we, in an age of expanding worldwide pluralism, live with our deepest--that is, our religiously and ideologically intense--differences? In short, what is the relationship of religious liberty and American democracy today?

This chapter examines perhaps the most critical task of rebuilding a civil society--reforging the public philosophy. The overall purpose is reconstitution--the genuine reappropriation of the constitutional heritage through citizens engaging in a new debate reordered in accord with constitutional first principles and considerations of the common good.

The present situation confronts Americans directly with a three-fold choice first stated by supporters of democracy in Greece and restated by John Courtney Murray in the early 1960s. The choice is as follows: As the crisis of the public philosophy deepens and controversies over religion and public life continue to arise, will Americans respond as "tribespeople," in the sense of those who seek security in a form of tribal solidarity and are intolerant of everything alien to themselves (a problem that grows from a distortion of communitarianism and an exaggerated view of group sensitivities, whether religious, racial, sexual, or ethnic)? Or will they respond as "idiots," in the original Greek sense of the totally private person who does not subscribe to the public philosophy and is oblivious to the importance of "civility" (a problem that grows from a distortion of libertarianism and an exaggerated view of individual and personal rights)? Or will they respond as "citizens," in the sense of those who stand for their own interests but who also recognize their membership in a

"commonwealth" and who appreciate the knowledge and skills that underlie the public life of a civilized community?²

Agreement over the place of religious liberty in a civil society is only one component of the wider public philosophy, but a vital one because of the personal importance of faiths to individuals and to communities of faith in America, and the public importance of both to American national life, a common vision of religious liberty in public life is critical to both citizens and the nation. It affects personal and communal liberty, civic vitality, and social harmony directly. Far from lessening the need for a public philosophy today, expanding pluralism increases it.

AMERICA'S FIRST LIBERTY

The first step in reforging the public philosophy is to show why the notion of religious liberty remains important to the public philosophy today. For, to underscore the point once more, to many Americans, especially the thought leaders, the question of religion in public life has become unimportant. It is viewed as a nonissue or a nuisance factor--something that should be purely a private issue, which inevitably becomes messy and controversial when it does not stay so, and which should therefore revert to being private as quickly as possible.

A more helpful way of seeing things is to see that the swirling controversies that surround religion and public life create a sort of sound barrier effect. At one level, the issue appears all passions, problems, and prejudices. But break through to a higher level and it touches on several of the deepest questions of human life in the modern world. Once these are appreciated, it clearly becomes in the highest interest of the common good to resolve the problems rather than ban the topic out of personal disdain or fear.

There are at least five reasons why religious liberty remains a vital part of America's public philosophy. First, religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, is a precious, fundamental, and inalienable human right--the freedom to reach, hold, freely exercise, or change one's beliefs, subject solely to the dictates of conscience and independent of all outside, especially governmental, control. Prior to and existing quite apart from the Bill of Rights that protects it, religious liberty is not a luxury, a second-class right, a constitutional redundancy, or a sub-category of free speech. Since it does not finally depend on the discoveries of science, the favors of the state and its officials, or the vagaries of tyrants or majorities, it is a right that may not be submitted to any vote nor encroached upon by

the expansion of the bureaucratic state. Since it is a free-standing right, it is integrally linked to other basic rights, such as freedom of speech, but it does not need them to supplement its legitimacy.

Unless America's public philosophy respects and protects this right for all Americans, the American promise of individual freedom and justice is breached.

Second, the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment are the democratic world's most distinctive answer to one of the entire world's most pressing questions: How do we live with our deepest--that is, our religiously intense--differences?

Some regions of the world (for example, in western Europe) exhibit a strong political civility that is directly linked to their weak religious commitments; and others (for example, in the Middle East) exhibit a strong religious commitment directly linked to their weak political civility. Owing to the manner of the First Amendment's ordering of religious liberty and public life, American democracy has afforded the fullest opportunity for strong religious commitment and strong political civility to complement, rather than threaten, each other.

Unless America's public philosophy respects and protects this distinctive American achievement, the American promise of democratic liberty and justice will be betrayed.

Third, the Religious Liberty clauses lie close to the genius of the American experiment. Far more than a luxury, let alone a redundancy, the First Amendment is essential and indispensable to the character of the American republic. Not simply a guarantee of individual and communal liberty, the First Amendment's ordering of the relationship of religion and public life is the boldest and most successful part of the entire American experiment. Daring in its time, distinctive throughout the world both then and now, it has proved decisive in shaping key aspects of the American story. It is not too much even to say that as the Religious Liberty clauses go, so goes America.

Unless America's public philosophy respects and protects this remarkable American ordering, the civic vitality of the American republic will be sapped.

Fourth, the Religious Liberty clauses are the single, strongest non-theological reason why free speech and the free exercise of religion have been closely related and why religion in general has persisted more strongly in the United States than in any other comparable modern country. In most modern countries, there appears to be an almost ironclad equation: the more modernized the country, the more secularized the

people. America, however, is a striking exception to the trend, being at once the most modernized country and having the most religious of modern peoples.

The reason lies in the effect of the American style of disestablishment. By separating church and state, but not religion and government or public life, disestablishment does two things. It undercuts the forces of cultural antipathy built up against religious communities by church-state establishments--historically speaking, established churches have contributed strongly to their own rejection and to secularization in general. At the same time, disestablishment throws each faith onto reliance on its own claimed resources. The overall effect is to release a free and unfettered competition of people and beliefs similar to the free-market competition of capitalism.

Unless America's public philosophy respects and protects this enterprising relationship, both American religious liberty and public discourse will be handicapped.

Fifth, the interpretation and application of the First Amendment today touches on some of the deepest and most revolutionary developments in contemporary thought. A generation ago it was common to draw a deep dichotomy between science and religion, reason and revelation, objectivity and commitment, and so on. Today such dichotomies are impossible. All thinking is acknowledged to be presuppositional. Value-neutrality in social affairs is impossible. To demand "neutral discourse" in public life, as some still do, should now be recognized as a way of coercing people to speak publicly in someone else's language and thus never to be true to their own.

Unless America's public philosophy respects and protects this new (or restored) understanding, the republican requirement of free democratic debate and responsible participation in democratic life will be thwarted.

One conclusion is inescapable: The place of religious liberty in American public life is not merely a religious issue, but a national issue. It is not only a private issue, but a public one. Far from being simply partisan or sectarian, religious liberty is in the interest of Americans of all faiths or none, and its reaffirmation should be a singular and treasured part of the American public philosophy.

CHANGES, CHALLENGES, AND CONTROVERSIES

The second step in reforging the public philosophy is to analyze the factors behind the recurring conflicts over religion and public life, and

assess the challenge they pose for American religious liberty and the public philosophy today. The conflicts themselves need no elaboration, though it is helpful to draw a distinction between cases where religion itself is directly the issue and cases where its influence is indirect. Abortion is the principal example of the latter and examples of the former are common—school prayer and New Age meditation, creation science, secular humanism, textbook tailoring, prayer before high school sporting events, Muslim prayer mats in government offices, Gideon's Bibles in hotel rooms, the Ten Commandments on school walls, blasphemy in films and novels, the Pledge of Allegiance, Mormon polygamy, "Christian Nation" resolutions, day care centers, and so on.

Some of these conflicts are critical, others less so. But they are all flashpoints along the contested boundaries between religion and public life. For a full generation now, this issue has been highly contentious, with an endless series of disputes and the whole subject surrounded by needless ignorance and fruitless controversy, including at the highest levels. Too often, debates have been sharply polarized, controversies dominated by extremes, resolutions sought automatically through litigation, either of the Religious Liberty clauses set against the other one, and any common view of a better way lost in the din of irreconcilable differences and insistent demands.

The temptation is to take a quick glance at the contestants, apportion the blame, enlist on one side or another, and treat the whole problem as largely political and capable of having a political solution. From that perspective, the problem is one that has been created by a series of overlapping conflicts: an ideological clash (the fundamentalists versus the secularists) that overlaps with a constitutional clash (the accommodationist "low wallers" versus the strict separationist "high wallers") that overlaps with a historical clash (the biblical and republican tradition versus the Enlightenment and liberal tradition) that overlaps with a clash of social visions (the communitarian "rooters" versus the libertarian "rightsers") that overlaps with opposing views of morality in public life (the maximalists versus the minimalists) that overlaps with a psychological clash (the "bitter-enders," who insist on commitment regardless of civility, versus the "betrayers," who insist on civility regardless of commitment), which has produced, in turn, two extremist tendencies (the "removers," who would like to eradicate all religion from public life, versus the "reimposers," who would like to impose their version of a past or future state of affairs on everyone else)—all this, of course, potentially reinforced by technological factors, such as direct mail and its shameless appeals to

fear and anger.

Such analyses may be accurate as far as they go. But they stop before they take into account some of the deepest factors. All of the above conflicts amount to a series of responses—which raises the question of what are the deeper forces to which they are responding. I would argue that behind the recent conflicts lie several developments that stem from the explosive acceleration of modernization in the last generation. Two factors are especially important to this argument: the reversal of roles in the relationship of church and state and the current expansion of pluralism.

"Church and State" has become a thought-numbing category that misleads as much as it illuminates. As Judge John Noonan has pointed out, the phrase is triply misleading because it suggests that in America there is a single church, a single state, and a simple, clear distinction between the two. But this confusion is only the beginning of the complexities. Harold J. Berman, the doyen of American scholars on law and religion, builds on that and shows that the framers' more common terms were religion and government, not church and state. But not only have religion and government each changed over the course of 200 years under the impact of modernity, the relationship between them has also changed to the point of being a complete "exchange of roles."³

Berman analyzed the involvement of religion and government over 200 years in three areas, family life, education, and welfare. He summarized the two main consequences of the role reversal:

In the 1780s religion played a primary role in social life . . . and government played a relatively minor, though necessary, supportive role, whereas in the 1980s religion plays a relatively minor, though necessary, supportive role and government plays a primary role. On the other hand, the role played by government in the social life of America in the 1780s (and for almost a century and a half thereafter) was openly and strongly influenced and directed by religion, whereas in the 1980s that is much less true and in many respects not true at all, while the role played by religion in the social life of America in the 1980s is openly and strongly influenced and directed by government.⁴

Berman builds his case with care, but states his conclusion with force. "Whereas two centuries ago, in matters of social life which have a significant moral dimension, government was the handmaid of religion, today religion—in its social responsibilities, as contrasted with personal faith and collective worship—is the handmaid of government."⁵

The second, and equally important, factor is the recent expansion of pluralism. This is a worldwide phenomenon that links current American

tensions to similar trends around the globe. How do we live with each other's deepest differences? That simple question has been transformed by modernity into one of the world's most pressing dilemmas. On a small planet in a pluralistic age the all too common response has been bigotry, fanaticism, terrorism, and state repression.

Multiculturalism and expanding pluralism is no stranger to the American experience. It has always been a major theme in the American story, with tolerance generally expanding behind pluralism. But the last generation has witnessed yet another thrust forward in religious pluralism in two significant ways. First, American pluralism now goes beyond the predominance of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish and includes sizable numbers of almost all the world's great religions--Buddhist and Muslim, in particular--though an astonishing 86.5 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians. Second, it now goes beyond religion altogether to include a growing number of Americans with no religious preference. In 1962, as in 1952, secularists--or the so-called "religious nones"--were two percent of Americans. Today they are between ten and 12 percent, and strikingly higher on the West coast than anywhere else.⁶

This latest expansion of pluralism is one of the social facts of our time, though consciousness of it has been reinforced and somewhat distorted through a combination of modern technologies and postmodern theories. The effect has been to complete the profound sea change initiated by the "new immigration" of the beginning of the century. The United States has shifted from a largely Protestant pluralism to a genuine multifaith pluralism that includes people of all faiths and those who claim no religious preference. The effect can be observed at two different levels in American society. In the first place, the effect of exploding diversity can be seen in the demographic make-up of contemporary American society. The state of California, for example, has America's most diverse as well as its largest population. It now accepts almost one-third of the world's immigration and represents at the close of the century what New York did at the start--the point of entry for millions of new Americans.⁷

California's schools have a "minority majority" in all public school enrollments. This will be true of the population of California as a whole soon after the year 2000. (The same situation already exists in all of the nation's 25 largest city school systems, and half of the states have public school populations that are more than 25 percent minorities.⁸) The result is a remarkable mix of the diverse cultures of Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

The effect of the exploding diversity can also be seen in what is a form

of cultural breakdown--collapse of the previously accepted understandings of the relationship of religion and public life and the triggering of the culture wars. As a result, a series of bitter, fruitless contentions over religion and politics has erupted, extremes have surfaced, the resort to the law court has become almost reflexive, many who decry the problems are equally opposed to solutions to them, and in the ensuing din of charge and countercharge any sense of common vision for the common good has been drowned.

As always with the trends of modernity, the consequences of increased pluralism are neither unique to America nor uniform throughout the world. Nor are the consequences of pluralization simple. On the one hand, increased pluralism deepens old tensions. Under the challenge of "all those others," many are seemingly pressured to believe more weakly in their own faith, to the point of compromise--the more choice and change, the less commitment and continuity. In reaction, however, others tend to believe more strongly, to the point of contempt for the faith of others. On the other hand, increased pluralism helps develop new trends. Today's dominant tensions are not so much between distinct religions and denominations. As often as not, they are between the more orthodox and the more contemporary within the same denomination.

In sum, like it or not, modern pluralism stands squarely as both the child of, and the challenger to, religious liberty--whether because of its presence (given the democratic conditions arising out of the Reformation and the Wars of Religion), its permanence (given the likely continuation of these conditions in the foreseeable future), or its premise (that a single, uniform doctrine of belief can only achieve dominance in a pluralistic society by two means: through persuasion, which is currently unlikely because unfashionable, or through coercion by the oppressive use of state power, which at anytime is unjust and unfree). If religious liberty makes pluralism more likely, pluralism makes religious liberty more necessary.

CHARTER FOR THE THIRD CENTURY

The third step in re forging the public philosophy is to introduce the concept of covenantalism, or chartered pluralism, as the basis of the public philosophy. This means to examine its contribution to the civil society and to show its advantages over the two existing visions of religion and public life that are now deadlocked--namely, communitarianism, the social vision that degenerates into "tribalism," and libertarianism, the vision that degenerates into political "idiocy." Anyone who appreciates the factors

behind the present conflicts is confronted with tough questions. Above all, can there be a healing of the schism of the spirit, a resolution to the culture wars, and an adjustment to the new pluralism without endangering the logic of religious liberty in public life? Can there be an agreed center of national unity that complements, rather than contradicts, American diversity? Is there a way in which diverse faiths can fulfill their respective responsibility to the requirements of order, freedom, and justice without favoring one of the three at the expense of the other two?

At first sight, the search for a just and commonly acceptable solution to these challenges seems as futile as squaring the circle or searching for esperanto. The question of the public role of religion in an increasingly pluralistic society appears to be a minefield of controversies, with the resulting ignorance, confusion, and reluctance an understandable outcome. Yet if it is correct to trace the problem to forces, such as pluralism, as much as to ideologies, individuals, and groups, then we have more victims than villains over this issue, and the wisest approach is to search together for a solution, not for a scapegoat.

In fact, the present stage of the conflict offers a strategic opportunity in the 1990s. Extreme positions and unwelcome consequences are readily identifiable on many sides, and a new desire for consensus is evident. But where and on what grounds could consensus emerge? As so often, the most constructive way forward is to go back--or, more accurately, to reforge the public philosophy through the renewal of a concept that is at the heart of American democracy and the American constitutional tradition--covenantalism.

Historical Covenants

The recovery of the idea of covenant as a key to American democracy and the American constitutional tradition is one of the freshest and most important findings of recent scholarship.⁹ Far from being completely new and startlingly original, the Constitution of 1787 is now seen to be the climax of a long tradition of covenants, compacts, and charters that goes back to the earliest colonial experience. Far from being the legacy of John Locke in the 17th century or Whig and Enlightenment thinkers in the 18th century, the American constitutional tradition was in place and operating strongly by the 1640s when John Locke was not yet a teenager and Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and William Blackstone had not been born.

Seen in this new light, the American Constitution and the constitutional

tradition grew directly from the seedbed of Puritan ideals and institutions that were rooted in the notion of covenant. Dissenting English colonists relied on Swiss, Dutch, and German theologians who themselves relied on the biblical principles of a Jewish covenantal republic to create a distinctively American style of government. The term "federalism" did not come into use until later, but Puritan notions, such as "federal liberty," were the twin-concepts to "federal theology" and all went back to the core of covenant (*foedus* in Latin and *B'rit* in Hebrew). The foundational covenant was the one between God and human beings, but there were multiple extensions to different levels of community--the covenant of marriage, the local church, the town, the colony, and eventually the nation.

The Mayflower Compact on November 11, 1620, was the first explicitly political use of the religious covenant form and a historic milestone on the road to the more secular and national covenant of the "miracle in Philadelphia" in 1787. But in all the dozens of cases that made up the early American system of institutions and set of ideals, one feature was unmistakable: The covenant/compact/charter represents a distinctive combination of unity and diversity, commonality and independence, obligation and voluntary consent.

This idea of covenantal, or federal, liberty holds the promise of a resolution of our present problems through the concept of chartered pluralism. At the base of the notion is a defining feature of modern experience: The present state of intellectual divisions in modern pluralistic societies does not permit agreement at the level of the *origin* of beliefs (where justifications for behavior are theoretical, ultimate, and irreconcilable). But a significant, though limited, agreement is still possible at the level of the *outworking* of beliefs (where the expression of beliefs in behavior is more practical, less ultimate, and often overlapping with the practical beliefs and behavior of other people).

The Three Rs: Rights, Responsibilities, Respect

Covenantalism, or chartered pluralism, is therefore a vision of religious liberty in public life that, across the deep religious differences of a pluralistic society, guarantees and sustains religious liberty for all by forging a substantive agreement, or freely chosen compact, over three things that are the "Three Rs" of religious liberty: rights, responsibilities, and respect. The compact affirms: first, in terms of rights, that religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, is a fundamental and inalienable right for peoples of all faiths and none; second, in terms of responsibilities, that

religious liberty is a universal right joined to a universal duty to respect that right for others; and third, in terms of respect, that the first principles of religious liberty, combined with the lessons of 200 years of constitutional experience, require and shape certain practical guidelines by which a robust yet civil discourse may be sustained in a free society that would remain free.

The social vision of covenantalism is a modern form of "federal liberty" that combines the best, and avoids the worst, of the libertarian and communitarian visions. Put differently, the notion of chartered pluralism is an example of what John Rawls calls the "overlapping consensus" that is needed in a liberal democracy. The core of its principled pact over the Three Rs is a variation of what Jacques Maritain described as "a sort of unwritten common law, at the point of practical convergence of extremely different theoretical ideologies and spiritual traditions." Maritain used himself to provide the example of the difference between the theoretical and the practical levels.

I am fully convinced that my way of justifying the belief in the rights of man and the ideal of liberty, equality, fraternity, is the only one which is solidly based on truth. That does not prevent me from agreeing on these practical tenets with those who are convinced that their way of justifying them, entirely different from mine, or even opposed to mine in its theoretical dynamism, is likewise the only one that is based on truth. Assuming they both believe in the democratic charter, a Christian and a rationalist will nevertheless give justifications that are incompatible with each other, to which their souls, their minds and their blood are committed, and about these justifications they will fight. And God keep me from saying that it is not important to know which of the two is right! That is essentially important. They remain, however, in agreement on the practical affirmation of that charter, and they can formulate common principles of action.¹⁰

The covenantal element in chartered pluralism is obvious. The social vision is solidly founded on such a principled pact that it can be seen to give due weight to the first of its two terms. It is therefore properly a form of *chartered* pluralism, or pluralism within the framework of a principled charter that spells out the rights, responsibilities, and respect required by religious liberty. So long as the pact over the Three Rs of religious liberty remains strong, the vision avoids the respective weaknesses of relativism, interest-group liberalism, or any of the minimalist approaches to unity that rely solely on "process" and "proceduralism." (For example, claims that seek to go beyond

proceduralism but only a little, such as: "We are held together by the coherence of our moral disagreement and argument within an ongoing cultural conversation."¹¹)

But at the same time the area of public agreement is strictly limited in both substance and in scope. The pact does not pretend to include agreement over religious beliefs, political policies, constitutional interpretations, or even the philosophical justifications of the three parts of the compact. Chartered pluralism is an agreement within disagreements over deep differences that make a difference. It therefore gives due weight to the second of its two terms, and remains a form of chartered *pluralism*. By doing so, it avoids the equal but opposite maximalist approaches to unity, such as the dangers of majoritarianism, civil religion, or any form of overreaching consensus that is blind or insensitive to tiny minorities and unpopular communities. Thus social unity is maintained, but religious liberty and diversity are respected in that religious unity is either made dependent upon persuasion or deferred as a messianic hope to be fulfilled only at the end of time.

Chartered Pluralism

Several features of this compact at the heart of chartered pluralism need to be highlighted indelibly, if the compact is to pass muster under the exacting challenges of the present situation. First, the character of the compact is not a form of civil religion or public theology. Its content does not grow from shared beliefs, religious or political, because the recent expansion of pluralism means that we are now beyond the point where that is possible.¹²

Second, the achievement of this compact does not come through the process of a general dilution of beliefs, as in the case of civil religion moving from Protestantism to "Judeo-Christian" theism. It comes through the process of a particular concentration of universal rights and mutual responsibilities, within which the deep differences of belief can be negotiated.

Third, the fact that religious consensus is now impossible does not mean that moral consensus (for example, "consensual" or "common core" values in public education) is either unimportant or unattainable. It means, however, that moral consensus must be viewed as a goal, not as a given; something to be achieved through persuasion and ongoing conversation rather than assumed on the basis of tradition. Thus chartered pluralism means that there is a way to give positive meaning to public life without

coercive imposition, and at the same time to foster an emphasis on freedom and diversity that need not lead toward fragmentation.

Fourth, the fact that the different religious roots of the public philosophy are largely invisible in public does not mean that they are unimportant or that the public philosophy is secular in a secularist ideological sense. On the contrary, a cut-flower public philosophy will not work. So the health of the public philosophy depends not only on a public conversation of citizens across the divisions of creed and generation, but on the private cultivation of the first principles of the public philosophy within each home and faith community. Should the diverse roots of those first principles ever grow weak or be poisoned from some antidemocratic source, such a private crisis would have inevitable public consequences.

Fifth, chartered pluralism allows even "radically monotheist" religions, such as Judaism and the Christian faith, to balance the twin demands of theological integrity and civil unity. Such faiths can never be content with religious liberty as freedom *from*; to them it must always be freedom *for*. Chartered pluralism therefore allows them to exercise their responsibilities to their conceptions of order, freedom, and justice, yet without infringing on the rights of others or becoming socially disruptive. Whereas the "idiocy" bred by libertarianism can be notoriously casual about order, and the "tribalism" bred by communitarianism on the Right and the Left can grow blind to freedom and justice for others, the federal liberty of chartered pluralism makes room for the free exercise of transcendent faiths that can address all three concerns with their own integrity, yet without compromise to themselves or damage to civil unity. The only proviso is that such influence is generally best exercised spiritually rather than politically, indirectly rather than directly, and persuasively rather than coercively.

Deficient Alternatives

Viewed in the light of the alternatives, chartered pluralism provides a way between communitarianism and libertarianism. Communitarianism, found on both the Left and the Right, virtually equates politics with morality. When transferred to the level of a public philosophy, it tends to see everything in terms of its ideology writ large all over public life. Whereas libertarianism, also found on both the Left and the Right, virtually excludes morality from politics. When transferred to the level of a public philosophy, it tends to see everything in terms of an individualism that sucks the commonness out of public life altogether.

Curiously, both social visions betray their inadequacies as candidates for the public philosophy, partly because of the ironies they exhibit and partly because they rule themselves out on the grounds of their own principles. In the politically unlikely event that communitarianism were to prevail as the public philosophy, it would become a form of majoritarianism. In seeking to impose a style of traditional solidarity on modern pluralism, it would end in denying pluralism (a smaller and milder recapitulation of the totalitarian error). On the other hand, if the communitarian vision does not seek to prevail as the public philosophy--which the majority of communitarians probably prefer anyway--the effect of communitarianism on public life would be to reinforce relativism, not community.

Libertarianism, in contrast, sets out to widen the sphere of public freedom by relativizing all faiths. Everyone will be more free if no one's position is "imposed" on anyone else because "everything depends on where you're coming from." But the effect is to relativize all positions except relativism and so to assert a new imposition in public life--that of a dogmatized relativism and a universalized libertarianism. Thus if communitarianism ends in denying the reality of pluralism, libertarianism ends in distorting it. For currently pluralism goes more closely with particularism than with relativism. Most believers who make up today's pluralistic society want to affirm their distinctives. They believe that the beliefs that make them different are finally right and important. They are committed to them in terms of absolutes--just as for many relativists relativism itself has become the last surviving absolute. Thus libertarianism rules itself out as a candidate for the public philosophy too. Ironically again, if American public life is to retain and strengthen the sphere of liberty, it cannot be on the basis of libertarianism as the public philosophy.

Expressed differently, chartered pluralism owes much to John Courtney Murray's valuable insistence that the unity asserted in the American motto, *E pluribus unum*, is a unity with limits. And therefore that the Religious Liberty clauses are "articles of peace" rather than "articles of faith."¹³ But Father Murray's distinction, which was borrowed from Samuel Johnson, must never be widened into a divorce. For one thing, the articles of peace are principled before they are procedural, and they need to stay principled if principled procedures are not to be sucked into the nihilism of empty proceduralism. The articles of peace are not sacred or ultimate themselves, but they derive from articles of faith and cannot be sustained long without them. For the same reason, genuine civility is substantive before it is formal. It is not a rhetoric of niceness, let alone a fear of

nastiness. Nor is it a psychology of social adjustment. Civility is both an attitude and a discourse shaped by a principled respect for people, truth, the common good, and the American constitutional tradition.

For another thing, neither chartered pluralism nor the notion of articles of peace should be understood as leading to unanimity, but to that unity within which diversity can be transformed into richness and disagreement itself into an achievement that betokens strength. Again, the old term "federal liberty" carries rich meanings. As Murray wrote, "The one civil society contains within its new unity the communities that are divided among themselves; but it does not seek to reduce to its own unity the differences that divide them."¹⁴

Understood properly, these three ideas--covenantalism, chartered pluralism, and federal liberty--are critical to reforging the aspect of the public philosophy that bears on questions of religion and American public life, especially in the light of the deficiencies of the alternatives. They therefore contribute vitally to keeping democracy safe for diversity. If this vision of a promise-keeping covenant gains acceptance in the three main arenas of conflict--public policy debates, the resort to law, and public education--and if it succeeds in addressing their problems constructively, chartered pluralism could serve as a public philosophy for the public square, truly a charter for religion and public life in America's third century of constitutional government.

OUR PAGE IN THE STORY

The last step in reforging the public philosophy is to set out some of the foreseeable principles and pitfalls that should shape prudential judgments as to the best way forward through the controversies.

First, certain conditions for a constructive solution are necessary politically to achieve justice. To be realistic, the issue is never likely to become a popular cause--if only because so many American thought-leaders are largely oblivious of religion and so many American believers are largely oblivious of serious thinking. Solid concepts and good will are therefore not enough. What is required is intellectual foresight that will tackle problems today; moral courage to tackle problems not necessarily considered "problematic" on the current political agenda; magnanimity that in the present situation will act generously, regardless of its own political position, with regard to the interests of others and especially those of the weaker parties; and all these qualities gathered up in bipartisan leadership of a Lincolnesque stature that begins in the White

House and reaches out across the land.

Second, there are two unlikely outcomes. These outcomes are all but inconceivable, but are worth stating because they form the stuff of activist propaganda and counterpropaganda. On the one hand, the conflicts would degenerate into Belfast-style sectarian violence. On the other hand, they would result in an Albanian-style repression of religion, especially in the public square. The combined logic of America's historic commitment to religious liberty and the depth of religious diversity today makes these outcomes virtually impossible.

Third, two undesirable outcomes, in the sense of two broad possibilities, might occur should there be no effective resolution of the current conflicts over religion and public life. The milder, shorter-term possibility is of a massive popular revulsion against religion in public life. This could take the form of "A-plague-on-both-your-houses" reaction to religious contention and therefore lead, ironically, to a sort of naked public square created, not by secularists or separationists, but by a wrongheaded overreaction to an equally wrongheaded religious overreaction.

Fourth, there are two unfortunate outcomes, in the sense of two broad possibilities that might occur even if chartered pluralism succeeds or if current conflicts simply fade away without apparent damage to national life. The first possibility is that, in the generally civil conditions of pluralism, the way is opened for some faith or worldview to play the game only to win the game and end the game for others (existing candidates from the secular left and the religious right are equally dangerous here). The second possibility is that, in the same civil conditions of pluralism, civility will itself become so corrupted that, in turn, pluralism is debased into a relativistic indifference to truth and principle. The result would be a slump into apathy, the logic of laissez-faire freedom gone to seed. The outcome would be that corruption of the republic from within of which the framers warned.

For some Americans, mention of these dangers only confirms the risks of chartered pluralism they feared all along. But mention of the framers is a reminder that the risks are not new. They were built into the experiment from the very start and, even before that, they were present in all the variations of covenant. From Sinai onward, covenants require free and continuing consent because the spirit of the compact is as important as its letter. Such risks are the reason why the American experiment is open-ended, and why the task of defending religious liberty is never finished.

Yet the risk is only half the story. The very open-endedness that is the

source of risk is also the source of potential renewal. That is why each citizen and each generation matter. Each adds a new chapter to the story. As so often, Tocqueville saw this point and applied it to the two great revolutions of his time. "In a rebellion, as in a novel," he wrote, "the most difficult part to invent is the end."¹⁵

ENDNOTES

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1. Gouverneur Morris to William Carmichael 2, 10 July 1789, *The Life and Writings of Gouverneur Morris*, ed. J. Sparks (1832), 75.
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12. See John Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 7, no. 1 (1987) No pp.
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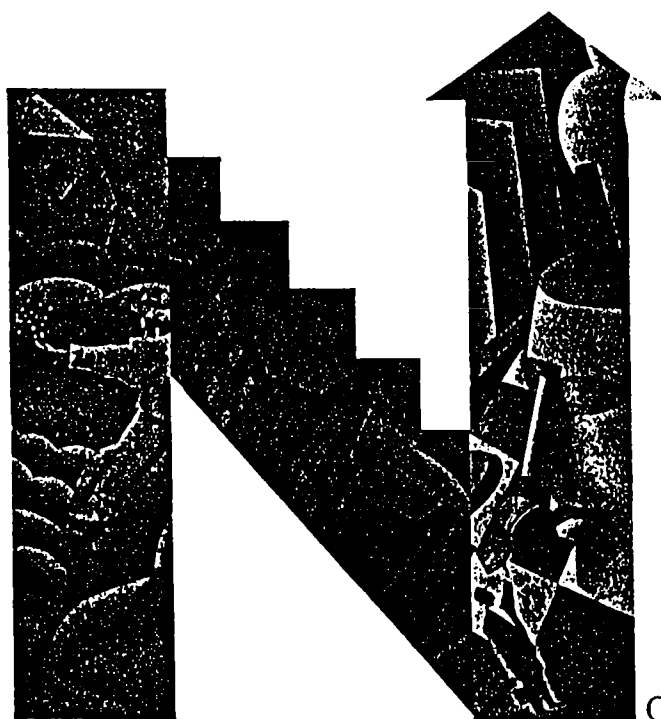
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THE AGE OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

by PETER F. DRUCKER

*A survey of the epoch that began early
in this century, and an analysis of its latest manifestations:
an economic order in which knowledge,
not labor or raw material or capital, is the key resource;
a social order in which inequality based on
knowledge is a major challenge; and a polity in which
government cannot be looked to for solving
social and economic problems*



O century in recorded history has experienced so many social transformations and such radical ones as the twentieth century. They, I submit, may turn out to be the most significant events of this, our century, and its lasting legacy. In the developed free-market countries—which contain less than a fifth of the earth's population but are a model for the rest—work and work force, society and polity, are all, in the last decade of this century, *qualitatively* and *quantitatively* different not only from what they were in the first years of this century but also from what has existed at any other time in history: in their configurations, in their processes, in their problems, and in their structures.

Far smaller and far slower social changes in earlier periods triggered civil wars, rebellions, and violent intellectual and spiritual crises. The extreme social transformations of this century have caused hardly any stir. They have proceeded with a minimum of friction, with a minimum of upheavals, and, indeed, with a minimum of attention from scholars, politicians, the press, and the public. To be sure, this century of ours may well have been the cruelest and most violent in history, with its world and civil wars, its mass tortures, ethnic cleansings, genocides, and holocausts. But all these killings, all these horrors inflicted on the human race by this century's murderous "charismatics," hindsight clearly shows, were just that: senseless killings, senseless horrors, "sound and fury, signifying nothing." Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, the three evil geniuses of this century, destroyed. They created nothing.

Indeed, if this century proves one thing, it is the futility of politics. Even the most dogmatic believer in historical determinism would have a hard time explaining the social transformations of this century as caused by the headline-making political events, or the headline-making political events as caused by the social transformations. But it is the social transformations, like ocean currents deep below the hurricane-tormented surface of the sea, that have had the lasting, indeed the permanent, effect. They, rather than all the violence of the political surface, have transformed not only the society but also the economy, the community, and the polity we live in. The age of social transformation will not come to an end with the year 2000—it will not even have peaked by then.

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE TRANSFORMED

BEFORE the First World War, farmers composed the largest single group in every country. They no longer made up the population everywhere, as they had from the dawn of history to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a hundred years earlier. But farmers still made up a near-majority in every developed country except England and Belgium—in Germany, France, Japan, the United States—and, of course, in all underdeveloped countries, too. On the eve of the First World War it was considered a self-evident axiom that developed countries—the United States and Canada being the only exceptions—would increasingly have to rely on food imports from nonindustrial, nondeveloped areas.

Today only Japan among major developed free-market countries is a heavy importer of food. (It is one unnecessarily, for its weakness as a food producer is largely the result of an obsolete rice-subsidy policy that prevents the country from developing a modern, productive agriculture.) And in all developed free-market countries, including Japan, farmers today are at most five percent of the population and work force—that is, one tenth of the proportion of eighty years ago. Actually, *productive* farmers make up less than half of the total farm population, or no more than two percent of the

work force. And these agricultural producers are not "farmers" in most senses of the word; they are "agribusiness," which is arguably the most capital-intensive, most technology-intensive, and most information-intensive industry around. Traditional farmers are close to extinction even in Japan. And those that remain have become a protected species kept alive only by enormous subsidies.

The second-largest group in the population and work force of every developed country around 1900 was composed of live-in servants. They were considered as much a law of nature as farmers were. Census categories of the time defined a "lower middle class" household as one that employed fewer than three servants, and as a percentage of the work force domestics grew steadily up to the First World War. Eighty years later live-in domestic servants scarcely exist in developed countries. Few people born since the Second World War—that is, few people under fifty—have even seen any except on the stage or in old movies.

In the developed society of 2000 farmers are little but objects of nostalgia, and domestic servants are not even that.

Yet these enormous transformations in all developed free-market countries were accomplished without civil war and, in fact, in almost total silence. Only now that their farm population has shrunk to near zero do the totally urban French loudly assert that theirs should be a "rural country" with a "rural civilization."

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BLUE-COLLAR WORKER

ONE reason why the transformations caused so little stir (indeed, the main reason) was that by 1900 a new class, the blue-collar worker in manufacturing industry—Marx's "proletarian"—had become socially dominant. Farmers were loudly adjured to "raise less corn and more hell," but they paid little attention. Domestic servants were

clearly the most exploited class around. But when people before the First World War talked or wrote about the "social question," they meant blue-collar industrial workers. Blue-collar industrial workers were still a fairly small minority of the population and work force—right up to 1914 they made up an eighth or a sixth of the total at most—and were still vastly outnumbered by the traditional lower classes of farmers and domestic servants. But early-twentieth-century society was obsessed with blue-collar workers, fixated on them, bewitched by them.

Farmers and domestic servants were everywhere. But as classes, they were invisible. Domestic servants lived and worked inside individual homes or on individual farms in small and isolated groups of two or three. Farmers, too, were dispersed. More important, these traditional lower classes were not organized. Indeed, they could not be organized. Slaves employed in mining or in producing goods had revolted frequently in the ancient world—though always un-

successfully. But there is no mention in any book I ever read of a single demonstration or a single protest march by domestic servants in any place, at any time. There have been peasant revolts galore. But except for two Chinese revolts in the nineteenth century—the Taiping Rebellion, in midcentury, and the Boxer Rebellion, at the century's end, both of which lasted for years and came close to overturning the regime—all peasant rebellions in history have fizzled out after a few bloody weeks. Peasants, history shows, are very hard to organize and do not stay organized—which is why they earned Marx's contempt.

The new class, industrial workers, was extremely visible. This is what made these workers a "class." They lived perforce in dense population clusters and in cities—in St. Denis, outside Paris; in Berlin's Wedding and Vienna's Ottakring; in the textile towns of Lancashire; in the steel towns of America's Monongahela Valley; and in Japan's Kobe. And they soon proved eminently organizable, with the first strikes occurring almost as soon as there were factory workers. Charles Dickens's harrowing tale of murderous labor conflict, *Hard Times*, was published in 1854, only six years after Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*.

By 1900 it had become quite clear that industrial workers would not become the majority, as Marx had predicted only a few decades earlier. They therefore would not overwhelm the capitalists by their sheer numbers. Yet the most influential radical writer of the period before the First World War, the French ex-Marxist and revolutionary syndicalist Georges Sorel, found widespread acceptance for his 1906 thesis that the proletarians would overturn the existing order and take power by their organization and in and through the violence of the general strike. It was not only Lenin who made Sorel's thesis the foundation of his revision of Marxism and built around it his strategy in 1917 and 1918. Both Mussolini and Hitler—and Mao, ten years later—built their strategies on Sorel's thesis. Mao's "power grows out of the barrel of a gun" is almost a direct quote from Sorel. The industrial worker became the "social question" of 1900 because he was the first lower class in history that could be organized and could stay organized.

NO class in history has ever risen faster than the blue-collar worker. And no class in history has ever fallen faster.

In 1883, the year of Marx's death, "proletarians" were still a minority not just of the population but also of industrial workers. The majority in industry were then skilled workers employed in small craft shops, each containing twenty or thirty workers at most. Of the anti-heroes of the nineteenth century's best "proletarian" novel, *The Princess Casamassima*, by Henry James—published in 1886 (and surely only Henry James could have given such a title to a story of working-class terrorists!)—one is a highly skilled bookbinder, the other an equally skilled pharmacist. By 1900 "in-

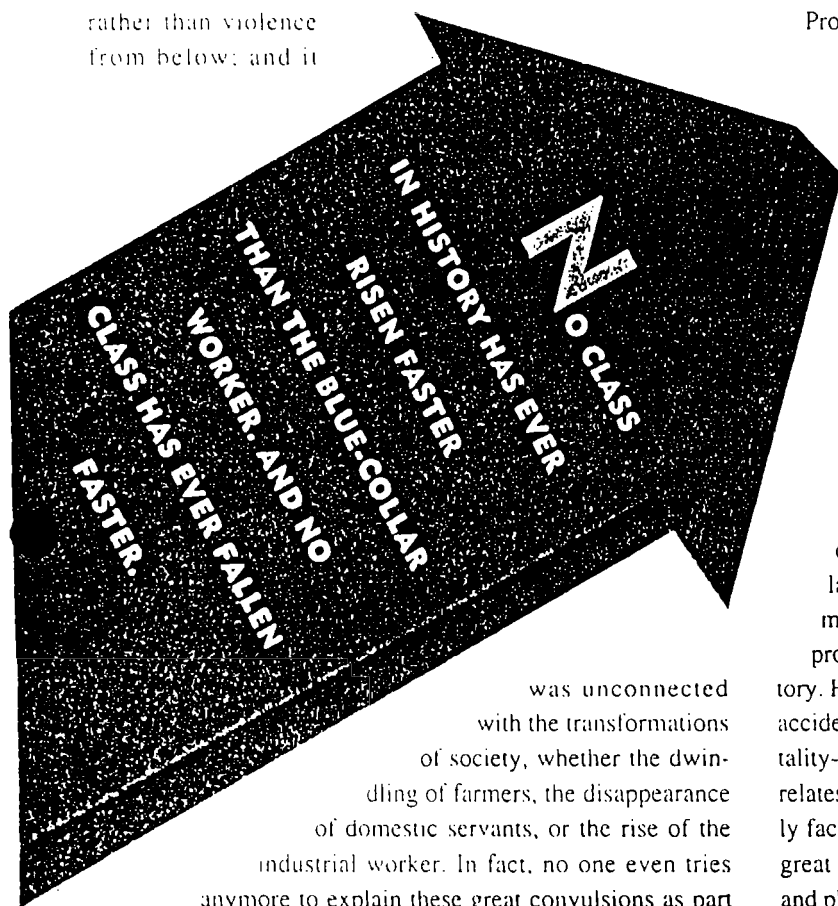
dustrial worker" had become synonymous with "machine operator" and implied employment in a factory along with hundreds if not thousands of people. These factory workers were indeed Marx's proletarians—without social position, without political power, without economic or purchasing power.

The workers of 1900—and even of 1913—received no pensions, no paid vacation, no overtime pay, no extra pay for Sunday or night work, no health or old-age insurance (except in Germany), no unemployment compensation (except, after 1911, in Britain); they had no job security whatever. Fifty years later, in the 1950s, industrial workers had become the largest single group in every developed country, and unionized industrial workers in mass-production industry (which was then dominant everywhere) had attained upper-middle-class income levels. They had extensive job security, pensions, long paid vacations, and comprehensive unemployment insurance or "lifetime employment." Above all, they had achieved political power. In Britain the labor unions were considered to be the "real government," with greater power than the Prime Minister and Parliament, and much the same was true elsewhere. In the United States, too—as in Germany, France, and Italy—the labor unions had emerged as the country's most powerful and best organized political force. And in Japan they had come close, in the Toyota and Nissan strikes of the late forties and early fifties, to overturning the system and taking power themselves.

Thirty-five years later, in 1990, industrial workers and their unions were in retreat. They had become marginal in numbers. Whereas industrial workers who make or move things had accounted for two fifths of the American work force in the 1950s, they accounted for less than one fifth in the early 1990s—that is, for no more than they had accounted for in 1900, when their meteoric rise began. In the other developed free-market countries the decline was slower at first, but after 1980 it began to accelerate everywhere. By the year 2000 or 2010, in every developed free-market country, industrial workers will account for no more than an eighth of the work force. Union power has been declining just as fast.

Unlike domestic servants, industrial workers will not disappear—any more than agricultural producers have disappeared or will disappear. But just as the traditional small farmer has become a recipient of subsidies rather than a producer, so will the traditional industrial worker become an auxiliary employee. His place is already being taken by the "technologist"—someone who works both with hands and with theoretical knowledge. (Examples are computer technicians, x-ray technicians, physical therapists, medical-lab technicians, pulmonary technicians, and so on, who together have made up the fastest-growing group in the U.S. labor force since 1980.) And instead of a class—a coherent, recognizable, defined, and self-conscious group—industrial workers may soon be just another "pressure group."

Chroniclers of the rise of the industrial worker tend to highlight the violent episodes—especially the clashes between strikers and the police, as in America's Pullman strike. The reason is probably that the theoreticians and propagandists of socialism, anarchism, and communism—beginning with Marx and continuing to Herbert Marcuse in the 1960s—incessantly wrote and talked of “revolution” and “violence.” Actually, the rise of the industrial worker was remarkably *nonviolent*. The enormous violence of this century—the world wars, ethnic cleansings, and so on—was all violence from above rather than violence from below; and it



was unconnected with the transformations of society, whether the dwindling of farmers, the disappearance of domestic servants, or the rise of the industrial worker. In fact, no one even tries anymore to explain these great convulsions as part of “the crisis of capitalism,” as was standard Marxist rhetoric only thirty years ago.

Contrary to Marxist and syndicalist predictions, the rise of the industrial worker did not destabilize society. Instead it has emerged as the century's most stabilizing social development. It explains why the disappearance of the farmer and the domestic servant produced no social crises. Both the flight from the land and the flight from domestic service were voluntary. Farmers and maids were not “pushed off” or “displaced.” They went into industrial employment as fast as they could. Industrial jobs required no skills they did not already possess, and no additional knowledge. In fact, farmers on the whole had a good deal more skill than was required to be a machine operator in a mass-production plant—and so did many domestic servants. To be sure, industrial work paid poorly until the First World War. But it paid better than farming or household work. Industrial workers in the United

States until 1913—and in some countries, including Japan, until the Second World War—worked long hours. But they worked shorter hours than farmers and domestic servants. What's more, they worked *specified* hours: the rest of the day was their own, which was true neither of work on the farm nor of domestic work.

The history books record the squalor of early industry, the poverty of the industrial workers, and their exploitation. Workers did indeed live in squalor and poverty, and they were exploited. But they lived better than those on a farm or in a household, and were generally treated better.

Proof of this is that infant mortality dropped immediately when farmers and domestic servants moved into industrial work. Historically, cities had never reproduced themselves. They had depended for their perpetuation on constant new recruits from the countryside. This was still true in the mid-nineteenth century. But with the spread of factory employment the city became the center of population growth. In part this was a result of new public-health measures: purification of water, collection and treatment of wastes, quarantine against epidemics, inoculation against disease. These measures—and they were effective mostly in the city—counteracted, or at least contained, the hazards of crowding that had made the traditional city a breeding ground for pestilence. But the largest single factor in the exponential drop in infant mortality as industrialization spread was surely the improvement in living conditions brought about by the factory. Housing and nutrition became better, and hard work and accidents came to take less of a toll. The drop in infant mortality—and with it the explosive growth in population—correlates with only one development: industrialization. The early factory was indeed the “Satanic Mill” of William Blake's great poem. But the countryside was not “England's green and pleasant Land” of which Blake sang; it was a picturesque but even more satanic slum.

For farmers and domestic servants, industrial work was an opportunity. It was, in fact, the first opportunity that social history had given them to better themselves substantially without having to emigrate. In the developed free-market countries over the past 100 or 150 years every generation has been able to expect to do substantially better than the generation preceding it. The main reason has been that farmers and domestic servants could and did become industrial workers.

Because industrial workers are concentrated in groups, systematic work on their productivity was possible. Beginning in 1881, two years before Marx's death, the systematic study of work, tasks, and tools raised the productivity of manual work in making and moving things by three to four percent compound on average per year—for a fiftyfold increase in output per worker over 110 years. On this rest all

the economic and social gains of the past century. And contrary to what "everybody knew" in the nineteenth century—not only Marx but all the conservatives as well, such as J. P. Morgan, Bismarck, and Disraeli—practically all these gains have accrued to the industrial worker, half of them in the form of sharply reduced working hours (with the cuts ranging from 40 percent in Japan to 50 percent in Germany), and half of them in the form of a twenty-five-fold increase in the real wages of industrial workers who make or move things.

There were thus very good reasons why the rise of the industrial worker was peaceful rather than violent, let alone revolutionary. But what explains the fact that the fall of the industrial worker has been equally peaceful and almost entirely free of social protest, of upheaval, of serious dislocation, at least in the United States?

THE RISE OF THE KNOWLEDGE WORKER

THE rise of the class succeeding industrial workers is not an opportunity for industrial workers. It is a challenge. The newly emerging dominant group is "knowledge workers." The very term was unknown forty years ago. (I coined it in a 1959 book, *Landmarks of Tomorrow*.) By the end of this century knowledge workers will make up a third or more of the work force in the United States—as large a proportion as manufacturing workers ever made up, except in wartime. The majority of them will be paid at least as well as, or better than, manufacturing workers ever were. And the new jobs offer much greater opportunities.

★ But—and this is a big but—the great majority of the new jobs require qualifications the industrial worker does not possess and is poorly equipped to acquire. They require a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. They require a different approach to work and a different mind-set. Above all, they require a habit of continuous learning. Displaced industrial workers thus cannot simply move into knowledge work or services the way displaced farmers and domestic workers moved into industrial work. At the very least they have to change their basic attitudes, values, and beliefs.

In the closing decades of this century the industrial work force has shrunk faster and further in the United States than in any other developed country—while industrial production has grown faster than in any other developed country except Japan.

The shift has aggravated America's oldest and least tractable problem: the position of blacks. In the fifty years since the Second World War the economic position of African-Americans in America has improved faster than that of any other group in American social history—or in the social history of any country. Three fifths of America's blacks rose into middle-class incomes; before the Second World War the figure was one twentieth. But half that group rose

into middle-class *incomes* and not into middle-class *jobs*. Since the Second World War more and more blacks have moved into blue-collar unionized mass-production industry—that is, into jobs paying middle-class and upper-middle-class wages while requiring neither education nor skill. These are precisely the jobs, however, that are disappearing the fastest. What is amazing is not that so many blacks did not acquire an education but that so many did. The economically rational thing for a young black in postwar America was not to stay in school and learn; it was to leave school as early as possible and get one of the plentiful mass-production jobs. As a result, the fall of the industrial worker has hit America's blacks disproportionately hard—quantitatively, but qualitatively even more. It has blunted what was the most potent role model in the black community in America: the well-paid industrial worker with job security, health insurance, and a guaranteed retirement pension—yet possessing neither skill nor much education.

But, of course, blacks are a minority of the population and work force in the United States. For the overwhelming majority—whites, but also Latinos and Asians—the fall of the industrial worker has caused amazingly little disruption and nothing that could be called an upheaval. Even in communities that were once totally dependent on mass-production plants that have gone out of business or have drastically slashed employment (steel cities in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, for instance, or automobile cities like Detroit and Flint, Michigan), unemployment rates for nonblack adults fell within a few short years to levels barely higher than the U.S. average—and that means to levels barely higher than the U.S. "full-employment" rate. Even in these communities there has been no radicalization of America's blue-collar workers.

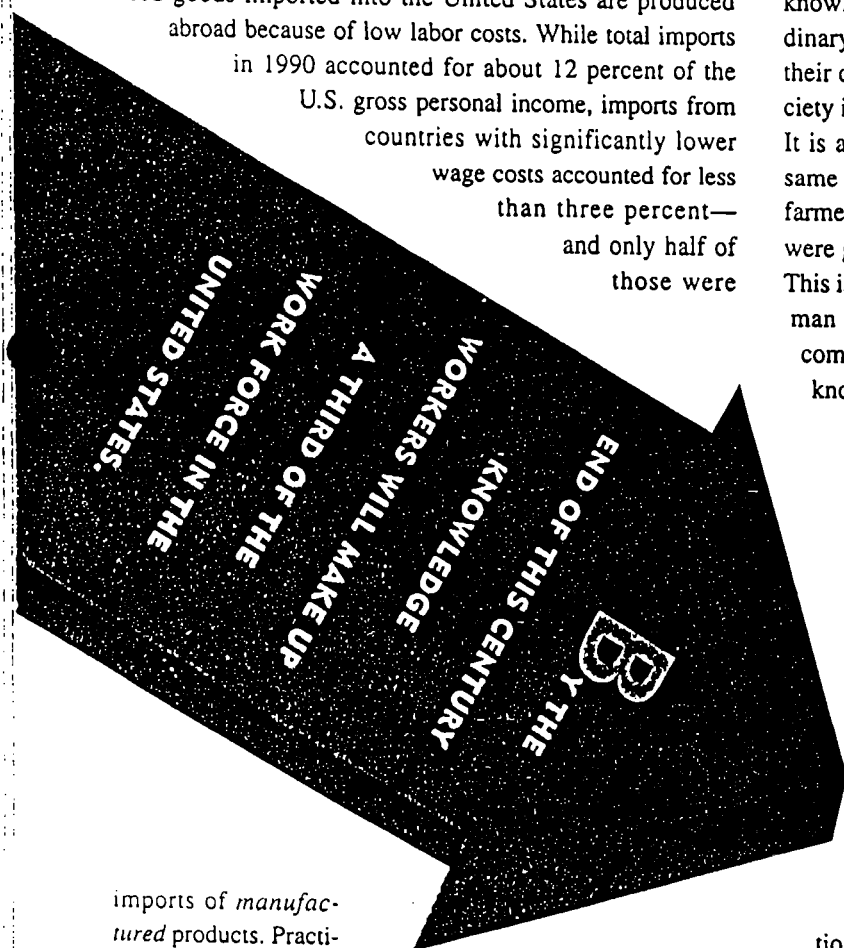
The only explanation is that for the nonblack blue-collar community the development came as no surprise, however unwelcome, painful, and threatening it may have been to individual workers and their families. Psychologically—but in terms of values, perhaps, rather than in terms of emotions—America's industrial workers must have been prepared to accept as right and proper the shift to jobs that require formal education and that pay for knowledge rather than for manual work, whether skilled or unskilled.

In the United States the shift had by 1990 or so largely been accomplished. But so far it has occurred only in the United States. In the other developed free-market countries, in western and northern Europe and in Japan, it is just beginning in the 1990s. It is, however, certain to proceed rapidly in these countries from now on, perhaps faster than it originally did in the United States. The fall of the industrial worker in the developed free-market countries will also have a major impact outside the developed world. Developing countries can no longer expect to base their development on their comparative labor advantage—that is, on cheap industrial labor.

It is widely believed, especially by labor-union officials, that the fall of the blue-collar industrial worker in the developed countries was largely, if not entirely, caused by moving production "offshore" to countries with abundant supplies of unskilled labor and low wage rates. But this is not true.

There was something to the belief thirty years ago. Japan, Taiwan, and, later, South Korea did indeed (as explained in some detail in my 1993 book *Post-Capitalist Society*) gain their initial advantage in the world market by combining, almost overnight, America's invention of training for full productivity with wage costs that were still those of a pre-industrial country. But this technique has not worked at all since 1970 or 1975.

In the 1990s only an insignificant percentage of manufactured goods imported into the United States are produced abroad because of low labor costs. While total imports in 1990 accounted for about 12 percent of the U.S. gross personal income, imports from countries with significantly lower wage costs accounted for less than three percent—and only half of those were



imports of manufactured products. Practically none of the decline in American manufacturing employment from some 30 or 35 percent of the work force to 15 or 18 percent can therefore be attributed to moving work to low-wage countries. The main competition for American manufacturing industry—for instance, in automobiles, in steel, and in machine tools—has come from countries such as Japan and Germany, where wage costs have long been equal to, if not higher than, those in the United States. The comparative advantage that now counts is in the application of knowledge—for example, in Japan's total quality management, lean manufacturing processes, just-in-

time delivery, and price-based costing, or in the customer service offered by medium-sized German or Swiss engineering companies. This means, however, that developing countries can no longer expect to base their development on low wages. They, too, must learn to base it on applying knowledge—just at the time when most of them (China, India, and much of Latin America, let alone black Africa) will have to find jobs for millions of uneducated and unskilled young people who are qualified for little except yesterday's blue-collar industrial jobs.

But for the developed countries, too, the shift to knowledge-based work poses enormous social challenges. Despite the factory, industrial society was still essentially a traditional society in its basic social relationships of production. But the emerging society, the one based on knowledge and knowledge workers, is not. It is the first society in which ordinary people—and that means most people—do not earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. It is the first society in which "honest work" does not mean a callused hand. It is also the first society in which not everybody does the same work, as was the case when the huge majority were farmers or, as seemed likely only forty or thirty years ago, were going to be machine operators.

This is far more than a social change. It is a change in the human condition. What it means—what are the values, the commitments, the problems, of the new society—we do not know. But we do know that much will be different.

THE EMERGING KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

KNOWLEDGE workers will not be the majority in the knowledge society, but in many if not most developed societies they will be the largest single population and work-force group. And even where outnumbered by other groups, knowledge workers will give the emerging knowledge society its character, its leadership, its social profile. They may not be the ruling class of the knowledge society, but they are already its leading class. And in their characteristics, social position, values, and expectations, they differ fundamentally from any group in history that has ever occupied the leading position.

In the first place, knowledge workers gain access to jobs and social position through formal education. A great deal of knowledge work requires highly developed manual skill and involves substantial work with one's hands. An extreme example is neurosurgery. The neurosurgeon's performance capacity rests on formal education and theoretical knowledge. An absence of manual skill disqualifies one for work as a neurosurgeon. But manual skill alone, no matter how advanced, will never enable anyone to be a neurosurgeon. The education that is required for neurosurgery and other kinds

of knowledge work can be acquired only through formal schooling. It cannot be acquired through apprenticeship.

Knowledge work varies tremendously in the amount and kind of formal knowledge required. Some jobs have fairly low requirements, and others require the kind of knowledge the neurosurgeon possesses. But even if the knowledge itself is quite primitive, only formal education can provide it.

Education will become the center of the knowledge society, and the school its key institution. What knowledge must everybody have? What is "quality" in learning and teaching? These will of necessity become central concerns of the knowledge society, and central political issues. In fact, the acquisition and distribution of formal knowledge may come to occupy the place in the politics of the knowledge society which the acquisition and distribution of property and income have occupied in our politics over the two or three centuries that we have come to call the Age of Capitalism.

In the knowledge society, clearly, more and more knowl-

edge, and especially advanced knowledge, will be acquired well past the age of formal schooling and increasingly, perhaps, through educational processes that do not center on the traditional school. But at the same time, the performance of the schools and the basic values of the schools will be of increasing concern to society as a whole, rather than being considered professional matters that can safely be left to "educators."

We can also predict with confidence that we will redefine what it means to be an educated person. Traditionally, and especially during the past 300 years (perhaps since 1700 or so, at least in the West, and since about that time in Japan as well), an educated person was somebody who had a prescribed stock of formal knowledge. The Germans called this knowledge *allgemeine Bildung*, and the English (and, following them, the nineteenth-century Americans) called it the liberal arts. Increasingly, an educated person will be somebody who has learned how to learn, and who continues

learning, especially by formal education, throughout his or her lifetime.

There are obvious dangers to this. For instance, society could easily degenerate into emphasizing formal degrees rather than performance capacity. It could fall prey to sterile Confucian mandarins—a danger to which the American university is singularly susceptible. On the other hand, it could overvalue immediately usable, "practical" knowledge and underrate the importance of fundamentals, and of wisdom altogether.

A society in which knowledge workers dominate is under threat from a new class conflict: between the large minority of knowledge workers and the majority of people, who will make their living traditionally, either by manual work, whether skilled or unskilled, or by work in services, whether skilled or unskilled. The productivity of knowledge work—still abysmally low—will become the economic challenge of the knowledge society. On it will depend the competitive po-

sition of every single country, every single industry, every single institution within society. The productivity of the non-knowledge, services worker will become the social challenge of the knowledge society. On it will depend the ability of the knowledge society to give decent incomes, and with them dignity and status, to non-knowledge workers.

No society in history has faced these challenges. But equally new are the opportunities of the knowledge society. In the knowledge society, for the first time in history, the possibility of leadership will be open to all. Also, the possibility of acquiring knowledge will no longer depend on obtaining a prescribed education at a given age. Learning will become the tool of the individual—available to him or her at any age—if only because so much skill and knowledge can be acquired by means of the new learning technologies.

Another implication is that how well an individual, an organization, an industry, a country, does in acquiring and applying knowledge will become the key competitive factor.

The knowledge society will inevitably become far more competitive than any society we have yet known—for the simple reason that with knowledge being universally accessible, there will be no excuses for nonperformance. There will be no “poor” countries. There will only be ignorant countries. And the same will be true for companies, industries, and organizations of all kinds. It will be true for individuals, too. In fact, developed societies have already become infinitely more competitive for individuals than were the societies of the beginning of this century, let alone earlier ones.

I HAVE been speaking of knowledge. But a more accurate term is “knowledges,” because the knowledge of the knowledge society will be fundamentally different from what was considered knowledge in earlier societies—and, in fact, from what is still widely considered knowledge. The knowledge of the German *allgemeine Bildung* or of the Anglo-American liberal arts had little to do with one’s life’s work. It focused on the person and the person’s development, rather than on any application—if, indeed, it did not, like the nineteenth-century liberal arts, pride itself on having no utility whatever. In the knowledge society knowledge for the most part exists only in application. Nothing the x-ray technician needs to know can be applied to market research, for instance, or to teaching medieval history. The central work force in the knowledge society will therefore consist of highly specialized people. In fact, it is a mistake to speak of “generalists.” What we will increasingly mean by that term is people who have learned how to acquire additional specialties rapidly in order to move from one kind of job to another—for example, from market research into management, or from nursing into hospital administration. But “generalists” in the sense in which we used to talk of them are coming to be seen as dilettantes rather than educated people.

This, too, is new. Historically, workers were generalists. They did whatever had to be done—on the farm, in the household, in the craftsman’s shop. This was also true of industrial workers. But knowledge workers, whether their knowledge is primitive or advanced, whether there is a little of it or a great deal, will by definition be specialized. Applied knowledge is effective only when it is specialized. Indeed, the more highly specialized, the more effective it is. This goes for technicians who service computers, x-ray machines, or the engines of fighter planes. But it applies equally to work that requires the most advanced knowledge, whether research in genetics or research in astrophysics or putting on the first performance of a new opera.

Again, the shift from knowledge to knowledges offers tremendous opportunities to the individual. It makes possible a career as a knowledge worker. But it also presents a great many new problems and challenges. It demands for the first time in history that people with knowledge take responsibility for making themselves understood by people who do not have the same knowledge base.

HOW KNOWLEDGES WORK

THAT knowledge in the knowledge society has to be highly specialized to be productive implies two new requirements: that knowledge workers work in teams, and that if knowledge workers are not employees, they must at least be affiliated with an organization.

There is a great deal of talk these days about “teams” and “teamwork.” Most of it starts out with the wrong assumption—namely, that we have never before worked in teams. Actually people have always worked in teams; very few people ever could work effectively by themselves. The farmer had to have a wife, and the farm wife had to have a husband. The two worked as a team. And both worked as a team with their employees, the hired hands. The craftsman also had to have a wife, with whom he worked as a team—he took care of the craft work, and she took care of the customers, the apprentices, and the business altogether. And both worked as a team with journeymen and apprentices. Much discussion today assumes that there is only one kind of team. Actually there are quite a few. But until now the emphasis has been on the individual worker and not on the team. With knowledge work growing increasingly effective as it is increasingly specialized, teams become the work unit rather than the individual himself.

The team that is being touted now—I call it the “jazz combo” team—is only one kind of team. It is actually the most difficult kind of team both to assemble and to make work effectively, and the kind that requires the longest time to gain performance capacity. We will have to learn to use different kinds of teams for different purposes. We will have to learn to understand teams—and this is something to which, so far, very little attention has been paid. The understanding of teams, the performance capacities of different kinds of teams, their strengths and limitations, and the trade-offs between various kinds of teams will thus become central concerns in the management of people.

Equally important is the second implication of the fact that knowledge workers are of necessity specialists: the need for them to work as members of an organization. Only the organization can provide the basic continuity that knowledge workers need in order to be effective. Only the organization can convert the specialized knowledge of the knowledge worker into performance.

By itself, specialized knowledge does not yield performance. The surgeon is not effective unless there is a diagnosis—which, by and large, is not the surgeon’s task and not even within the surgeon’s competence. As a loner in his or her research and writing, the historian can be very effective. But to educate students, a great many other specialists have to contribute—people whose specialty may be literature, or mathematics, or other areas of history. And this requires that the specialist have access to an organization.

This access may be as a consultant, or it may be as a provider of specialized services. But for the majority of

knowledge workers it will be as employees, full-time or part-time, of an organization, such as a government agency, a hospital, a university, a business, or a labor union. In the knowledge society it is not the individual who performs. The individual is a cost center rather than a performance center. It is the organization that performs.

WHAT IS AN EMPLOYEE?

MOST knowledge workers will spend most if not all of their working lives as "employees." But the meaning of the term will be different from what it has been traditionally—and not only in English but in German, Spanish, and Japanese as well.

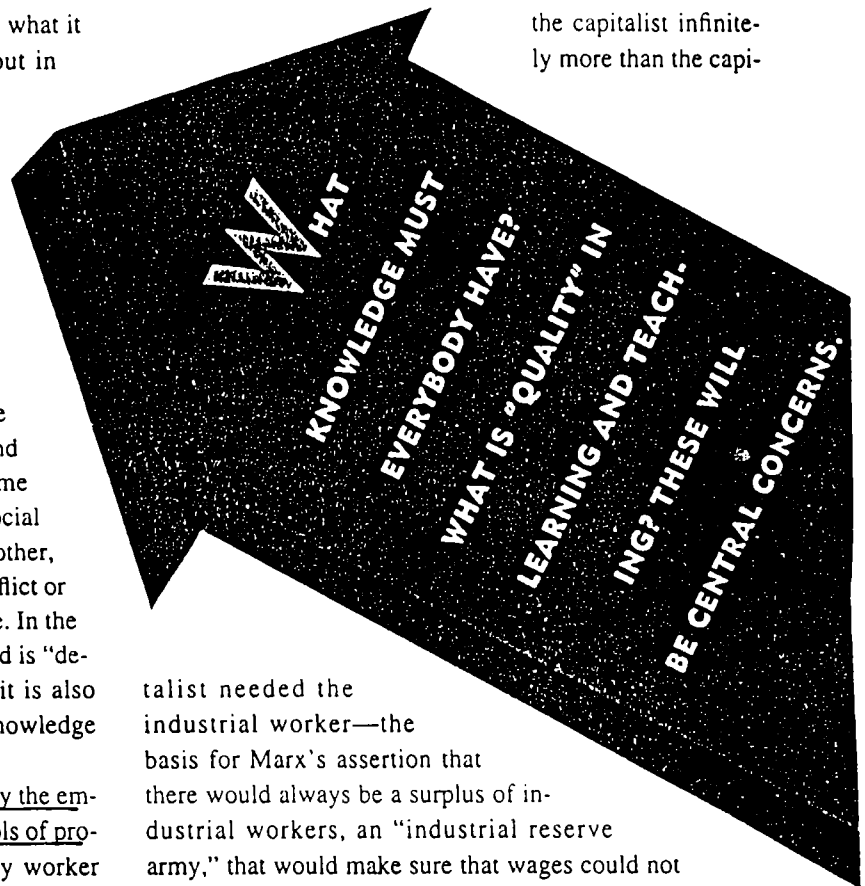
Individually, knowledge workers are dependent on the job. They receive a wage or salary. They have been hired and can be fired. Legally each is an employee. But collectively they are the capitalists; increasingly, through their pension funds and other savings, the employees own the means of production. In traditional economics—and by no means only in Marxist economics—there is a sharp distinction between the "wage fund," all of which goes into consumption, and the "capital fund," or that part of the total income stream that is available for investment. And most social theory of industrial society is based, one way or another, on the relationship between the two, whether in conflict or in necessary and beneficial cooperation and balance. In the knowledge society the two merge. The pension fund is "deferred wages," and as such is a wage fund. But it is also increasingly the main source of capital for the knowledge society.

Perhaps more important, in the knowledge society the employees—that is, knowledge workers—own the tools of production. Marx's great insight was that the factory worker does not and cannot own the tools of production, and therefore is "alienated." There was no way, Marx pointed out, for the worker to own the steam engine and to be able to take it with him when moving from one job to another. The capitalist had to own the steam engine and to control it. Increasingly, the true investment in the knowledge society is not in machines and tools but in the knowledge of the knowledge worker. Without that knowledge the machines, no matter how advanced and sophisticated, are unproductive.

The market researcher needs a computer. But increasingly this is the researcher's own personal computer, and it goes along wherever he or she goes. The true "capital equipment" of market research is the knowledge of markets, of statistics, and of the application of market research to business strategy, which is lodged between the researcher's ears and is his or her exclusive and inalienable property. The surgeon needs the operating room of the hospital and all its expensive capital equipment. But the surgeon's true capital investment is

twelve or fifteen years of training and the resulting knowledge, which the surgeon takes from one hospital to the next. Without that knowledge the hospital's expensive operating rooms are so much waste and scrap.

This is true whether the knowledge worker commands advanced knowledge, like a surgeon, or simple and fairly elementary knowledge, like a junior accountant. In either case it is the knowledge investment that determines whether the employee is productive or not, more than the tools, machines, and capital furnished by an organization. The industrial worker needed the capitalist infinitely more than the capi-



talist needed the industrial worker—the basis for Marx's assertion that there would always be a surplus of industrial workers, an "industrial reserve army," that would make sure that wages could not possibly rise above the subsistence level (probably Marx's most egregious error). In the knowledge society the most probable assumption for organizations—and certainly the assumption on which they have to conduct their affairs—is that they need knowledge workers far more than knowledge workers need them.

There was endless debate in the Middle Ages about the hierarchy of knowledges, with philosophy claiming to be the "queen." We long ago gave up that fruitless argument. There is no higher or lower knowledge. When the patient's complaint is an ingrown toenail, the podiatrist's knowledge, not that of the brain surgeon, controls—even though the brain surgeon has received many more years of training and commands a much larger fee. And if an executive is posted to a foreign country, the knowledge he or she needs, and in a hurry, is fluency in a foreign language—something every native of that country has mastered by age three, without any great investment. The knowledge of the knowledge society, pre-

cisely because it is knowledge only when applied in action, derives its rank and standing from the situation. In other words, what is knowledge in one situation, such as fluency in Korean for the American executive posted to Seoul, is only information, and not very relevant information at that, when the same executive a few years later has to think through his company's market strategy for Korea. This, too, is new. Knowledges were always seen as fixed stars, so to speak, each occupying its own position in the universe of knowledge. In the knowledge society knowledges are tools, and as such are dependent for their importance and position on the task to be performed.

MANAGEMENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

ONE additional conclusion: Because the knowledge society perforce has to be a society of organizations, its central and distinctive organ is management.

When our society began to talk of management, the term meant "business management"—because large-scale business was the first of the new organizations to become visible. But we have learned in this past half century that management is the distinctive organ of all organizations. All of them require management, whether they use the term or not. All managers do the same things, whatever the purpose of their organization. All of them have to bring people—each possessing different knowledge—together for joint performance. All of them have to make human strengths productive in performance and human weaknesses irrelevant. All of them have to think through what results are wanted in the organization—and have then to define objectives. All of them are responsible for thinking through what I call the theory of the business—that is, the assumptions on which the organization bases its performance and actions, and the assumptions that the organization has made in deciding what not to do. All of them must think through strategies—that is, the means through which the goals of the organization become performance. All of them have to define the values of

the organization, its system of rewards and punishments, its spirit and its culture. In all organizations managers need both the knowledge of management as work and discipline and the knowledge and understanding of the organization itself—its purposes, its values, its environment and markets, its core competencies.

Management as a practice is very old. The most successful executive in all history was surely that Egyptian who, 4,500 years or more ago, first conceived the pyramid, without any precedent, designed it, and built it, and did so in an astonishingly short time. That first pyramid still stands. But as a discipline management is barely fifty years old. It was first dimly perceived around the time of the First World War. It did not emerge until the Second World War, and then did so primarily in the United States. Since then it has been the fastest-growing new function, and the study of it the fastest-growing new discipline. No function in history has emerged as quickly as has management in the past fifty or sixty years, and surely none has had such worldwide sweep in such a short period.

Management is still taught in most business schools as a bundle of techniques, such as budgeting and personnel relations. To be sure, management, like any other work, has its own tools and its own techniques. But just as the essence of medicine is not urinalysis (important though that is), the essence of management is not techniques and procedures. The essence of management is to make knowledges productive. Management, in other words, is a social function. And in its practice management is truly a liberal art.

THE SOCIAL SECTOR

THE old communities—family, village, parish, and so on—have all but disappeared in the knowledge society. Their place has largely been taken by the new unit of social integration, the organization. Where community was fate, organization is voluntary membership. Where community claimed the entire person, organization is a means to a person's ends, a tool. For 200 years a hot debate has been raging, especially in the West: are communities "organic" or are they simply extensions of the people of which they are made? Nobody would claim that the new organization is "organic." It is clearly an artifact, a creation of man, a social technology.

But who, then, does the community tasks? Two hundred years ago whatever social tasks were being done were done in all societies by a local community. Very few if any of these tasks are being done by the old communities anymore. Nor would they be capable of doing them, considering that they no longer have control of their members or even a firm hold over them. People no longer stay where they were born, either in terms of geography or in terms of social position and status. By definition, a knowledge society is a society of mobility. And all the social functions of the old communi-

ties, whether performed well or poorly (and most were performed very poorly indeed), presupposed that the individual and the family would stay put. But the essence of a knowledge society is mobility in terms of where one lives, mobility in terms of what one does, mobility in terms of one's affiliations. People no longer have roots. People no longer have a neighborhood that controls what their home is like, what they do, and, indeed, what their problems are allowed to be. The knowledge society is a society in which many more people than ever before can be successful. But it is therefore, by definition, also a society in which many more people than ever before can fail, or at least come in second. And if only because the application of knowledge to work has made developed societies so much richer than any earlier society could even dream of becoming, the failures, whether poor people or alcoholics, battered women or juvenile delinquents, are seen as failures of society.

Who, then, takes care of the social tasks in the knowledge

society? We cannot ignore them. But the traditional community is incapable of tackling them.

Two answers have emerged in the past century or so—a majority answer and a dissenting opinion. Both have proved to be wrong.

The majority answer goes back more than a hundred years, to the 1880s, when Bismarck's Germany took the first faltering steps toward the welfare state. The answer: the problems of the social sector can, should, and must be solved by government. This is still probably the answer that most people accept, especially in the developed countries of the West—even though most people probably no longer fully believe it. But it has been totally disproved. Modern government, especially since the Second World War, has everywhere become a huge welfare bureaucracy. And the bulk of the budget in every developed country today is devoted to "entitlements"—to payments for all kinds of social services. Yet in every developed country society is becoming sicker

rather than healthier, and social problems are multiplying. Government has a big role to play in social tasks—the role of policymaker, of standard setter, and, to a substantial extent, of paymaster. But as the agency to *run* social services, it has proved almost totally incompetent.

In my *The Future of Industrial Man* (1942), I formulated a dissenting opinion. I argued then that the new organization—and fifty years ago that meant the large business enterprise—would have to be the community in which the individual would find status and function, with the workplace community becoming the one in and through which social tasks would be organized. In Japan (though quite independently and without any debt to me) the large employer—government agency or business—has indeed increasingly attempted to serve as a community for its employees. Lifetime employment is only one affirmation of this. Company housing, company health plans, company vacations, and so on all emphasize for the Japanese employee that the employer, and

especially the big corporation, is the community and the successor to yesterday's village—even to yesterday's family. This, however, has not worked either.

There is need, especially in the West, to bring the employee increasingly into the government of the workplace community. What is now called empowerment is very similar to the things I talked about fifty years ago. But it does not create a community. Nor does it create the structure through which the social tasks of the knowledge society can be tackled. In fact, practically all these tasks—whether education or health care; the anomies and diseases of a developed and, especially, a rich society, such as alcohol and drug abuse; or the problems of incompetence and irresponsibility such as those of the underclass in the American city—lie outside the employing institution.

The right answer to the question Who takes care of the social challenges of the knowledge society? is neither the government nor the employing organization. The answer is a separate and new *social sector*.

It is less than fifty years, I believe, since we first talked in the United States of the two sectors of a modern society—the “public sector” (government) and the “private sector” (business). In the past twenty years the United States has begun to talk of a third sector, the “nonprofit sector”—those organizations that increasingly take care of the social challenges of a modern society.

In the United States, with its tradition of independent and competitive churches, such a sector has always existed. Even now churches are the largest single part of the social sector in the United States, receiving almost half the money given to charitable institutions, and about a third of the time volunteered by individuals. But the nonchurch part of the social sector has been the growth sector in the United States. In the early 1990s about a million organizations were registered in the United States as nonprofit or charitable organizations doing social-sector work. The overwhelming majority of these, some 70 percent, have come into existence in the past thirty years. And most are community services concerned with life on this earth rather than with the Kingdom of Heaven. Quite a few of the new organizations are, of course, religious in their orientation, but for the most part these are not churches. They are “parachurches” engaged in a specific social task, such as the rehabilitation of alcohol and drug addicts, the rehabilitation of criminals, or elementary school education. Even within the church segment of the social sector the organizations that have shown the capacity to grow are radically new. They are the “pastoral” churches, which focus on the spiritual needs of individuals, especially educated knowledge workers, and then put the spiritual energies of their members to work on the social challenges and social problems of the community—especially, of course, the urban community.

We still talk of these organizations as “nonprofits.” But this is a legal term. It means nothing except that under

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American law these organizations do not pay taxes. Whether they are organized as nonprofit or not is actually irrelevant to their function and behavior. Many American hospitals since 1960 or 1970 have become "for-profits" and are organized in what legally are business corporations. They function in exactly the same way as traditional "nonprofit" hospitals. What matters is not the legal basis but that the social-sector institutions have a particular kind of purpose. Government demands compliance; it makes rules and enforces them. Business expects to be paid; it supplies. Social-sector institutions aim at changing the human being. The "product" of a school is the student who has learned something. The "product" of a hospital is a cured patient. The "product" of a church is a churchgoer whose life is being changed. The task of social-sector organizations is to create human health and well-being.

Increasingly these organizations of the social sector serve a second and equally important purpose. They create citizenship. Modern society and modern polity have become so big and complex that citizenship—that is, responsible participation—is no longer possible. All we can do as citizens is to vote once every few years and to pay taxes all the time.

As a volunteer in a social-sector institution, the individual can again make a difference. In the United States, where there is a long volunteer tradition because of the old independence of the churches, almost every other adult in the 1990s is working at least three—and often five—hours a week as a volunteer in a social-sector organization. Britain is the only other country with something like this tradition, although it exists there to a much lesser extent (in part because the British welfare state is far more embracing, but in much larger part because it has an established church—paid for by the state and run as a civil service). Outside the English-speaking countries there is not much of a volunteer tradition. In fact, the modern state in Europe and Japan has been openly hostile to anything that smacks of volunteerism—most so in France and Japan. It is *ancien regime* and suspected of being fundamentally subversive.

But even in these countries things are changing, because the knowledge society needs the social sector, and the social sector needs the volunteer. But knowledge workers also need a sphere in which they can act as citizens and create a community. The workplace does not give it to them. Nothing has been disproved faster than the concept of the "organization man," which was widely accepted forty years ago. In fact, the more satisfying one's knowledge work is, the more one needs a separate sphere of community activity.

Many social-sector organizations will become partners with government—as is the case in a great many "privatizations," where, for instance, a city pays for street cleaning and an outside contractor does the work. In American education over the next twenty years there will be more and more government-paid vouchers that will enable parents to put their children into a variety of different schools, some public and

tax-supported, some private and largely dependent on the income from the vouchers. These social-sector organizations, although partners with government, also clearly compete with government. The relationship between the two has yet to be worked out—and there is practically no precedent for it.

What constitutes performance for social-sector organizations, and especially for those that, being nonprofit and charitable, do not have the discipline of a financial bottom line, has also yet to be worked out. We know that social-sector organizations need management. But what precisely management means for the social-sector organization is just beginning to be studied. With respect to the management of the nonprofit organization we are in many ways pretty much where we were fifty or sixty years ago with respect to the management of the business enterprise: the work is only beginning.

But one thing is already clear. The knowledge society has to be a society of three sectors: a public sector of government, a private sector of business, and a social sector. And I submit that it is becoming increasingly clear that through the social sector a modern developed society can again create responsible and achieving citizenship, and can again give individuals—especially knowledge workers—a sphere in which they can make a difference in society and re-create community.

THE SCHOOL AS SOCIETY'S CENTER

KNOWLEDGE has become the key resource, for a nation's military strength as well as for its economic strength. And this knowledge can be acquired only through schooling. It is not tied to any country. It is portable. It can be created everywhere, fast and cheaply. Finally, it is by definition changing. Knowledge as the key resource is fundamentally different from the traditional key resources of the economist—land, labor, and even capital.

That knowledge has become the key resource means that there is a world economy, and that the world economy, rather than the national economy, is in control. Every country, every industry, and every business will be in an increasingly competitive environment. Every country, every industry, and every business will, in its decisions, have to consider its competitive standing in the world economy and the competitiveness of its knowledge competencies.

Politics and policies still center on domestic issues in every country. Few if any politicians, journalists, or civil servants look beyond the boundaries of their own country when a new measure such as taxes, the regulation of business, or social spending is being discussed. Even in Germany—Europe's most export-conscious and export-dependent major country—this is true. Almost no one in the West asked in 1990 what the government's unbridled spending in the East would do to Germany's competitiveness.

This will no longer do. Every country and every industry will have to learn that the first question is not Is this measure desirable? but What will be the impact on the country's, or the industry's, competitive position in the world economy? We need to develop in politics something similar to the environmental-impact statement, which in the United States is now required for any government action affecting the quality of the environment: we need a competitive-impact statement. The impact on one's competitive position in the world economy should not necessarily be the main factor in a decision. But to make a decision without considering it has become irresponsible.

Altogether, the fact that knowledge has become the key resource means that the standing of a country in the world economy will increasingly determine its domestic prosperity. Since 1950 a country's ability to improve its position in the world economy has been the main and perhaps the sole determinant of performance in the domestic economy. Monetary and fiscal policies have been practically irrelevant, for better and, very largely, even for worse (with the single exception of government-

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tal policies creating inflation, which very rapidly undermines both a country's competitive standing in the world economy and its domestic stability and ability to grow).

The primacy of foreign affairs is an old political precept going back in European politics to the seventeenth century. Since the Second World War it has also been accepted in American politics—though only grudgingly so, and only in emergencies. It has always meant that military security was to be given priority over domestic policies, and in all likelihood this is what it will continue to mean, Cold War or no Cold War. But the primacy of foreign affairs is now acquir-

ing a different dimension. This is that a country's competitive position in the world economy—and also an industry's and an organization's—has to be the first consideration in its domestic policies and strategies. This holds true for a country that is only marginally involved in the world economy (should there still be such a one), and for a business that is only marginally involved in the world economy, and for a university that sees itself as totally domestic. Knowledge knows no boundaries. There is no domestic knowledge and no international knowledge. There is only knowledge. And with knowledge becoming the key resource, there is only a world economy, even though the individual organization in its daily activities operates within a national, regional, or even local setting.

HOW CAN GOVERNMENT FUNCTION?

SOCIAL tasks are increasingly being done by individual organizations, each created for one, and only one, social task, whether education, health care, or street cleaning. Society, therefore, is rapidly becoming pluralist. Yet our social and political theories still assume that there are no power centers except government. To destroy or at least to render impotent all other power centers was, in fact, the thrust of Western history and Western politics for 500 years, from the fourteenth century on. This drive culminated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when, except in the United States, such early institutions as still survived—for example, the universities and the churches—became organs of the state, with their functionaries becoming civil servants. But then, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, new centers arose—the first one, the modern business enterprise, around 1870. And since then one new organization after another has come into being.

The new institutions—the labor union, the modern hospital, the mega-church, the research university—of the society of organizations have no interest in public power. They do not want to be governments. But they demand—and, indeed, need—autonomy with respect to their functions. Even at the extreme of Stalinism the managers of major industrial enterprises were largely masters within their enterprises, and the individual industry was largely autonomous. So were the university, the research lab, and the military.

In the "pluralism" of yesterday—in societies in which control was shared by various institutions, such as feudal Europe in the Middle Ages and Edo Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—pluralist organizations tried to be in control of whatever went on in their community. At least, they tried to prevent any other organization from having control of any community concern or community institution

within their domain. But in the society of organizations each of the new institutions is concerned only with its own purpose and mission. It does not claim power over anything else. But it also does not assume responsibility for anything else. Who, then, is concerned with the common good?

This has always been a central problem of pluralism. No earlier pluralism solved it. The problem remains, but in a new guise. So far it has been seen as imposing limits on social institutions—forbidding them to do things in the pursuit of their mission, function, and interest which encroach upon the public domain or violate public policy. The laws against discrimination—by race, sex, age, educational level, health status, and so on—which have proliferated in the United States in the past forty years all forbid socially undesirable behavior. But we are increasingly raising the question of the social responsibility of social institutions: What do institutions have to do—in addition to discharging their own functions—to advance the public good? This, however, though nobody seems to realize it, is a demand to return to the old pluralism, the pluralism of feudalism. It is a demand that private hands assume public power.

This could seriously threaten the functioning of the new organizations, as the example of the schools in the United States makes abundantly clear. One of the major reasons for the steady decline in the capacity of the schools to do their job—that is, to teach children elementary knowledge skills—is surely that since the 1950s the United States has increasingly made the schools the carriers of all kinds of social policies: the elimination of racial discrimination, of discrimination against all other kinds of minorities, including the handicapped, and so on. Whether we have actually made any progress in assuaging social ills is highly debatable; so far the schools have not proved particularly effective as tools for social reform. But making the school the organ of social policies has, without any doubt, severely impaired its capacity to do its own job.

The new pluralism has a new problem: how to maintain the performance capacity of the new institutions and yet maintain the cohesion of society. This makes doubly important the emergence of a strong and functioning social sector. It is an additional reason why the social sector will increasingly be crucial to the performance, if not to the cohesion, of the knowledge society.

OF the new organizations under consideration here, the first to arise, 120 years ago, was the business enterprise. It was only natural, therefore, that the problem of the emerging society of organizations was first seen as the relationship of government and business. It was also natural that the new interests were first seen as economic interests.

The first attempt to come to grips with the politics of the emerging society of organizations aimed, therefore, at making economic interests serve the political process. The first to pursue this goal was an American, Mark Hanna, the restorer

of the Republican Party in the 1890s and, in many ways, the founding father of twentieth-century American politics. His definition of politics as a dynamic disequilibrium between the major economic interests—farmers, business, and labor—remained the foundation of American politics until the Second World War. In fact, Franklin D. Roosevelt restored the Democratic Party by reformulating Hanna. And the basic political position of this philosophy is evident in the title of the most influential political book written during the New Deal years—*Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936), by Harold D. Lasswell.

Mark Hanna in 1896 knew very well that there are plenty of concerns other than economic concerns. And yet it was obvious to him—as it was to Roosevelt forty years later—that economic interests had to be used to integrate all the others. This is still the assumption underlying most analyses of American politics—and, in fact, of politics in all developed countries. But the assumption is no longer tenable. Underlying Hanna's formula of economic interests is the view of land, labor, and capital as the existing resources. But knowledge, the new resource for economic performance, is not in itself economic.

It cannot be bought or sold. The fruits of knowledge, such as the income from a patent, can be bought or sold; the knowledge that went into the patent cannot be conveyed at any price. No matter how much a suffering person is willing to pay a neurosurgeon, the neurosurgeon cannot sell to him—and surely cannot convey to him—the knowledge that is the foundation of the neurosurgeon's performance and income. The acquisition of knowledge has a cost, as has the acquisition of anything. But the acquisition of knowledge has no price.

Economic interests can therefore no longer integrate all other concerns and interests. As soon as knowledge became the key economic resource, the integration of interests—and with it the integration of the pluralism of a modern polity—began to be lost. Increasingly, non-economic interests are becoming the new pluralism—the special interests, the single-cause organizations, and so on. Increasingly, politics is not about “who gets what, when, how” but about values, each of them considered to be an absolute. Politics is about the right to life of the embryo in the womb as against the right of a woman to control her own body and to abort an embryo. It is about the environment. It is about gaining equality for groups alleged to be oppressed and discriminated against. None of these issues is economic. All are fundamentally moral.

Economic interests can be compromised, which is the great strength of basing politics on economic interests. “Half a loaf is still bread” is a meaningful saying. But half a baby, in the biblical story of the judgment of Solomon, is not half a child. No compromise is possible. To an environmentalist, half an endangered species is an extinct species.

This greatly aggravates the crisis of modern government.

Newspapers and commentators still tend to report in economic terms what goes on in Washington, in London, in Bonn, or in Tokyo. But more and more of the lobbyists who determine governmental laws and governmental actions are no longer lobbyists for economic interests. They lobby for and against measures that they—and their paymasters—see as moral, spiritual, cultural. And each of these new moral concerns, each represented by a new organization, claims to stand for an absolute. Dividing their loaf is not compromise; it is treason.

There is thus in the society of organizations no one integrating force that pulls individual organizations in society and community into coalition. The traditional parties—perhaps the most successful political creations of the nineteenth century—can no longer integrate divergent groups and divergent points of view into a common pursuit of power. Rather, they have become battlefields between groups, each of them fighting for absolute victory and not content with anything but total surrender of the enemy.

THE NEED FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INNOVATION

THE twenty-first century will surely be one of continuing social, economic, and political turmoil and challenge, at least in its early decades. What I have called the age of social transformation is not over yet. And the challenges looming ahead may be more serious and more daunting than those posed by the social transformations that have already come about, the social transformations of the twentieth century.

Yet we will not even have a chance to resolve these new and looming problems of tomorrow unless we first address the challenges posed by the developments that are already accomplished facts, the developments reported in the earlier sections of this essay. These are the priority tasks. For only if they are tackled can we in the developed democratic free-market countries hope to have the social cohesion, the economic strength, and the governmental capacity needed to tackle the new challenges. The first order of business—for sociologists, political scientists, and economists; for educators; for business executives, politicians, and nonprofit-group leaders; for people in all walks of life, as parents, as employees, as citizens—is to work on these priority tasks, for few of which we so far have a precedent, let alone tested solutions.

- We will have to think through *education*—its purpose, its values, its content. We will have to learn to define the quality of education and the productivity of education, to measure both and to manage both.
- We need systematic work on the *quality of knowledge* and the *productivity of knowledge*—neither even defined so far. The performance capacity, if not the survival, of any organization in the knowledge society will come increasingly to

depend on those two factors. But so will the performance capacity, if not the survival, of any individual in the knowledge society. And what *responsibility* does knowledge have? What are the responsibilities of the knowledge worker, and especially of a person with highly specialized knowledge?

- Increasingly, the *policy* of any country—and especially of any developed country—will have to give primacy to the country's competitive position in an increasingly competitive world economy. Any proposed domestic policy needs to be shaped so as to improve that position, or at least to minimize adverse impacts on it. The same holds true for the policies and strategies of any institution within a nation, whether a local government, a business, a university, or a hospital.
- But then we also need to develop an *economic theory* appropriate to a world economy in which knowledge has become the key economic resource and the dominant, if not the only, source of comparative advantage.
- We are beginning to understand the new integrating mechanism: *organization*. But we still have to think through how to balance two apparently contradictory requirements. Organizations must competently perform the one social function for the sake of which they exist—the school to teach, the hospital to cure the sick, and the business to produce goods, services, or the capital to provide for the risks of the future. They can do so only if they single-mindedly concentrate on their specialized mission. But there is also society's need for these organizations to take social responsibility—to work on the problems and challenges of the community. Together these organizations *are* the community. The emergence of a strong, independent, capable social sector—neither public sector nor private sector—is thus a central need of the society of organizations. But by itself it is not enough—the organizations of both the public and the private sector must share in the work.
- The *function of government* and its *functioning* must be central to political thought and political action. The megastate in which this century indulged has not performed, either in its totalitarian or in its democratic version. It has not delivered on a single one of its promises. And government by countervailing lobbyists is neither particularly effective—in fact, it is paralysis—nor particularly attractive. Yet effective government has never been needed more than in this highly competitive and fast-changing world of ours, in which the dangers created by the pollution of the physical environment are matched only by the dangers of worldwide armaments pollution. And we do not have even the beginnings of political theory or the political institutions needed for effective government in the knowledge-based society of organizations.

If the twentieth century was one of social transformations, the twenty-first century needs to be one of social and political innovations, whose nature cannot be so clear to us now as their necessity. ☸

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1 ♦ The Moral Voice

The State of the Union's Morality

IN the fifties we had a clear set of values that spoke to most Americans, most of the time, with a firm voice. These values were often discriminatory against women (who were not allowed into many clubs, to have credit in their own name, or to advance far in their jobs) and against minorities, from blacks to Jews. They were also at least a bit authoritarian. When your doctor told you that you needed surgery, you did not even think of asking for a second opinion. When your boss ordered you around at work, you did not mention that the Japanese invite their workers to participate in decision making. When your priest, labor leader, or father spoke, he spoke with authority. Indeed, often such figures of authority expected unquestioning obedience. (When I addressed the board of the United Steelworkers in the early sixties at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, no board member so much as peeped until the head of the union, the forceful I. W. Abel, spoke and set the tone of the discussion that ensued.)

In the sixties all these voices and the values they spoke for were deeply challenged—as they ought to have been. That challenge, though, is *not* the reason for the moral predicament we find ourselves in these days in

both private and public realms. The problem is that the waning of traditional values was not followed by a solid affirmation of new values; often nothing filled the empty spaces that were left when we razed existing institutions. The result is rampant moral confusion and social anarchy. We often cannot tell right from wrong—or cannot back up what we do believe in. Thus, while traditional authority figures were challenged, the new form of “participatory democracy” that was supposed to replace them remained largely a vague slogan. Above all, the young these days are bombarded with incessant violent, sexual, and commercial messages, but they hear relatively few credible, morally reaffirming voices.

The eighties tried to turn vice into virtue by elevating the unbridled pursuit of self-interest and greed to the level of social virtue. It turned out that an *economy* could thrive (at least for a while) if people watched out only for themselves (although this is by no means as well documented as many economists suggest, and it is certainly not what the classic economist Adam Smith favored). But it has become evident that a *society* cannot function well given such self-centered, me-istic orientations. It requires a set of dos and don'ts, a set of moral values, that guides people toward what is decent and encourages them to avoid that which is not.

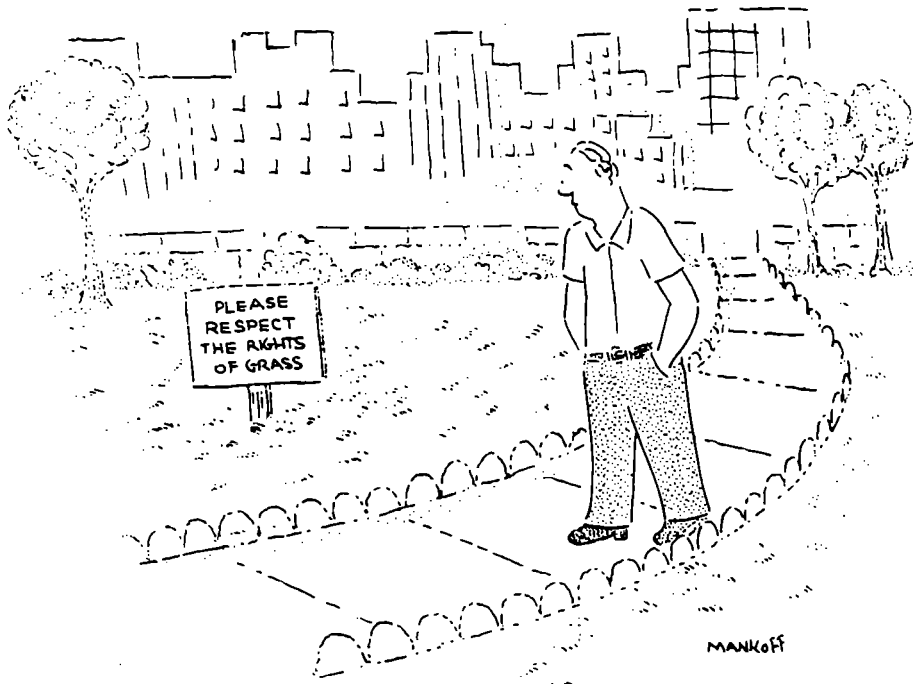
I often ask my students whether if they had a severe cash shortfall—in plain English, if they needed money badly—they would consider selling a kidney (the going price is about \$10,000 in Europe). They look at me as if the old man has finally lost his senses, and I am proud of them. Their reaction is what we require in more areas. *We need to return to a society in which certain actions are viewed as beyond the pale*, things that upright people would not do or even consider: to walk out on their children, file false insurance claims, cheat on tests, empty the savings accounts of others, or force sexual advances on unwilling employees. We also need to return to a state in which there are a fair number of positive compelling commitments—the dos rather than the don'ts—that are beyond debate and dispute. When a sick child cries at night, a parent rushes to help. There is no need to consult clergy or a book by Kant to determine what one's duty is under such clear, elementary conditions. This is what Tocqueville and Communitarian sociologist Robert Bellah mean by “habits of the heart”: values that command our support because they are morally compelling.

Communitarians do not suggest that we return to the traditional values of the fifties. We do not favor, say, a return to the "Leave It to Beaver" family (the father at work, the mother shut in the kitchen), but to a communitarian family—one in which both parents are actively and deeply involved in their children's upbringing. Similarly, Communitarians favor not a return to authoritarian leadership, but a climate that fosters finding agreed-upon positions that we can favor authoritatively.

We do require a set of social virtues, some basic settled values, that we as a community endorse and actively affirm. Thus, if we are to maintain our edge in an increasingly competitive world, workers will have to come to their jobs drug free and sober, stay sober all the time they are on the job, and give a day's work for a decent day's pay. We must reaffirm that expressions of hate toward members of other ethnic or racial groups, not to mention violent behavior, are intolerable. And although we may disagree on exactly how far we should go in protecting our shared environment (for example, what rights do spotted owls have?), we will most certainly express our disapproval of those who flush their engine oil down the drain, refuse to sort their garbage, or wash their cars and water their lawns when the town's water reservoir is low and falling. At the same time, we will continue to debate other values that are contested, seek changes in the prevailing consensus, and even rebel if we feel we are pushed too far, by moral claims or a choir of our peers.

The eighties was a decade in which "I" was writ large, in which the celebration of the self became a virtue. (The period was not unique, however, since such tendencies run far and deep in our national tradition.) Now is the time to push back the pendulum. The times call for an age of reconstruction, in which we put a new emphasis on "we," on values we share, on the spirit of community.

This is our particular American course. The people of China, Eastern Europe, and Japan for that matter may well need to move in the opposite direction: to make more room for self-expression, to slash excessive government control, and to roll back severely enforced moral codes that suppress creativity and impinge on individual rights. But this is not our problem at this stage of American history. To worry now about excessive "we-ness" is like suggesting in the depths of winter that we shouldn't turn on a space



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heater because it might make us sweat. People can freeze to death that way. Our society is suffering from a severe case of deficient we-ness and the values only communities can properly uphold; restoring communities and their moral voice is what our current conditions require.

When Communitarians argue that the pendulum has swung too far toward the radical individualistic pole and it is time to hurry its return, we do *not* seek to push it to the opposite extreme, of encouraging a community that suppresses individuality. We aim for a judicious mix of self-interest, self-expression, and commitment to the commons—of rights *and* responsibilities, of I and we. Hence the sociological recommendation to move from “I” to “we” is but a form of shorthand for arguing that a strong commitment to the commons must now be *added* to strong commitments to individual needs and interests that are already well ensconced. Balancing the me-istic forces with a fair measure of resumed we-ness will bring

our society closer to a balanced position, without a significant tilt toward either side, a society able to steer a stable course.

Enter the Nineties

The nineties opened with a growing awareness that the previous decades had left in their wake a hodgepodge of notions but few firmly established moral positions. Social attitudes toward sex often speak volumes about how a society approaches moral and social matters in general. These days many parents are uncertain about what to say to their children about sexual matters. Ever since we gave up, in effect, on the notion that "one should save oneself for marriage," we talk vaguely about the need to have a "committed relationship" before intercourse. Many provide their kids with little more guidance than vague suggestions, such as "never on the first date" and "at least do it safely." No one should be surprised, then, that in contemporary America nearly one in seven American children has lost his or her virginity by the age of thirteen. Millions of teenagers see little meaning in life other than to have a child, without having a serious commitment to their infants. Marriage for many has become a *disposable* relationship. It is all too often entered into like a rental agreement—with an escape clause that if it does not suit the parties involved, they may look for another apartment. We are no longer clear if and when we ought to marry or if fidelity in marriage is to be expected. And if we beget children, it is unclear what we owe them.

The moral condition of other areas is similarly a source of concern. Almost half of Americans surveyed report chronic malingering at work and calling in sick when they are not sick; one-sixth admit that they have abused drugs or alcohol while at work. Six out of ten (59 percent) admit to having used physical force against another person—and fewer than half (45 percent) regret it. Twenty-five percent of Americans say they would abandon their families for money, and 7 percent admit freely that they would kill someone if paid enough. The moral patrimony of the eighties has been the proliferation of cost-benefit analysis into realms in which it has no place; it has devalued matters such as life, companionship, and integrity that ought not to be subject to such superficial quantification.

In public life one scandal follows closely on the heels of the previous one, as the terms of our moral covenant with our elected representatives are hazy. Do we expect public figures to serve as role models for the rest of us? We still chastise some in public life for having had an extramarital affair or for smoking a joint of marijuana (or for having lied about it), as we did Governor Bill Clinton, Senator Gary Hart, and Supreme Court nominee Douglas H. Ginsburg. But for decades we tolerated others who were obsessive womanizers and adulterers (such as Senator Edward Kennedy). We complained about elected representatives who kited checks or accepted money from special interests in the form of expensive junkets and sizable honoraria, but we reelected the same people year after year. More recently we have replaced these representatives with often rather similar persona.

Concomitantly, Americans' faith in the country's political system has dropped sharply. A 1991 poll found that almost half of all Americans (46 percent) believed that quite a few government officials were crooked, up from under 30 percent in the late 1950s. Further, 54 percent felt that the level of ethics and honesty had fallen in the past decade, and 59 percent didn't think that "public officials care much what people like me think," twice the number compared with the late fifties.

In the financial markets there is great confusion about whether insider trading is unethical, a practice that has caught the public eye. Other dubious practices are rampant, from "cornering the market" to churning accounts. James B. Stewart, an editor of *The Wall Street Journal* (hardly a hotbed of left-wing radicals), called his book about the markets *Den of Thieves*. (If you need more documentation, see Michael Lewis's *The Money Culture* or read *The Wall Street Journal* during any given week.)

Too many businesspeople no longer accept the responsibility of *stewardship*, at the very least to leave their communities no worse off than they found them. They no longer see it as their duty to reach beyond furthering self or corporate advancement or to serve as trustees of a social undertaking. Speculation, cronyism, bribery, and raiding of corporate coffers have left numerous savings and loans, banks, insurance companies, and pension funds teetering on the brink of insolvency and have shattered public confidence, which in turn damages the country's economic performance. Deregulated

airlines have become less safe and monopolistic. Drug companies have continued to market drugs and devices such as silicone breast implants, artificial heart valves, and pacemakers long after they had found them to be unsafe. The list goes on.

Some argue that there is no pervasive moral erosion with America today but that we have become more attentive to moral abuses. For instance, they point out that there is less discrimination now against minorities and women than there was thirty years ago, not to mention compared with earlier periods. Instead of deliberate discrimination and disenfranchisement to the point of lynching, there are scores upon scores of black elected officials, and sheriffs, even in the Deep South. American males are learning that rape is a crime of violence and not something that women subconsciously ask for; they are even becoming more aware of the meaning of sexual harassment.

Others point out that matters are much worse in other countries, and not just in the Third World. Fair enough. We should acknowledge that we have made progress and that our standards in many areas are higher than those of countries such as Italy and France (say, in tax morality) and Japan (outright corruption and cronyism). This takes away nothing from the observation that in private matters such as family relations and business transactions and in public spheres from elected office to voluntary organizations, our moral foundations are crumbling, and shoring up is overdue. The fact that some others in some areas are less ethical than we are does not belie the fact that our morality in key areas has been corroded.

Similarly, it is true that throughout history, parents, especially fathers, have run off and left their children behind. But since the sixties we have witnessed a mass exodus of both parents from the home to the workplace. The members of the younger generation cannot learn the difference between right and wrong if they're left alone at home while their parents are out pursuing their careers and do not find the time required to educate them. Traders have surely shortchanged customers, and merchants have tipped the scales in their favor from the first days bazaars were open. But no economy can thrive when greed is so overpowering that few have a motive to invest in the long run and the highest rewards go to those who engage in financial manipulations rather than constructive enter-

prises

Elected representatives may well have had extramarital affairs ever since the Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia, and many may well have imbibed more liquor than is proper for anyone. But the fact is that the personal conduct of many of today's elected officials provides a rather poor role model for us to emulate, and many legislators are in the pockets of special interests to an extent that is highly troubling to anyone concerned about the integrity and well-being of American democracy.

To put it in more general terms: *No society can function well unless most of its members "behave" most of the time because they voluntarily heed their moral commitments and social responsibilities.* There can never be enough police and FBI, IRS, and customs agents, inspectors, and accountants to monitor the billions of transactions that occur every day. And who will guard the guardians? Even if half the society were to police the other half, who would police this vast police to ensure that it obeyed the law? The only way the moral integrity of a society can be preserved is for most of the people, most of the time, to abide by their commitments voluntarily. The police powers of the government should be called upon only as a last resort to deal with the small number of sociopaths and hard-core recalcitrants, those who do not have moral commitments or sufficient impulse control to heed those commitments.

Unfortunately the record shows, even after only a cursory examination of our world, that from drug abuse to corporate crime, illegal and immoral behaviors have broken through this important line of voluntary self-restraint. Large segments of the population do not voluntarily do what they are supposed to do. It follows that we must shore up our moral foundations to allow the markets, government, and society to function properly again.

Morality as a Community Affair

Conscience Is Not Enough

How do we shore up morality? How can we encourage millions of individuals to develop a stronger sense of right and wrong? First, it is essential to reiterate that morality does not soar on its own wings. True, the ultimate custodian of moral conduct is a person's own conscience. However, individuals' consciences are neither in-born nor—for most people—self-enforcing. We gain our initial

moral commitments as new members of a community into which we are born. Later, as we mature, we hone our individualized versions out of the social values that have been transmitted to us. As a rule, though, these are variations on community-formed themes. Thus, many Americans are more socially concerned and active than other nationalities, not because of differences in genes or basic human nature, but because social concern and activism are major elements of this country's moral tradition. If we were living instead in traditional Korea, the same energy would be dedicated to, say, ensuring that we conducted ourselves properly toward numerous relatives. That is, the mainspring of our values is the community or communities into which we are born, that educated us (or neglected to educate us), and in which we seek to become respectable members during our adult lives.

Most important for the issue at hand is the sociological fact that we find reinforcement for our moral inclinations and provide reinforcement to our fellow human beings, through the community. We are each other's keepers. As Common Cause founder John Gardner writes:

Families and communities are the ground-level generators and preservers of values and ethical systems. No society can remain vital or even survive without a reasonable base of shared values. . . . They are generated chiefly in the family, schools, church, and other intimate settings in which people deal with one another face to face.

When the term *community* is used, the first notion that typically comes to mind is a place in which people know and care for one another—the kind of place in which people do not merely ask “How are you?” as a formality but care about the answer. This *we-ness* (which cynics have belittled as a “warm, fuzzy” sense of community) is indeed part of its essence. Our focus here, though, is on another element of community, crucial for the issues at hand: *Communities speak to us in moral voices. They lay claims on their members.* Indeed, they are the most important sustaining source of moral voices other than the inner self.

Communitarians, who make the restoration of community their core mission, are often asked which community they mean.

The local community? The national community? The sociologically correct answer is that communities are best viewed as if they were Chinese nesting boxes, in which less encompassing communities (families, neighborhoods) are nestled within more encompassing ones (local villages and towns), which in turn are situated within still more encompassing communities, the national and cross-national ones (such as the budding European Community). Moreover, there is room for nongeographic communities that criss-cross the others, such as professional or work-based communities. When they are intact, they are all relevant, and all lay moral claims on us by appealing to and reinforcing our values.

But, we are asked, given the multiple communities to which people belong (the places where they live and work, their ethnic and professional associations, and so on), can't a person simply choose at will which moral voice to heed? Aren't people using the values of one community to free themselves from obligations that others may press on them—leaving them free to do what they fancy? It is true that you can to some extent play these multiple affiliations against one another, say, spend more time with friends at work when people in the neighborhood became too demanding. However, societies in which different communities pull in incompatible directions on basic matters are societies that experience moral confusion; have moral voices that do not carry. We need—on all levels, local, national—to agree on some basics.

The Community as a Moral Voice

How can the moral voice of the community function when it is well articulated and clearly raised?

I lived for a year on the Stanford University campus. Not far from the house I rented was a four-way stop sign. Each morning I observed a fairly heavy flow of traffic at the intersection. Still, the cars carefully waited their turns to move ahead, as they were expected to. The drivers rarely moved out of turn, and in those cases when they did, the offenders often had out-of-state license plates. The main reason for the good conduct: practically everyone in the community knew who was behind the wheel. If someone rushed through, he or she could expect to be the subject of some mild ribbing at the faculty club, supermarket, or local movie theater

(such as "You must have been in an awful rush this morning"). This kind of community prodding usually suffices to reinforce the proper behavior that members of the community acquire early—in this case, observing safe traffic patterns.

When I first moved to a suburb of Washington, D.C., I neglected to mow my lawn. One neighbor asked politely if I needed "a reference to a good gardener." Another pointed out that unless we all kept up the standards of the neighborhood, we would end up with an unsightly place and declining property values. Soon after I moved into a downtown cooperative building, the tenants were sent memos that reminded us to sort our garbage. Various exhortations were used ("It is good for the environment"), and a floor representative was appointed to "oversee" compliance. I never found out what the representative actually did; the very appointment and reminders seemed sufficient for most residents to attend to their trash properly.

It might be said that I have lived in middle-class parts. It is well established, however, that many working-class and immigrant communities—to the extent that they are intact—uphold their values. These are often further modulated and backed up by the ethnic groups. Thus the specific values may differ from a Cuban to an Irish neighborhood, or from an Asian to a black one, but all communities sustain values. Their concerns may vary from what is the proper way to conduct a wake or a confirmation to how much help a new immigrant can expect or whether a local shopkeeper will hire illegal aliens. But it is mainly in instances in which there is no viable community, in which people live in high-rise buildings and do not know one another, in some city parts in which the social fabric is frayed, and in situations in which people move around a lot and lose most social moorings, that the social underpinnings of morality are lost.

The examples of moral voices that carry that I have cited so far are about matters of limited importance, such as lawns and garbage. Hence, community responses to those who disregard the shared values have been appropriately mild. When people misbehave in more serious ways, the community's response tends to be stronger, especially when the community is clear about what is right and wrong. If someone's child speeds down the street as though there were no tomorrow or throws beer bottles at passersby, the rebuke

is appropriately sharper. People may say to parents "We are all deeply troubled about what happened the other day when you were not home" or "For the sake of the safety of all of us, we [meaning you] must find a way to ensure that this will not happen again." Basketball star David Robinson once explained to a TV interviewer that instead of telling everybody that "you are great," he "gets into the face" of those who need to be told right from wrong. Americans brought up on Dale Carnegie, anxious never to give offense, may find such an approach a bit moralistic. Well, as I see it, *what we need now is less "how to win friends and influence people" and more how to restore the sway of moral voices.*

Most important, the moral voice does not merely censure; it also blesses. We appreciate, praise, recognize, celebrate, and toast those who serve their communities, from volunteer fire fighters to organizers of neighborhood crime watches. Members of a neighborhood constantly share tales of how wonderful it was that this or that individual organized a group to take care of the trees on the side of the road, rushed to welcome the new families that escaped from Iran, or whatever. It is these positive, fostering, encouraging, yet effective moral voices that we no longer hear with sufficient clarity and conviction in many areas of our lives.

The Fear of Moral Claims

Often when I speak about the need to shore up the moral voice of our communities, I observe a sense of unease. Americans do not like to tell other people how to behave. I first ran into the fear many liberal people have of formulating and expressing moral claims, of articulating the moral voice of the community, when I taught at Harvard. A faculty seminar was conducted on the ethical condition of America. The first session was dedicated to a discussion of what our agenda should be. I suggested a discussion of the moral implications of the decline of the American family. Nobody objected, but nobody picked up on the idea, either; it was politely but roundly ignored. When I later asked two members of the seminar why my suggestion had been accorded such a quiet burial, they explained that they (and presumably other members of the seminar) were uncomfortable discussing the subject. "If a high-profile group of ethicists at Harvard would form a consensus on the matter, it might

put a lot of pressure on people, and it might even be used to change the laws [on divorce]."

Sociologist M. P. Baumgartner found that in an American suburb he studied in the 1980s, people who observed minor violations of conduct often simply ignored them rather than express their displeasure. If the violations were somewhat serious, people tended to ostracize the offenders without explanation. If they did confront a miscreant—say, a person who burned chicken feathers in his backyard and stank up the neighborhood, mowed the lawn early in the morning, or left a barking dog out at night—they were likely to ask him to cease the behavior as a *favor* to them, rather than labeling it as something a decent person would not do.

This disinclination to lay moral claims undermines the daily, routine social underwriting of morality. It also hinders moral conduct in rather crucial situations.

During a conference on bone-marrow transplants, a psychiatrist argued that it was not proper to ask one sibling for a bone-marrow donation for another sibling, despite the fact that making such a donation does not entail any particular risk. His reason was that the sibling who refused might feel guilty, especially if as a result the brother or sister died. On the contrary, a Communitarian would argue that siblings should be asked in no uncertain terms to come to the rescue. If they refuse, they *should* feel guilty.

When I discuss the value of moral voices, people tell me they are very concerned that if they lay moral claims, they will be perceived as self-righteous. If they mean by "self-righteous" a person who comes across as without flaw, who sees himself as entitled to dictate what is right (and wrong), who lays moral claims in a sanctimonious or pompous way—there is good reason to refrain from such ways of expressing moral voices. But these are secondary issues that involve questions of proper expressions and manner of speech.

At the same time we should note that given our circumstances, our society would be much better off if some of its members sometimes erred on the side of self-righteousness (on which they are sure to be called) than be full of people who are morally immobilized by a fear of being considered prudish or members of a "thought police." I personally regret occasions I did not speak up about some foul tricks Japan plays on us, because I feared being called a Japan basher; I should have called it the way I saw it. And I realize that

when I speak of the value of the two-parent family, many of my single-parent friends frown. I do not mean to put them down, but their displeasure should not stop me or anybody else from reporting what we see as truthful observations and from drawing morally appropriate conclusions. It is my contention that *if we care about attaining a higher level of moral conduct than we now experience, we must be ready to express our moral sense*, raise our moral voice a decibel or two. In the silence that prevails, it may seem as if we are shouting; actually we are merely speaking up.

As more and more of us respond to the claims that we ought to assume more responsibilities for our children, elderly, neighbors, environment, and communities, moral values will find more support. Although it may be true that markets work best if everybody goes out and tries to maximize his or her own self-interest (although that is by no means a well-proven proposition), moral behavior and communities most assuredly do not. They require people who care for one another and for shared spaces, causes, and future. Here, clearly, it is better to give than to take, and the best way to help sustain a world in which people care for one another—is to care for some. The best way to ensure that common needs are attended to is to take some responsibility for attending to some of them.

To object to the moral voice of the community, and to the moral encouragement it provides, is to oppose the social glue that helps hold the moral order together. It is unrealistic to rely on individuals' inner voices and to expect that people will invariably do what is right completely on their own. Such a radical individualistic view disregards our social moorings and the important role that communities play in sustaining moral commitments. Those who oppose statism must recognize that communities require some ways of making their needs felt. They should welcome the gentle, informal, and—in contemporary America—generally tolerant voices of the community, especially given that the alternative is typically state coercion or social and moral anarchy.

True, there have been occasions in the past when community voices were stridently raised to justify coercion. More than forty years ago, for example, America experienced the nightmare of McCarthyism. Likewise the memory of the real Ku Klux Klan (today's Klansmen are largely a defanged and pathetic bunch) serves to warn

us against the excesses of community. A colleague asks: "What if the community demands that children with AIDS not be allowed to attend public schools, or that a family of color not be allowed to buy a home in a neighborhood?" (One might add, what if the community decided to burn books?) In response I suggest that no community has a right to violate higher-order values, values that we all should share as a society, or even humanity, values that prescribe rules of behavior such as "Do unto others only as you wish others would do unto you."

Moreover, we do constantly need to be on guard against self-centered communities, just as we need to watch out for self-centered individuals. (I'll discuss ways to be on guard later in this book.) However, we do not forgo cars just because some drive them dangerously. The same holds, many times over, for the moral voices of communities. The fact that those voices are to be raised in moderation, and only in ways that do not violate overarching values, should not hide the fact that we cannot be a civil and decent society without a moral voice. Try the following mental experiment: Ask yourself what the alternatives are to the exercise of moral voices. There are only two: a police state, which tries to maintain civic order by brute force, or a moral vacuum in which anything goes.

Look also at the historical condition we are in. As we have seen, at this particular stage in our history signs of moral deficiencies abound, while incidents of excessive moralism are few and far between. The fact is that many thousands of communities keep all kinds of books in their libraries, while each year not more than a handful try to ban them; and most of them are stopped from proceeding by those who are committed to our liberties. True, ugly and deeply disturbing incidents of racial hatred and other forms of bigotry (such as gay bashing) continue, especially in some cities. Unfortunately they grab headlines, leaving the impression that they are the norm. Actually there are hundreds of places in which people of different backgrounds, orientations, and persuasions work and live together peacefully. In short, excessive moralism is not exactly our current problem.

In principle there is no reason to deny that there are always the twin dangers of too much and too little social pressure. As when we ride a bike, we need to lean in the opposite direction of where the course of social history is tilting us. The bulk of the evidence shows

that in recent decades we have been tilting too far in the direction of letting everybody do their own thing or pursue their own interests and have concerned ourselves too little with our social responsibilities and moral commitments. It is time to set things aright.

What About "Coercion"?

Many Radical Individualists *confuse the right to be free from government intrusion with a nonexistent "right" to be exempt from the moral scrutiny of one's peers and community.* Any form of social encouragement or pressure is quickly branded "coercion." Jonathan Rauch, who is writing a book on this subject, discusses the uproar that ensued at Georgetown University Law School after publication of a campus newspaper article that had alleged that the school admits blacks who are much less qualified than whites. The uproar was interpreted correctly as pressure on the law school to treat all applicants as equal. Whether or not one agrees with this position, all we have here is speech. Those who objected to this view, however, were quick to brand it as violence. One student declares that the "article is assaultive. People were injured." On another occasion, Duke professor Stanley Fish commented: "[President Bush] talks about the assault on free speech on campus. . . . What he doesn't note is that the speech that is being assaulted is itself assaultive speech. . . ."

As I see it, suasion is not coercion, because coercion entails the use of force. Moral suasion carries no threat of imprisonment, deportation, physical harm to one's loved ones, or even destruction of property. As a result, the ultimate decision of how to conduct oneself when one is subject to suasion, as distinct from coercion, rests with the individual. Ultimately, most times if a person does not accede to the community's moral urgings, nobody will make the person "behave." He or she may not be invited over for coffee or be asked to sit at the head of the table during community celebrations, and people may even refuse to chat over the back fence or at the store or bar, but typically this is more or less as far as it goes.

Branding these moral expressions "coercion" and putting them in the same category as taking someone by the scruff of the neck and carrying him off, say, to a forced labor camp until he toes the line is to confuse the normal social give-and-take with the tactics of

a police state. True, sometimes moral suasion turns into violence (although these are the exceptions to the rule); we must oppose such violence with the full conviction of our moral voice, but without eliminating the essential moral expressions.

It is crucial not to confuse strong moral expressions with the use of violence, precisely because we do not want to allow the first to spill over into the second. Thus, Anne Sinclair, a French television journalist, confounds the two realms when she asks (given all the attention that has been paid to American politicians' extramarital affairs) if "one [can] still court a woman in America in 1992 without moral terrorism winning a complete victory." Whether or not you believe that sexual adventurism should disqualify a person from public office is a completely legitimate, appropriate topic. Use of terror to advance your values in a democratic society is illegitimate and abhorrent.

Much of what Communitarians favor has little to do with laws and regulations, which ultimately draw on the coercive powers of the state, but with being active members of a community. Whether the activity is learning cardiopulmonary resuscitation (or CPR, which allows someone to restart a failing heart) or forming or joining a neighborhood crime watch, members of communities make them work for one another. In the past—and, to a lesser extent, today—ethnic associations bore a great deal of the burden of absorbing new immigrants. These seriously social activities nourish vital parts of the community, making its members true participants in its shared life and allowing them to draw significant parts of their inner lives and satisfaction from serving one another and their common causes.

Does that mean that every act of moral observance is completely and purely voluntary? The answer is yes, if by "voluntary" acts we mean those propelled by moral voices within the community that are neither forced nor motivated by the threat of a lawsuit or a gun, nor accompanied by a fist or other violence, nor driven by the state. If by "voluntary" we mean, however, that people do right only out of the goodness of their hearts, that inner drives and pangs of conscience are the wellsprings of their actions, then moral acts egged on by moral voices of the community do not qualify.

Take the example of a charity fund-raiser. People of means are invited to participate, knowing full well that they will be asked to

make hefty contributions to pay, say, for soup kitchens and mobile clinics for the homeless. They attend the function in part because they feel it is morally proper to contribute, in part because they like the recognition, and in part because they expect to spend the time with friends and maybe even make some new business contacts—or find a date. During the event they come under some social “pressure” to contribute more than they had originally intended to give—assuming they came with a clear limit in mind, which is often not the case. Perhaps it’s the excitement or because others have contributed more and they are embarrassed to be less generous—the result is that they end up pledging more than they had intended, to a cause to which they were committed long before they came to the fund-raiser. It would be foolish to call such behavior “coerced.” We should not be troubled by such mild social pressure; it is an essential part of the moral life of a community. Only when it is used for immoral purposes (for example, to pressure teenagers to become sexually active when they are unwilling) or becomes excessive (such as excommunicating people for their beliefs) need we concern ourselves.

To put it differently, to the extent that we have lost community, we need to rebuild it, not only because community life is a major source of satisfaction of our deeper personal needs, but because the social pressures community brings to bear are a mainstay of our moral values.

“The Puritans Are Coming”

In the early nineties Communitarians began to call for a moral recommitment and were gratified by the positive response we received. But as soon as there were signs that Americans were again inclined to lay moral claims on one another and to express their moral concerns somewhat more firmly, critics raised the specter of a moral police. They dubbed the fledgling movement “neopuritanism” and depicted our rather gentle proddings as the work of zealots and meddlesome busybodies.

A summer 1991 cover story in *Time* magazine railed against the dangers of busybodies “humorlessly imposing on others arbitrary (meaning their own) standards of behavior, health and thought.” The London *Economist* cautioned against dangers associated with

trying to legislate our social problems out of existence. Both labeled this new wave of American morality a form of puritanism. Let me first acknowledge that puritanism is a potential danger for the Communitarian movement. Puritanism, at its worst, was a rigid social order maintained through fear and conformity and denying dissent. Even in our age a community may get carried away and make its moral consensus too tight and too imposing, as one can readily see in Saudi Arabia, where women must robe almost their entire bodies and cannot go out alone if they are single. In Iran, until recently, special officials called *komitehs* patrolled the streets to ensure that no sign of hair showed from beneath the *chador*, not to mention other parts of the female anatomy. In an earlier period in the United States, such excesses were found in Salem, Massachusetts, where, some argue, puritanism led to witch-hunts, as depicted in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*.

Critics are correct to point to the hypothetical danger that a small number of American ayatollahs could impose their capricious moral perspective on the rest of the community through loyalty oaths, condemnations, and excommunications. There have already been some attempts to limit the teaching of evolution (by insisting that creationism be given equal standing in schools), to impose specific prayers in public schools, and to close abortion clinics. But because the religious Right is generally in disarray—televangelism has been rocked by a series of salacious scandals, and the Moral Majority is an increasingly irrelevant minority—America is currently experiencing significantly less intolerance from these quarters than was often true in the past. Note, for instance, that juries refused to convict museum directors who displayed what Senator Jesse Helms (and quite a few other Americans) considered to be obscene pictures and paintings. (I should add that in my judgment the question of whether taxpayer money should be used to pay for such exhibits is a legitimate question. However, nothing should be done—and rather little is done—to prevent creating or displaying works of which many may disapprove.) The pressure to “bring God back into the classroom” (as if He needed an invitation from a government agency or a summons from a board of education to be present) is a matter we heard much more about in earlier decades than in the nineties. And no Pat Robertsons presented themselves as preacher-politicians in the 1992 presidential election.

When I discuss these matters on radio call-in shows, someone invariably brings up the fact that a few extreme pro-lifers attempted to close abortion clinics by throwing bombs, setting fires, and other acts of violence. (Similar acts have been committed by some extreme advocates of animal rights.) As I see it, this is not reflective of the way contemporary America typically deals with moral issues or questions of public policy. On the contrary, on most issues—from the right to health care to questions of what is the proper character for our elected officials to the amount of aid we should give to Israel or to Russia—debates are just that: debates. Moreover, the moral voices that have been raised recently—Communitarian early birds—tend to reflect the consensus of the community rather than the notions of isolated busybodies and moralizers. Thus we agree with one another that creationism will not be taught in public schools, that there will be no prayers in public schools, and so on. A new community campaign such as “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk” is another case in point. So are neighborhood crime watches, which continue to spring up across the country. While Radical Individualists keep warning us that these community activists will turn into vigilantes and chase minorities out of the neighborhood, the fact is that such incidents are very rare among the thousands of such neighborhood associations. The abortion issue is unusual in that the two camps are locked into an uncompromising, I-am-right/you-are-evil confrontation.

These days it is much more common to find so-called communities that have lost most of their moral convictions and in which practically anything goes and most people attend to their own knitting, caring little about what goes on around them.

No matter what the Radical Individualists claim, such rare incidents do not constitute nationwide trends. Thus a Penn State student sees in arguments that the placement of Goya’s *Naked Maja* in a classroom constituted sexual harassment (a claim made by one professor), “a puritanism [that] has created false and poor conceptions. . . . This prudishness is making it impossible for some people to accept a great (and old) work like the *Naked Maja*.” An isolated incident such as this does not make an American cultural pattern.

To demonstrate that America has become “the punitive society,” the London *Economist* writes that Americans “reprimand a

neighbor for kissing her boyfriend good night on the steps of her house and so lowering the tone of the block (as happened recently in California)." While I am sure that sooner or later everything conceivable happens once or twice in California, this incident constitutes no American pattern. Indeed, the storm of unfavorable publicity surrounding the event suggests just the opposite: the busybodies were widely reprimanded, and kissing in California and elsewhere continues unabated on doorsteps and in quite a few other places.

The *Economist* sites another example of rising American punitiveness: "if you lose your job you can sue for the mental distress of being fired." (No time or place was mentioned.) Although it is true that one can sue for practically any reason, it is extremely unlikely that a case could be won on such grounds.

True, there are a few potentially more disturbing incidents. To assess them properly, it is necessary to distinguish among three realms that are often lumped together: new or renewed values foisted by members of the community on one another; values imposed by corporations on their employees; and values that are underwritten by law.

Puritanism Within Communities

In some communities members put strong pressure on those who live and work within their confines to be religiously committed. They allow some leeway in terms of which religion their members may adhere to, but these communities will express concern, if not dismay, over those who are atheists or agnostics. (Nor will the followers of Islam or Buddhism be nearly as welcome as those who subscribe to the various Christian denominations.) Or local moral pressures may lock in some other value—for instance, making all those who are not married after a certain age feel inferior. But as long as these preferred moral expressions do not lead to discrimination against those who do not abide by them, not to mention coercion, they do not amount to puritanism. Those who wish to follow other courses may join other communities, form their own communities—or put up with the fact that many people in a given community will avoid social contact with them. This may sound somewhat intimidating until one realizes that one may change one's

community without changing one's residence, by joining a different social club, place of worship, and so on.

The best way to minimize the role of the state, especially its policing role, is to enhance the community and its moral voice. If most of us, most of the time, observed the speed limit, especially near schools and where children play, there would be much less need for police. If we basically paid our share of the taxes due, there would be less need for IRS agents and auditors. If divorced fathers paid agreed-upon amounts of child support, there would be no need for the state to go after them. There are always some who violate what is right, and hence the state is unlikely to wither away, at least until very far-reaching and fundamental changes occur in human nature. However, such limited use of the state, for a handful of miscreants, is not the issue. What we must try to avoid is relying on the state to maintain social order, which can be achieved more humanely and at less cost by the voluntary observance of those values we all hold dear, such as driving without endangering others and paying our share of the communities' burdens. In short, the more people generally agree with one another about what is to be done and encourage one another to live up to these agreements, the smaller the role that coercive authority will play and the more civil the community.

Corporations and Their Puritanical Tendencies

The critics of the new morality, those who evoke the specter of neopuritanism, point to corporations that use their economic power to force their employees to behave. Businesses, they say, are insisting that their employees refrain from smoking, avoid drug abuse, lose weight, exercise, and so on. They bring up the case of a security guard at the *Los Angeles Times* who was dismissed, despite an excellent performance record, because he was overweight. And they tell the story of Janice Bone, from Wabash, Indiana, who lost her job at a company called Ford Meter Box. Why? Because she violated a company rule against smoking on or off the job. How did the company know? It insisted on a urine test, in which nicotine was found. Indeed, there are many similar cases.

Some of these measures may be prudent and hardly smack of neopuritanism. Thus, if a guard's potbelly is so overwhelming that

he cannot give chase, a corporation may ask the guard to lose some weight.

Moreover, corporations that explicitly inform persons who apply for jobs, before they are retained, that the job entails, say, drug testing leave the choice up to the employee whether or not he or she wishes to join such a workplace. (Economic coercion enters here only if there are no other jobs to be had, which is true only for a small proportion of the labor force.)

True, according such a free choice does not automatically render ethical and proper all corporate requirements. The courts have already ruled that corporations (and other parties) may not impose conditions of employment that are unconstitutional. For example, no one may sell a person as if he or she were a slave. Even if a person were to consent to such a condition, it would still be legally invalid and unenforceable. When the requirements are constitutional, however, prior notification that the job entails, say, computer monitoring of the quality of the work carried out adds to the legitimacy of the claims. There is nothing in the Constitution to prevent companies from insisting that their employees be sober and not high on drugs. (The Constitution bars *unreasonable* search and seizure, but drug tests for a large number of categories of employees have been repeatedly ruled reasonable by the courts.)

Much of the conduct at issue has clear consequences for others, and corporations may legitimately take it into account. For example, smoking affects not merely the smoker, but his or her co-workers; drunken pilots endanger not only themselves, but the lives of the airlines' passengers; and so on. Note that reference is being made to conduct that may significantly affect work or the public interest. I will turn to a full-scale discussion of the ways we may tell what is significant and where to draw the line when I examine the balance between rights and responsibilities (in part II of this book).

Much more problematic is the question of whether corporations may ban behavior that occurs outside the workplace. As a general rule, these prohibitions are appropriate only if employees' private behavior significantly affects their on-the-job performance. For example, studies show that alcohol consumption impairs behavior as long as twenty-four hours later. Hence pilots may be expected not to drink for a given period before they come to work,

even if it means placing restrictions on what they may consume in their "free" time. Drugs that lead to unexpected bouts of hallucination or paranoia, such as PCP and LSD, may be banned at any time, at least until we know more about the duration of their effects. By the same criteria, private behavior that cannot be shown to affect on-the-job performance should not be corporations' business.

Finally, there remains the question of the propriety of corporations trying to control private behavior that affects only health care costs, a tab that they pick up. For example, a small property-development firm in Atlanta prohibits its employees from engaging in "hazardous activities and pursuits" such as skydiving, mountain climbing, and motorcycling. Best Lock Corporation of Indianapolis forbids alcohol consumption by its employees, even after work. The city of North Miami has a policy against hiring smokers. So does Turner Broadcasting. Fortunoff's, a retailer, charges employees who smoke \$12.50 more a week for health insurance costs. Both Texas Instruments and U-Haul International also have monthly health insurance surcharges for smokers. Some states have responded by passing legislation prohibiting employer discrimination based on off-the-job smoking or some other legal off-the-job activity.

Should corporations attempt to regulate this type of behavior? Probably not. In fact, this may be a good place to limit the reach of corporate morals. An important criterion for corporate intervention—protecting the life and limb of others besides the offender—is not met, and if we go farther down this road, there is no stopping. Most behavior affects health costs in some way, and if we endorse this kind of paternalism, soon we'll see corporations insisting that we go to bed early, floss and brush our teeth regularly, engage only in heterosexual intercourse with one partner, and meditate frequently to reduce stress.

In short, when private behavior directly affects job performance, corporations may step in. Otherwise they should refrain from regulating the private affairs of their employees. This does not mean that anything goes after hours, only that the proper people to deal with private behavior are those who share in it: fellow family members, neighbors, and the community in which the behavior takes place.

By Force of Law: Shades of Authoritarianism?

Radical Individualists are particularly troubled by America's alleged proclivity to impose the new morality by force of law. They equate such laws with authoritarian tendencies. Government controls, states the *Economist*, are nothing more than an archaic form of Eastern European social engineering. Ira Glasser, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), wrote the following to *The Wall Street Journal* in response to a Communitarian article I had written:

It is ironic indeed that at a time when the early American idea of individual rights as the highest purpose of government is reasserting itself all over the world—in the Soviet Union and elsewhere—Prof. Etzioni would choose to revive in this country the profoundly dangerous and statist notion that individual rights and the common good occupy distinct and oppositional spheres. If this is communitarianism, who needs it?

Actually, a world of difference separates Eastern Europe's former Communist party regimes from ours. Laws in the United States are arrived at democratically and not imposed by a tyrannical government. They are limited in scope and are neither omnipresent nor totalitarian. Moreover their enforcement is subject to public scrutiny, democratic approval, and constitutional checks; gulags, secret police, and torture chambers are alien to the American scene.

Second, laws do represent, in every society, a proper method of expressing social and moral values and of signaling conduct that the community considers proper or abhorrent—even when these laws are rarely enforced through fines, jail sentences, or other coercive means. Mary Ann Glendon explains in *Rights Talk*:

At the very least, judges and legislators need to be more conscious of the radiating pedagogical effects of their activities in a law-saturated society. Lawmakers and law-sayers have more responsibility today than ever before to consider how their words will be understood—not only within a professional community schooled to distinguish between law and morality,

but by a wider public that experiences these spheres as overlapping and interpenetrating.

Thus we do not approve of adultery, and our laws used to say so, even if they were typically only "on the books." When we changed the laws that apply to divorce to make it "no fault," far from being viewed as a technical change or as way to make divorce less costly, many considered the new law to be one more indication that the community was less troubled by easy divorce than it had been. For much the same reason, if we were now to enact somewhat stricter divorce requirements, it would signal that we were restoring our respect for the family. It is important, then, to recognize the *expressive power* that law holds for the community's moral concerns and for influencing what is deemed appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Third, the law as a deterrent has its place in any moral order. Morality rests on intricate interactions among three factors: individual conscience, the moral voice of the community, and the state. Each one helps to sustain the others. Hence, while it is best to build up individual consciences and community voices, communities must on occasion fall back on the law. Without punishing those who do serious injury to our commonly held values—child abusers, toxic polluters, fathers who renege on child support, corporations who market unsafe drugs—no moral order can be sustained. We do not have to love the coercive side of the law, but we cannot fail to recognize its place as a last resort.

One example will have to stand for numerous others that could be cited: To enhance public safety, there must be fewer drunken drivers. To combat drunk driving we need, among other things, more people who fully embrace the notion of a designated driver (the way Scandinavians do)—that is, choosing one person per car who will not consume alcohol during an outing or party. This practice is best introduced as a social and moral expectation. For example, if both a husband and wife consumed alcohol at a party, they would be subject to social criticism (unless, of course, they carpooled). Those who stated with pride (as if they were saying "Look how responsible I am!") that they were abstaining—because they were designated drivers—would gain social approbation. I do not mean a standing ovation, but the kind of informal cues—such

as a nod or a word of support—that we are quite familiar with, but the importance of which we tend to overlook.

For those who do not pay attention to these Communitarian cues, however, we need to support sobriety checkpoints (rather than fight them, as the ACLU does) to help enforce the new social and moral tenets. Ultimately the changed moral valuation of drunk driving will significantly reduce the need for such checkpoints. Whatever state action is needed is to be limited to buttressing new or renewed moral values and those endorsed by the consensus of the community.

I do not dispute that authorities sometimes get carried away and impose laws in an authoritarian, even brutal, manner; the clubbing of Rodney King comes to mind. We need to be vigilant to protect one and all from such excesses. We cannot, however, oppose the rule of law because it is sometimes abused, any more than we can oppose government-subsidized school lunches just because people are sometimes force-fed.

Consensus with Rights (without Majoritarianism)

Another fear voiced by Radical Individualists is that the restoration of a consensus about what is virtuous—and urging it upon the members of the community—will lead to “majoritarianism.” For those who evoke it, especially the ACLU, the term *community* conjures up not merely the specter of “thought police” or of a minority of extremists imposing their immoderate views on the community, but a fear of a majority imposing its view on minorities or dissenting individuals. Some fear, for example, that the community would ban from public and school libraries books the majority dislikes. Note that the concern here is not that some local goon or national tyrant would take over, but that ordinary citizens would instruct their duly elected city council or school board to institute policies that violated basic rights.

The charge of majoritarianism was leveled specifically against Communitarians when we started a new publication, *The Responsive Community: Rights and Responsibilities*. ACLU’s Ira Glasser told *BusinessWeek* that “communitarian really means majoritarian. The tendency is to make constitutional rights responsible for the failure to solve social problems.”

Professor Tibor Machan of Auburn University, a philosopher close to Radical Individualism, writes:

Communitarians wish to place community and individual on a collision course, saying there is some kind of balance that is needed between the rights of individuals and the rights of the community. But if we consider that community means simply a lot of other people other than oneself, this simply makes for majority rule. And if we consider that such other people usually leave it to a few who will speak out in their behalf, that again means that we will have a few community representatives dictating to the rest of us what we must do, what our "responsibilities" are.

Actually, American society has both constitutional and moral safeguards against majoritarianism that Communitarians very much respect. These safeguards basically work by *differentiation*, by defining some areas in which the majority has not and ought not to have a say and those in which it does and should. We are not simply a nose-count majoritarian democracy, but a constitutional one. That is, some choice, defined by the constituencies, are out of realm for the majority.

Clearer among these is the Bill of Rights, which singles out matters that are exempt from majority rule and from typical democratic rule making and in which minority and individual rights take precedence. The First Amendment, which protects the right of individuals to speak freely whether or not the majority approves of what they have to say, is a prime example of an area explicitly exempt from majority rule or consensus building. It does not matter if most, some, or none of us agrees with you; *you* have a basic right to state what you please. Similarly, the majority may not deny any opposition group the right to vote; even Communists were not banned even in the days when they were most hated and feared. We are all entitled to a trial by jury of our peers, whether we are members of the majority or the minority. And that is the way it ought to be.

The Constitution and our legal traditions and institutions indicate clearly, however, that other matters are subject to majority rule. Thus Americans must pay their taxes, drive with a license, and

refrain from abusing children. It is inconceivable, and there is no moral and legal support for the notion, that everybody would be allowed to decide for himself whether or not he wished to obtain a license, how much taxes he would choose to pay, and so on. (On still other matters, we require a special majority—say, a two-thirds vote; these are matters that are not as fully set aside as individual and minority rights, but are more weighty than routine policy matters, such as overriding a presidential veto or proposing an amendment to the Constitution.)

There is more here than meets the eye. This constitutional differentiation between the realms of minority and individual rights and where the majority is to rule is not merely a matter of legal provisions. It is backed up by beliefs that many Americans hold dear. That is, differentiation is upheld not merely in courts of law, but also, most times, is underwritten by community consensus. Thus, when in the early nineties about 130 universities moved to ban racial slurs and thereby limit free speech, very few of the challenges to this approach found their way into the courts. The primary voices of opposition to any such codes were raised by editorial writers, authors (such as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in *The Disuniting of America* and Dinesh D'Souza in *Illiberal Education*), columnists (from George Will to Nat Hentoff), and many others who together comprise the main opinion leaders of America. They evoked a moral claim: We must continue to allow free expression of ideas, words, and sentiments even if it hurts the feelings of minorities and women. The majority ought not to decide what can be said; it is the right of each individual to speak freely. They carried the day in the court of public opinion. The so-called hate codes did not spread to most universities; several were canceled, and those that are in place are rarely enforced. (In the summer of 1992, the Supreme Court invalidated many of these codes.)

A similar mobilization of public opinion on the side of free speech occurred when an art show that contained sexually explicit sadomasochistic and homoerotic photographs, taken by Robert Mapplethorpe, came under attack. Among the photos in question were one that depicted one man urinating into another's mouth; three that showed penetration of a man's anus with various objects; one that showed a finger inserted in a penis; and two that showed children with their genitals exposed. Another source of controversy

was a show that included a photograph by Andres Serrano entitled "Piss Christ," which depicted a crucifix in a jar filled with the artist's urine.

Many Americans consider such artwork abhorrent. But the *moral* support for free speech prevailed, and the freedom to display these pictures was sustained largely through community voices and not legal steps. Christina Orr-Cahall, the director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., had to resign after a months-long debate that ensued after she canceled the Corcoran's exhibit of the Mapplethorpe photographs. The director of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati and the museum itself were acquitted by a jury on charges of pandering to obscenity by displaying the Mapplethorpe show. In short, community consensus need not conflict, indeed may underwrite, protection from the majority when and where it is called for.

We should also note that minority and individual rights within a given community are protected by the values of the society at large. Thus some communities may wish to prohibit selling houses to members of minorities; others bash lesbians and gay men; and so on. However, societywide values come into play to alert the communities' members that their inclinations violate fundamental values we share as a community of communities, as a society. And if moral suasion does not suffice, legal procedures are available to challenge local policies that violate overarching values to which the whole society is committed. For instance, as recently as the late 1980s a federal court forced the city of Yonkers, New York, to end its patterns of housing segregation, which were favored by the Yonkers City Council and, most likely, by most of the city's residents.

In Conclusion

We have seen that although American society is more moral than many others, and still has high standards in some areas, in all too many matters moral confusion or emptiness reigns. As no society can thrive without a moral order, especially if heavy reliance on the state is to be avoided, the moral voice—carried by communities that are intact or reconstituted—must be reraised. The moral voice is the main way communities keep moral order, other than relying

on individual consciences. Although there is a possibility that such voices may be raised too stridently, on most issues we are currently whispering at best. Moreover too many fear laying moral claims on one another, lest they be considered self-righteous. As I see it, just as we do not avoid swimming because some people drown, we should not hesitate to raise our moral voice, albeit guarding against excesses. Two major factors help keep moral voices within bounds: the Bill of Rights and those overarching values we all share that no majority or community may override.

We turn next to questions of how one refurbishes the moral order of communities: What is to morality as infrastructure is to the economy? What are the foundations that undergird morality? And how can they be shored up?

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Chapter 20

Communitarian: A New Balance between Rights and Responsibilities

Roger L. Conner

INTRODUCTION

Three key issues will be addressed in this chapter. First, in recent years the United States has experienced a massive decline in particular values that are critical to a healthy representative democracy. Second, the problem is getting worse because the decline in values is rooted in some of our greatest successes as a country--things we like about ourselves. Third, America's historic capacity for self-renewal is not exhausted; as we search for ways to reverse these trends, communitarian ideas offer a helpful framework.

A DECLINE IN DEMOCRATIC VALUES

America is in the midst of a massive collapse in responsibility for self and to others. Responsibility is a complicated word. Here, in this context, responsibility refers to feelings which impel us to voluntarily act or restrain ourselves on the basis of empathy for others, respect for community norms, and appreciation for the invisible hands of society that constantly protect and lift us. These are values associated with voluntary restraint, mutual obligation, and civic responsibility. The evidence of this decline is all around us. For example, in 1993 Daniel Yankelovich

reported on an opinion survey that asked Americans in which system of morality they believed. One system says that you should play by the rules even if nobody is there to catch you if you do otherwise. The other maintains that if there is an advantage to be obtained you should violate the rules so long as you incur no penalties. He found only 41 percent of Americans believe in playing by the rules. More ominously, while Americans aged 60 and older believe in "respecting the system" by more than two to one, younger Americans aged 18 to 24 favored a "beat the system" morality by almost two to one.

In his book *The Spirit of Community*, Amitai Etzioni reports the results of a similar opinion poll. When asked to list the most important rights they enjoy in this country, most Americans put the right to trial by jury at the top of the list. When asked whether they would willingly serve on a jury if called, a majority said that they would try to get excused.

During the savings and loan crisis, a member of Congress held a community meeting in her district. While she was explaining how much the bailout was going to cost and that Congress would have to raise taxes or reduce other social programs, someone in the back of the room stood up and said, "Wait a minute, why do the taxpayers have to pay for the savings and loan bailout--why doesn't the government do it?"

There are hosts of social problems that give us battle fatigue, including crime, the loss of safety and civility in public spaces, public housing that does not work, the budget deficit, family breakups--the list seems endless. All too often we talk about these individual social problems as if they were isolated, and we fail to recognize them as manifestations of a deeper trend--the collapse of responsibility for self and to others.

One way to understand the magnitude of changes over the past 30 years is to draw a graph, in the form of a bell curve, which portrays the entire population of the United States in 1950 with regard to responsibility. Out on one end of the base line would be Mother Theresa, my next door neighbor who has been ministering to the sick and the frail in her circle of friends for a lifetime, and dedicated high school teachers in inner city schools. On the other extreme would be the serial murderers and criminals who kill other human beings for a pair of tennis shoes and experience no feelings of guilt or remorse. In the middle are people who pretty much play by the rules so long as temptation is not overwhelming.

Next, using the same base line, imagine what the graph would look like today with respect to the same values. In the intervening years that entire curve has shifted in the direction of self-absorption and away from responsibility to the community. Statisticians say that when a bell curve

shifts, the percentage changes are much larger in the tails of the distribution. Thus, both the dramatic rise in grotesquely antisocial behavior and the dramatic decline in self-sacrificial heroes, which we have experienced in recent years, should be seen as warning signals that the values of our citizens across the board are shifting in the wrong direction. Some social critics see the increase in violent crime, to take one example of our most persistent social problems, as evidence of the failure of particular subgroups within our society, an indication that we need to work on *them*. To respond solely with tougher jail sentences for criminals fails to follow the first rule of effective reform: the hole and the patch should be commensurate.

This image--of an entire bell curve which has shifted away from responsibility for self and to others--is the only way to make sense out of the daily news. For example, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a fellow got drunk. He staggered past the parking garage attendant on the way to his car, went upstairs, wandered around looking for his car, and fell out of the garage. What was his response? Of course, his response was to sue the city because the parking garage attendant had not stopped him.

In Pennsylvania, there was the dentist who lost his license after being convicted of engaging in sexual relations with his female clients while they were under sedation. He filed a claim with his insurance company saying that he was entitled to disability payments because he had been diagnosed with "frotterism." The definition of frotterism is "the irresistible impulse to touch the private parts of women." So, therefore, this dentist considered himself a victim who should be given disability payments by his insurance company just as if he had taken a bad fall or developed multiple sclerosis.

And, from New York, comes the doctor whose medical school education was paid for by the federal government in exchange for a promise to work in under-served communities for five years. This particular doctor got to West Virginia and decided that West Virginia was a drag compared to New York City. So she and her husband filed for bankruptcy, seeking to have all of their obligations discharged, including their obligation to the federal government to serve in an indigent community.

Finally, consider the group of Americans who went to college on subsidized loans and then never repaid them. Years later, when the federal government instituted a program through which colleges could use the IRS to track down people who had not paid their college loans, the former students, now successful professionals, defended themselves in court. Too much time had passed, they argued (successfully!). Blame for their

default lay with the college for failing to pursue them more aggressively.

These are more than humorous and mildly irritating anecdotes. They are illustrations of a deeper trend, a society-wide shift away from the values associated with voluntary restraint, mutual obligation, and civic responsibility. If you wish to see a collapsing country, look about you.

THE FRUITS OF OUR SUCCESS

Unless we take action, this problem will only become worse, because the trends are rooted in our finest accomplishments as a country. The first cause is the sustained economic growth and stability enjoyed by this country in the post World War II period. Daniel Yankelovich suggests a phrase, "the affluence effect" to describe what happens when several generations in a row enjoy affluence and economic success without war, pestilence, or massive economic discontinuities. He argues that a slow and steady erosion in the value of self-restraint occurs. Depressions, famine, war, and disease teach entire generations that you do not just live for today, because people who live for today get hurt. According to Yankelovich in *Values and Public Policy* published in 1993 by the Brookings Institution, without direct experience of these maladies, "people . . . start to live for today and for their own self-satisfaction, on the assumption that tomorrow things will take care of themselves."

Yankelovich's analysis is similar to the conclusions drawn by historian David Musto of Yale University who studies drug epidemics. Musto explains that addictive drugs go through predictable cycles. In the early stages, few young people have direct experience with a particular drug. A large number of young people experiment with it, thinking that this drug, unlike more dangerous ones, will offer the benefits of escapism and alternative states of awareness without the risks of addiction. Experimentation leads to addiction for many, and their friends and relatives see the destructive effects at close hand. Use of that particular drug then declines until enough time passes so that the generation which lived with the drug is dead or otherwise unable to pass on the knowledge gained from their direct experience. Then use of the addictive drug surges, and society goes through another cycle.

Yankelovich's argument--long sustained economic success results in the loosening of social bonds--sounds more deterministic than it turns out to be. As with most trends, this one cannot continue indefinitely. Economic decline will follow social decline unless we do something about it. Like the frog in a beaker of water raised one degree per day, a society beset

with a decline in values may not sense the danger until too late.

The opportunity for geographic mobility is another blessing that has eroded responsibility for self and to others. Not so long ago, most people expected to live their lives in the same community, so that misbehavior carried lifelong consequences. Today, we have people who have been repeatedly convicted of child molestation moving to new states to work at day care centers. The chance for a new start is a great and liberating American tradition, one that no one is willing to sacrifice. It inevitably weakens, however, society's capacity to impose penalties for violations of community norms.

Yet another mixed blessing is the capacity of our economy to produce products people enjoy and to herald them through modern communications technology. A popular bumper sticker in Washington asserts "He who dies with the most toys wins." Every advertisement on television, every mail-order catalogue, every billboard pummels us with the message that more material goods are the way to happiness and fulfillment. If you become convinced by that message, what sense does it make to work for the interest of your community or restrain yourself in any way that reduces your earning power?

The post-war expansion in individual rights is another factor leading to the decline in responsibility. When I was in law school, we were taught that the way to solve social problems was to get them *out* of politics and *into* courts. There would sit the judge in his black robe, his (they were nearly all men in the early 1970s) faithful law clerk at his side and a huge black bag nearby. The judge would reach into his bag, pull out a bolt of lightening, and fling it downward, crying, "Discrimination, stop!" And discrimination would cease. Again he would reach into his bag and, again, fling down a bolt of lightening, declaring, "Housing, be built!" And up would go housing. All we had to do to solve social problems was to create a right, allow the people to go to court, and move on to the next problem.

It took me a long time to figure out why this model of problem-solving is so attractive to lawyers. It turns out that judges are nothing but lawyers dressed up in black robes. The "rights" model shifts the forum for resolution of problems to courts and away from the nasty, dirty, world of politics where we have to convince all of these unwashed, uncaring, unintelligent people. In our preferred forum, lawyers are king. We use a specialized language, and write on specialized forms. With rare exceptions, non-lawyers cannot even speak to the judge in their own voice, without the interlocation of the lawyer's questions.

One small problem which our law professors did not anticipate was how everyone else in the country would listen to what they were saying in court. The language of rights which we developed in court seeped outside the courtroom and became a part of normal discourse. Lawyers taught Americans that our rights are, to quote Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School, "individual, absolute, and disconnected from any sense of social obligation." Lawyers are often blamed for America's current fixation on rights. In truth, the language of the law only gave strength and greater momentum to a trend driven by the other forces mentioned in this article. The importance, however, of the lawyers' contribution should not be belittled. They gave the rest of society the words, phrases, and ideas to justify the thought, "I have a right to what I want." Thus, we have seen a steady escalation of every interest and every interest group seeking to elevate its interest to the status of a right.

To illustrate the process, there was a lawsuit recently filed in South Carolina to establish a constitutional right to pick your own doctor. The case arose when a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) discovered that doctors were using a brief stint on the HMO staff to recruit patients before setting up a private practice. So the organization added a restriction to the basic contract preventing any doctor who left for private practice from taking patients that had once been assigned to them by the HMO. Years later, a doctor came, identified a list of patients who she could woo, and sued, claiming that the HMO requirement violated the patient's constitutional right of privacy.

This escalation in the scope of individual rights which courts will vindicate is another example of how our positive achievements are weakening our society. What some critics deride as "the rights lobby" was extremely important to opening up the American community to minorities, women, and other excluded groups. It was not very long ago, for example, that a Janet Reno would have been excluded from law school. She would also have been ostracized for failing to form a family, and told to go home and raise children instead of being a hard-driving prosecutor and fulltime public servant. If this were 1950, she would not have been considered for attorney general, she would have been considered a failure. Blacks were excluded entirely from our definition of members in the community as were many ethnic groups, from Jews in Minneapolis to Irish Catholics in Boston. My house in Washington, D.C., which is less than 75 years old, bears on its deed a restrictive covenant, now stricken, preventing sale to blacks or Jews.

Vilma Martinez, the lawyer who founded the Mexican American Legal

Defense and Education Fund, was told by her high school counselor not to aspire to anything beyond a secretarial job. She would waste her time applying for college, said the counsellor who was attempting to be kind. Just ten years before I entered law school, a friend of mine applied to Yale Law School. She had excellent test scores, good recommendations, and top grades at Radcliffe. Her meeting with the admissions officer was going well. At the end of the interview she asked him, "What is my chance of getting in?" He answered, "Well, our quota is three women in each entering class at the Yale Law School, but I will do everything I can to make sure you're one of the three women." We need to be reminded of how far the rights movement has brought us in a positive direction. It is one of America's great successes, one the rest of the world's people eagerly hope to follow. But as with economic security and geographic mobility, it is progress with a catch. Neighborhoods which are trying to regain control over their streets and parks from crime and disorder are constantly blocked by extreme interpretations of the constitution. Virtually every interest group in society is trying to emulate the civil rights movement, arguing with great passion that to reject their argument is to deny their rights, all of which drives society further away from a balance between rights and responsibilities.

TOWARD AN AMERICAN RENEWAL

Our predicament today is loaded with irony. As argued above, crime, the deficit, collapsing communities, and disorder have been caused by sustained economic growth, a greater emphasis on the worth of the individual, and courts which invite expanded definitions of individual rights. Yet economic security, individual autonomy, and judges prepared to defend individual rights are *good*, not *bad*. No one wants to go back to 1950.

Seen in this light, the challenge faced by thoughtful Republicans and Democrats who value freedom is very complex. In most of our political battles we fight evils--such as racism or big government. Today we are called to a very different campaign, one which involves seeking a balance between competing goods, rather than rallying the forces of good against the forces of evil. Individual autonomy is a good thing, it is being fought for by people all over the world. It is not bad. It is good. What we must do is find a balance between the pursuit of individual autonomy and individual wants, on the one hand, and the fulfillment of civic responsibilities on the other. It is a little bit like riding a bicycle. If you

are riding a bicycle and feel yourself leaning in one direction and you overcorrect the other way, you still fall down. You only keep going forward if you keep your balance.

Three principal themes have emerged from the communitarian movement on how to lean in the direction of responsibility without overreacting. The first theme is that we urgently need to start a "multi-log" about responsibility. The word multi-log was coined by Amitai Etzioni, the founder of the communitarian movement. A multi-log is like a dialog, except that millions of people are involved in the conversation all at once. We need a multi-log about the place of responsibility in private life, public policy, and constitutional law.

From now on, whenever a right is asserted, we should immediately say, "That is an incomplete sentence. Where is the responsibility that goes with that right?" Just as every coin has two sides, a right cannot exist without responsibilities.

During this conversation, we should emphasize that rights and responsibilities are not like a teeter-totter, where one goes up and the other goes down. They are reciprocal. The relationship is like the oriental symbols, *yin and yang*. If one shrinks, the other will inevitably shrink as well.

People can experience freedom only within the security of a community whose members take responsibility for one another. Only then are people able to exercise their rights and share in the common experience of having rights that they themselves have rights. To live in a community where people do not exercise their responsibilities toward you is to live constrained and unfree.

An extreme example is a public housing development in Washington, D.C. The mothers do not allow their children to go out at night for fear of the drug dealers who rule the street. They put their children to sleep in the bathtub to protect them from random gunfire. Some pile mattresses against doors and windows for protection from gunfire. These mothers do not experience freedom. No matter what it says in the Constitution, no matter how much money is spent on lawyers to protect them against police and housing authority managers, these women are not free, because they are not embedded in a healthy community where people are exercising their responsibilities to one another.

Anytime we talk about rights in political conversations, we need to acknowledge that rights are not individual, absolute, and disconnected from social obligation. Quite the opposite, every right is conditional, limited, and embedded in a social context. Thus, when someone wishes

to assert a right, whether it is the right to health care, the right to smoke, the right to choose one's own doctor, whatever, the statement is not complete. The person must also talk about the limitations upon the exercise of that right, the social relations required in order for that right to exist, and finally, who is going to pay for it. Furthermore, a critical notion must be reintroduced into the discussion of what it means to be a successful person. The capacity for responsibility for self and to others is not only part of a successful life, but rather, it is what living a successful life means.

In New York, there is a job-training program called "Vehicles" for people outside the economic mainstream. Janet Avery Barrett, the founder, worked her way up from being a child in a single-parent household in public housing to head of personnel for a major New York bank. She argues that much job training today is not designed to help clients deal with the problems of their lives. When people come into her office, they are greeted by a sign on the wall that says "Step One--No Whining." Her philosophy is this: if you have a problem, it does not make any difference who caused it, you are the only one who can get you out of your plight. She has been criticized by people in the job-referral and job-training community in New York, yet she has a much higher record of placement than these other programs. She starts with faith in the capacity of each person; she makes demands on them, stressing that this is not an entitlement. "You are entitled to an opportunity to get up in the morning, to breathe the air, and that is where entitlements stop. After that, your life is your responsibility." The power of her convictions has infused in her clients the crucial idea that self-reliance is always better than dependency.

Another vital element of the conversation about responsibility is the assertion that service to the community through action is a part of what it means to be a citizen. Everyone ought to consider it his or her duty as a citizen to vote, but the obligations of citizenship only begin there. It must also be expected of everyone to answer, "What roles have you chosen in service to your community?" William James said action precedes feeling, and the feelings of community and connection develop through action, not just through talk. Service is perhaps the best way to restore those feelings of connection. Thanks to a bill passed by Congress in 1993, thousands of young people will be engaged in community service for the next two years. It is up to local communities, however, to assure the success of the program by providing young people with the opportunity to work together in diverse groups and contribute to the common good. Local initiative and

support, not government mandate, will enable this to be a true service-learning experience by which young people can gain understanding of social interdependence and the democratic arts.

This new conversation about responsibility must infuse discussions of private life, public policy, and constitutional law. As we rediscover a new language of responsibility we can take up the second aim of the communitarian movement: strengthening community institutions as problem-solvers. Schools need to become safe places for students, and their central role must be moral education, not just the accumulation of information. Churches and other neighborhood institutions must again see themselves as primary problem-solvers within the community.

One Church--One Child, a program started by Father George Clements of Chicago, is an example of this kind of initiative. One Church--One Child asks each church in America to find within its congregation a family willing to adopt a child who is in foster care, and it asks the church community to provide support that the family will need to assume the responsibility of raising that child. A testament to the ability of local institutions to address national problems by engaging communities, One Church--One Child has lead to over 40,000 adoptions in the past ten years.

More community institutions need to be likewise strengthened by finding ways for the community to speak to its members with a moral voice. The barriers to this step will be formidable. For example, in 1992, the City of San Francisco proposed to locate a new multi-service facility for evaluation and referral of homeless persons in the downtown area immediately south of Market Street. The neighborhood was already struggling to overcome crime, disorder, and urban abandonment. People opposed the new facility out of fear that it would attract homeless people to camp on the grounds of nearby federal property, urinate on sidewalks, sell drugs, and panhandle.

A local United Way agency called the South of Market Problem Solving Council, with representatives of all sides, negotiated a compromise. The local police officers would issue tickets to people sleeping in public places overnight, engaging in public elimination, aggressive panhandling, loitering for prostitution or drug dealing. They would also notify the counsellors at the multi-service center. The staff at the center agreed to counsel their clients, saying, "We're trying to be good neighbors. You can't do that around here. That's part of your problem, and let's deal with what causes you to be in that situation." The facility managers agreed that repeat offenders would be denied services.

Shortly after the agreement was signed and the facility was built, the

ACLU threatened to sue, alleging that the proposed cooperation was unconstitutional. For police to inform the managers before a guilty verdict, they maintained, would violate the privacy rights of the alleged violators. To deny service to repeat violators was placing an unconstitutional condition on a public benefit. As a result, the cooperative agreement was discarded. Similar facilities will be harder to locate in the residential neighborhoods of San Francisco in the future.

When we have gotten so far down the line that the people running a homeless shelter are disabled from learning of the antisocial conduct of their patrons in the surrounding neighborhood, we have disabled our community's capacity to speak with a moral voice to its members.

The third theme of the communitarian movement is to identify and defend public policies that strike a balance between individual rights and community responsibility. Communitarians maintain that the values associated with individualism and community are of equal moral weight. They are in constant tension, and to allow one to dominate over the other can only produce bad social results.

We need to stop taking good, pragmatic solutions off the table before we have a chance to try them. The San Francisco experiment mentioned above is a perfect example. We must permit and support public policies that restore the link between entitlements and rights on the one hand and duties and obligations on the other. For example, in Alexandria, Virginia, after drugs and crime had become rampant in public housing, folks instituted a policy that the leaseholder was responsible for anything that was done in their unit by family members and guests. Therefore, if a boyfriend or child was dealing drugs, the entire family would be evicted. The leaseholder could no longer say, "Well, I didn't do it, I didn't know, therefore I get to stay."

Jim Moran, the liberal Democratic Mayor of Alexandria, insisted that the people being harmed by the drug dealing and crime were the majority of public housing residents who were not involved in the drug dealing and criminal behavior. Moran wanted to restore the link between the opportunity to live in public housing and the responsibility to control your household. He was challenged by critics who argued that evicted families would be thrown into homeless shelters. He answered that his first responsibility is to the health of the community, in making it a safe place for the law-abiding residents to live and raise children, not to mention the long waiting lines of people anxious to move into public housing.

Interestingly, under Moran's policy there have been very few evictions, but the rates of drug dealing and crime have gone down. It turned out

that a clear rule linking the right to housing with obligations to protect your neighbors resulted in strengthening the hand of some mothers who were having trouble with teenagers, relatives, and friends.

Similarly, in Chicago, the Chicago Housing Authority began requiring that every person in public housing who is going to reside in the unit be on the lease because every person entering the building would have to carry an ID card or sign in on a daily basis. The first thing that happened was a flurry of marriages. The second result was lower crime, because it was hard to sell drugs out of an apartment if all guests had to identify themselves and sign in. Subsequently the ACLU sued the Housing Authority, claiming that metal detectors at entrances and a sign-in requirement for visitors violated rights secured by the Fourth Amendment and the Due Process Clause. The case is not yet resolved.

Until recently the State of Maryland did not have a mandatory helmet law for motorcycle riders. In the last legislative session, frustrated sponsors of the helmet law introduced two bills. Bill number one required motorcycle riders to wear helmets. That was defeated. On the same day, there was a vote in a separate committee on Bill number two that would have required motorcycle riders to carry major medical insurance before they could have a license to drive a motorcycle. You can guess what happened to that piece of legislation. It was defeated. In other words, motorcycle riders have a right to go down the freeway on a motorcycle with the wind blowing in their hair, and no responsibility is necessary to insure against serious accidents. The community is going to be responsible if someone without a helmet needs long term care after slamming into a tree.

REVERSING THE TRENDS

The collapse of responsibility is not an irresistible trend. America has an enormous capacity for self-renewal as a nation. The emergence of this communitarian movement is a reaction, a response, a recognition by parents and children and teachers and ministers that things have gone awry and that we need to figure out a way to respond. Happily, the leaders of this movement recognize that overreaction is just as bad as the original problem. What we are searching for is balance.

One of the highlights of 1993 for me was the testimony of five citizens who tried to protect the white truck driver pulled from his truck and beaten by a vicious mob during the Los Angeles riots. These citizens saw the event unfolding on television and recognized the intersection. They

got up from their sofas, got in their cars, and drove to the site to defend a man they had never met. Asked the obvious question by the prosecutor, one of the citizens answered, "I felt like they were hitting me."

What we need to regain in this country is the feeling--feeling is the key word--the feeling that when a problem exists within our communities, we "feel like they are hitting me," that we feel impelled to go forward to be part of finding a solution to the problems which beset our communities instead of sitting on the sidelines in a self-contained, self-absorbed stew. If five people in Los Angeles are willing to put their lives in jeopardy in order to protect a man who is being beaten on the street, there must be five million or 50 million who are willing to come back toward a very old and traditional American idea: that when there is a problem in this country, that we, the people, working together in little squadrons as citizens, respond. That is the core of the communitarian idea, one that may well turn this country around.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

12-11-94

Don Raul
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William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States
The White House

December 2, 1994

Dear Mr. President:

I am taking advantage of your incautious invitation in August when we were talking at the Styron's house on the Vineyard about what ails the psyche of the nation. I had just sent you a long letter full of analysis and advice.

Like everyone else in Washington, I have been absorbed over the last three weeks in trying to figure out what the elections mean. I have read and listened to the pundits, studied the returns and also the polling data, reflected on the positive response I have been getting as I travel around the country promoting the NEH's "national conversation" on the American identity and shared values (what holds this pluralistic nation together?), and I also had a long chat last weekend with an Anglo cab driver in San Antonio. The more I reflect on it, the more I believe my analysis of last August was not far off. Thus emboldened, I write with more advice that you said you wanted.

The dominant emotion in the voting booth was anxiety. One might even speak of fear, giving rise to all of the dangers inherent in a frightened electorate and a polarized climate. I will resist the temptation to try to identify here precisely what people are anxious about, not only because that would take up too much space and is being done better than I could do it by the experts to whom you have access, but because identifying a particular fear creates a temptation to try to assuage that fear with a public policy response. I believe very strongly that that is the wrong response for you in this situation.

What the country desperately needs is for a leader to define the moral context within which public and private actions can be taken to address our problems. We are beginning to hear other voices doing that, and the America being portrayed is cruelly narcissistic, atomized, and inhospitable, the natural issue of an impoverished brand of the self-help ethic. Only you can provide an alternative image of America, only you can counteract the divisiveness of the slash and burn approach to social reform. The central tension in American culture is and has always been between individualism and cooperation. I think the chief tenet of the centrism for which you stand is that there must be a humane balance between the extreme versions of either pole of that tension. Most Americans will agree with that, but you must define the choices in those terms.

The other voices that we are beginning to hear are draping their program in the robes of "personal responsibility", which we can certainly use more of, but what we are hearing is a harsh and uncaring model that ignores the needs of Americans who are vulnerable through no fault of their own. It will be divisive and mean spirited (build more prisons, revive orphanages for the children of irresponsible parents, allow more guns in private hands, refuse AFDC to unwed mothers, etc.), and its primary concern for the common enterprise will be expressed through defense expenditures. This is all a predictable swinging of the pendulum away from an overly permissive society, and it presents you with a very difficult problem of how to respond. At the tactical level, I hope you will say that we should not punish needy people but help them to become self-supporting and self-governing. By itself, however, this will not be an effective response.

One big problem is that the public has been convinced that government programs don't work. That is inaccurate and much too simplistic, but it is a widespread article of faith. I know that one of the goals that you set for yourself coming into the presidency was to make government work and to restore public faith in the government's ability to do its job. This is where we still need leadership by precept and example. Unfortunately, however, the problem goes much deeper and is not amenable to direct, rational, public policy treatment.

We are at a critical juncture in our history. People sense that something is fundamentally wrong. Whatever principled rhetoric you choose to use, you must, of course, acknowledge the public's anxieties. Much more important than the particular fears that people happen to focus on, and that pollsters happen to ask about, however, you must address an underlying sense of fragmentation in society, a sense of the incoherently rapid change of many elements of our lives over the last thirty years (racial and ethnic relations, gender roles, sexual behavior, family structure, the end of the Cold War, the values that guide personal behavior such as self-discipline, postponed gratification, responsibility, duty, etc.), and a sense of cynicism about the common enterprise. There has been a huge amount of change, pulling society apart, and there has not yet been a reintegration of society. (This is obviously a very large and somewhat complicated reading of recent history, so I have enclosed one of my talks in which I sketch it in a little more detail, should you be interested.) As one of my journalist friends puts it, if you think of the 50s as the thesis, the 60s were the antithesis, and we have not yet had the synthesis. Or, as Os Guinness writes, there is no common vision of the common good. That is what Americans hunger for, and only you can provide it.

I am therefore among those who believe that in your public utterances, you must rise above the tactical squabbles about particular public policy choices and let the country know what kind of America you stand for. Clearly, this is a time to show strength

of purpose and firm resolve. Beyond that, what is needed is nothing less than a restatement of the national purpose, a redefinition of the meaning of America. Whatever else you do over the next two years, I think you must talk a lot about shared values, not personal values so much as communal values. I realize I am advocating that you practice a rhetoric of "American exceptionalism", the notion that America has been chosen by God to exemplify a virtuous form of society (a "New Jerusalem" for John Winthrop in his famous sermon on the Arabella; "Democracy" for our founding fathers and the great national leaders from Lincoln to Roosevelt and Kennedy). You will recall to what different uses Ronald Reagan and Mario Cuomo put John Winthrop's image of a "city on a hill." This rhetoric is fraught with dangers but, delicately handled, it is powerfully resonant with the American people.

Just as important, we do need to hear about what we owe to each other as citizens, to balance the ethic of self-reliance with some notions of mutual help from our neighborly barn-raising and corn-husking past. We need to hear about our duties as well as our liberties. We need to be reassured that faith in American democracy still exists, that the concepts of liberty and equality to which our founding documents committed us are still animating the idea of America, that we are a single society that includes all Americans, and that we are capable of uniting "to promote the general welfare." Unless Americans restore their faith in the moral worthiness of the nation, cynicism and nihilism will continue to grow. Obviously, I would be glad to talk further about these ideas with you or anyone you would like for me to talk to.

The good news from my wanderings around the country is that I have stumbled across a nascent civic renewal movement that is real and is vital but is still too small to register on any social seismograph. You can give voice to that movement, thus accelerating its healthy spread. In the process you will also recapture the center.

Finally, let me say how deeply I appreciate your support of the NEH and the NEA, both in general and through such particular gestures as the prize ceremonies and White House dinner back in October. That means a lot to Jane Alexander and me. I know that we are in for a hard time with the new Congress, but we have bipartisan support (as well as some bipartisan opposition) and we will make our case as aggressively and compellingly as we can.

Lucy joins me in sending our encouragement to you and Hillary. When we saw her at the Blumenthal's just before the election, she looked exhausted, as did you at your press conference just following the election. I hope you both can find ways to balance

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your arduous public lives with some relaxation and private enjoyment. These are not great times for you, we know, but your strength, steadfastness and resilience are very much needed now.

With hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheldon', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sheldon Hackney

Comments of Sheldon Hackney
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities
At the Michigan Humanities Council
Twentieth Anniversary Celebration
November 10, 1994

I take as my text some words of John Dewey written about sixty years ago but still pertinent to our situation:

What Philosophers have got to do is to work out a fresh analysis of the relations between the one and the many. Our shrinking world presents that issue today in a thousand different forms. . . . How are we going to make the most of the new values we set on variety, difference, and individuality -- how are we going to realize their possibilities in every field, and at the same time not sacrifice that plurality to the cooperation we need so much? How can we bring things together as we must without losing sight of plurality?

THE ONE AND THE MANY -- that is my subject, the dynamic tension between an important pair of opposite tendencies in our culture. I recall being intrigued by something that the poet, Donald Hall, said in his televised interview with Bill Moyers. He recited a little poem and then explained it, only to be told by Moyers that the poem had an entirely different meaning to him. Hall confessed appreciatively that he had never thought of the poem in the way Moyers interpreted it, and then he said, "A poem frequently has at the same time the meaning the poet intended and the opposite meaning as well."

I was reminded immediately of Sigmund Freud's crack that neurotic symptoms are both punishment and reward, and I kept thinking about the implications of Hall's profound observation. It soon occurred to me that nature seems to be filled with examples of binary opposites that complete each other:

Male-Female

North and South poles of magnets, and of earth

The genetic code arrayed along strands of the double helix

So it is with culture, especially American culture. For every strongly asserted trait of national character, the culture appears to produce, perhaps as a reaction formation, its opposite as well:

Equality -- Celebrity

Hard Work -- Get rich quick

Greed -- Philanthropy

Materialism - Religiosity

Delayed gratification -- Instant everything (rice, coffee, soup -- we are the land of fast food, quickee divorces and drive-in churches)

The linked pair of American cultural opposites that interests me tonight is individualism and organization -- the many and the one.

One revealing American arena in which to observe the mutuality of the many and the one is baseball. I hope you watched, as I did, the Ken Burns documentary, "Baseball, A Film by ken Burns." It was a fortuitous gift this fall, a way of extending the foreshortened season. Because NEH was a major funder of "Baseball", I had an excuse to watch, so I did.

If you watched all nine innings of the documentary, all 18.5 hours, you will understand why the current strike occurred, why the season was terminated, and why so many Americans care about the sport. To be sure, there are those who say the game of

baseball is fifteen minutes of excitement crammed into three and a half hours, but the stately pace and reverential tone of the documentary are appropriate for an activity that is so woven into our communal lives.

Take, for example, the story of the Little League coach who called his star player over to explain about good sportsmanship. "Johnny," he said, "on this team there will be no temper tantrums, there will be no profanity, we will not yell derogatory things at the umpire, we will not insult the opposing players, there will be no sulking if we lose the game -- is that clear?" "Yes sir," said Johnny. "Well," said the coach, "if you understand that, do you think you can explain it to your father, or am I going to have to ban him from the games?"

In our fractured and fragmented modern life, baseball is one of the shared experiences that provides common ground for an increasingly diverse America. It helps to hold us together. Some wags insist that America is held together by the pursuit of sex, money and celebrity. That reminds me of the comment that Oscar Levant made about the divorce of Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio, "It proves that nobody can be successful at two national pastimes."

Despite the humor, baseball is a prism through which one can examine large areas of American social history: race relations in particular, but also immigration, gender roles, labor-management

relations, ideals of heroism and villainy, personal virtues and vices, and American national character. Baseball, the game and the documentary, offers a thousand and one morality plays in which we are instructed about human nature and the human condition.

More important, baseball provides a metaphor for the paradoxical duality of the many and the one. This is probably the central tension in our culture, focused as it is on the cult of individualism and self reliance in a country whose real genius is for organizing human beings into large-scale enterprises -- politically, economically and militarily. Of all our team sports, baseball is the most individualistic. Each player's performance can be clearly observed and statistically measured, yet the most important statistic is the team's score at the end of the game and its won-lost record at the end of the season.

When Bo Belinsky, a pitcher for the Angels, was asked to explain how he lost a game 15-0, he said, "How do you expect a guy to win any games around here if you don't get him any runs?" Each player's success is in some large measure dependent on the success of the team. It is now a cliché for a star who has won the batting title or the Cy Young award or been named the MVP to say he would trade in all the personal recognition for the experience of being on a team that wins the world series. The success of the team is important to the individual.

We all want individual recognition, but we also want to belong to something of worth that is bigger than we are. That is part of the romance of the many and the one. Alan Wolfe of Boston University has noted the tension between liberalism, understood as personal freedom from governmental or other external constraint, and democracy, understood as the will of the majority. This is also the tension between the many and the one. Wolfe writes, "The predicament of liberal democracy is that liberalism denies the logic of democracy and democracy denies the logic of liberalism, but neither can exist without the other." Too much liberty, one might observe, is anarchy and leads to the tyranny of the strong; too much democracy is authoritarianism and leads to the tyranny of the majority. The required balance between freedom and order rests on a mystical mutual dependence of the opposing ideals of liberty and democracy. That balance is so important to us that we should worry when it threatens to go awry.

Scholars interested in the problems of contemporary life and in economic development have begun to focus on what they are calling "social capital." They distinguish social capital from "human capital" (education, skills, training, traits of character, etc.) and from "physical capital" (natural resources, roads, bridges, communications linkages, means of production, etc.). Robert Putnam, a political scientist at Harvard University, did a study of regional governments in Italy to try to identify why some were successful and others were less so.

The variations in success were not strongly correlated with any of the usual variables of human or physical capital (education, wealth, resources, etc.) Success was statistically best explained, however, by measures of citizen engagement. Furthermore, the social networks of civic involvement seem to precede rather than to follow the success. This implies that the most important thing in making a neighborhood or a society or a college a wholesome place to live, and to provide improved life chances to those who live there, is citizen involvement.

This recognition of the importance of the village in the raising of the child would be unalloyed good news if it were not also true that in the United States every measure of civic involvement has been trending down for over two decades and is still in decline (voter participation, PTA membership, church attendance, visiting a neighbor, etc.). Contemporary Americans have fled from the public square. As John Staudenmaier suggested brilliantly in his talk earlier today, they are too psychologically exhausted by "media fatigue" to participate in the discussions in the public square. So, we Americans sit passive and isolated in front of our television sets, or at our computer terminals, or in our "edge cities" and suburbs, or otherwise in the pursuit of private and individual satisfactions. This flight is both physical and psychological.

No wonder we are living with so much cynicism and distrust! The downward trend in measures of civic involvement over the past

twenty-five years is mirrored in a Harris poll that has been taken continuously since 1966 which shows a plummeting level of confidence expressed by the public in the presidency, the Congress, the news media, and in every institution in American life.

Several weeks ago, the New York Times ran a cover story entitled "Antipolitics" in which the editors describe the public as being in a "sullen, surly mood." That mood is suggested in a series of stories, from which the reader could infer that the cause of the nasty public mood is to be found in such factors as stagnant living standards, rising crime, the proliferation of sources of news and thus the bombarding of the public with an overabundance of information, most of it negative, the dramatic rise in spending of special interest groups, gridlock in Washington, and impossibly high expectations of any President of the United States.

Those factors are undoubtedly real, but they are not sufficient to explain the long-term decline in American confidence as measured by the Harris poll (or a similar Gallup poll, for that matter). This is not the place to develop a complete explanation for what has been happening in America over the past three decades or more, but I believe any adequate explanation would have to begin with a recognition of the 1960s as a watershed in American history, a significant reordering of attitudes and relationships that have not yet been reintegrated into any sort of coherent notion of what the society is and where

it is going.

The sixties were years during which America took giant strides forward in social justice and inclusiveness, and during which countless subtle and no-so-subtle barriers to individual fulfillment were torn down, but the sixties had a dark side as well: self-indulgence, sexual promiscuity, drug abuse, and delusions of revolutionary transformation were all too prevalent. More importantly, even the positive changes had unintended consequences and perhaps unavoidable costs such as divisiveness.

All the social justice movements of the post-war era began in the decade of the sixties broadly defined, beginning with the civil rights movement ignited by the Brown decision in 1954, but including the women's movement, the gay and lesbian rights movement, the disabilities movement, the American Indian movement, and other movements on behalf of groups previously excluded from full participation in American life. These thrusts on behalf of social justice certainly ought to be seen as another proud step toward fulfilling the promises inherent in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, a step toward a closer approximation of the universal values in those great founding documents, but they also were occasioned by a great deal of social turmoil. The anti-war movement that was such a defining element of the decade was incredibly divisive, leaving tears in the social fabric that have not yet healed.

Furthermore, the counterculture that we sometimes think of

primarily in terms of styles and taste and music and dress was actually a frontal assault on the verities of the middle class. As middle-class culture is marked by planning for the future, doing one's duty, postponing gratification, respecting established authority, trusting the institutions of American life, and respecting one's elders; the counterculture urged us to live spontaneously and creatively without being imprisoned by the stultifying conformity of middle class life, not to trust anyone over thirty, to question authority, to recognize that human relationships are fleeting so personal loyalty and commitment are outworn virtues that interfere with self-actualization, and otherwise to live for the moment. It was an entirely different orientation to the world. Even though it did not gain the adherence of anything close to a majority of the population, it did influence attitudes and values profoundly.

Then, in 1973-74, in a brief span of months, three events occurred that shook the confidence of America in itself. Watergate, the Arab oil embargo, and the full awareness that we would leave Vietnam without a victory. America's innocence, traditional optimism and belief that all problems had solutions were fundamentally shaken.

Through the seventies and eighties, not only did the social justice movements continue to practice and profit from the politics of difference, but the individualism of rights-based liberalism competed with the individualism of material greed.

Christopher Lasch called it the "culture of narcissism" and Tom Wolfe dubbed the eighties the "me decade." Missing from the public discussion was what Os Guinness laments as a "common vision for the common good."

As we draw apart from each other in our private and perhaps self-indulgent pursuits, we grow suspicious of each other, and we become less capable of common action. It is a worry.

"Democracy begins in conversation," wrote John Dewey. It can not exist without a certain level of mutual trust, without citizens caring enough about the success of the whole to forego on occasion the rewards of atomistic competition. Two things are required if each of us is to be willing to subordinate our individual self-interests on occasion to the good of the whole: we must feel that we belong to the whole, that our personal fate is bound up in the fate of the whole, and we must see in that whole some moral purpose that is greater than the individual. Our problem is our inadequate awareness of what might be called the sacred order that underlies the social order and is the source of legitimate authority in the social order.

At an earlier defining moment in the nation's history, on the eve of the outbreak of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, speaking between his election and his inauguration, in Philadelphia in Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution had been drafted, found the

meaning of America in its mission of being the exemplar for the world of the ideals of human freedom and equality set forth in those great documents.

On that occasion, Lincoln said, "I have often inquired of myself, what great principle or idea it was that kept this [Union] so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the mother land; but hope to the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance." It was not only about slavery but about slavery as a violation of the principles of democracy and the sanctity of the Union, because with the Union rested the world's hope for democracy.

The Civil War thus became a test of whether democracy, with its promise of liberty and equality, could survive, whether the last best hope on earth could endure. Returning to this theme two and a half brutal years later at the dedication of the military cemetery in Gettysburg, Lincoln declared that defending the Union was worth the sacrifices exacted by that terrible struggle because the sacrifices made possible a "new birth of freedom."

The challenge of our time is to revitalize our civic life in order to realize a new birth of freedom. To that end, the National Endowment for the Humanities is sponsoring a "national

conversation on American pluralism and identity," on what it means to be an American in the twenty-first century, on what principles and common commitments hold Americans together and make it possible for our ethnically and racially and culturally diverse society to be successful as a democracy. Where along the continuum from melting pot to mosaic are we to find the appropriate image to describe an American identity suitable for the twenty-first century?

Through a program of grants, a film intended for broadcast on public television and use in the nation's classrooms, an interactive bulletin board on the internet, a conversation kit that will be made available to anyone or any group that wishes to conduct its version of the conversation, the NEH seeks to bring together unprecedented numbers of Americans to talk and to listen to each other about shared values and the meaning of America. It is a conversation in which all voices need to be heard and all points of view represented. Only in that way can we revitalize our sense of our communal life.

This will be a risky enterprise, because the NEH comes only with questions -- not answers. The outcome is therefore unpredictable, contingent as it is on the course of the conversation and what we learn from each other as we talk.

However large the task, I believe we must reconstruct networks of mutual engagement of the kind that will serve as

has been liberated from the demands of religious obligation and from the demands of society, it has also been separated from a sense of itself, a sense of personhood. Personhood derives from our relationships to people, groups, things, ideas outside of ourselves. Relationships that confer meaning inevitably come with demands or obligations or duties. Take away the obligations and you take away the relationships and thus you take away the meaning that is one's identity. One then becomes a rootless individual in a sea of meaninglessness.

I believe, further, that there is a master historical narrative in which we all recognize not only the stories of our kith and kin but in which we recognize that we all are playing roles in a common story, in which we are all linked to each other across barriers of time and boundaries of race, in which we share the shame of our mistakes and the glory of our achievements, in which the meaning of America is to be found in the common ground of its aspirations of liberty and justice for all.

[END]



THE PRESIDENT

12-14-94

Dear Sheldon—

Thank again for your great
letter and your speech—You're
on to something very important.

Sincerely

Bill Clinton

Mr. Sheldon Hackney
Chairman,
National Endowment for the Humanities
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20506

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Chapter 13

The Irony of Democratic History

E.J. Dionne, Jr.

Arguments over the history of the Democratic party are often as contentious as the arguments within the party that the historians record. This is not just because most contemporary historians are either active or disheartened Democrats. It is in the very nature of the Democratic party to be controversial, because over the course of its history, it has put itself to the service of so many diverse causes and interests. Most famously, the New Deal coalition united a militant working class with the most reactionary Bourbons of the South. The Jacksonian era was made up of a curious coalition involving quasi-socialist mechanics and a newly emergent capitalist class. Grover Cleveland and William Jennings Bryan were part of the same party in the 1890s, though neither liked that fact very much.

Philosophically, the party has been just as torn. The Democrats' Jeffersonian forebears were deeply opposed to the designs of Alexander Hamilton for a strong central government with an activist approach to the economy. Franklin D. Roosevelt quoted Jefferson on behalf of what at least some have seen as the ultimate triumph of Hamiltonian energy in the federal executive. The Democrats have gathered to themselves radical free market advocates and socialists, globalists and anti-imperialists, inflationists and the paladins of sound money, machine politicians and earnest reformers, slave owners and free soilers. One is tempted to take Will Rogers' famous line about the Democrats not being an "organized political party" and argue that this applies to the party's philosophy no less than to its campaign apparatus.

But this, as Richard Nixon might say, would be wrong. If there is a unifying thread through this complex history, it is the concept of "irony." The best definition of irony in the sense that it applies to Democrats was offered by the late Reinhold Niebuhr in *The Irony of American History*, published, as it happens, in 1952, the year that the New Deal era finally came to the end of its electoral road. Niebuhr is careful to distinguish between the ironic situation on the one hand and pathos, tragedy and

comedy on the other. These last three have all applied to the Democrats at one point or another, but irony works best. Niebuhr wrote:

The ironic situation is distinguished from a pathetic one by the fact that the person involved in it bears some responsibility for it. It is differentiated from tragedy by the fact that the responsibility is related to an unconscious weakness rather than to a conscious resolution. While a pathetic or tragic situation is not dissolved when a person becomes conscious of his involvement in it, an ironic situation must dissolve, if men or nations are made aware of their complicity in it. Such awareness involves some realization of the hidden vanity or pretension by which comedy is turned into irony.¹

In a sense, the history of the Democratic party can be seen as the effort of those who gravitated to it to understand and work out the ironies of their particular historical situations. Viewing the Democratic party in this light helps us understand why different generations of historians have viewed the party and its major actors so differently. The essence of irony is odd juxtapositions, and no party has been more specialized in odd juxtapositions than the Democrats.

The recent histories of the Jacksonian Era are revealing. The heroic account, *The Age of Jackson*, written by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in 1945 under the influence of the New Deal's triumph, presents Jacksonianism as the first large step in the ultimate triumph of democratic values—with a small "d" as well as a big one.² Jacksonians are seen as the backwoods enemies of urban privilege, aligned eventually with their comrades in the urban working class. The view of Andrew Jackson as a forerunner to FDR came under challenge in the 1950s from a group of historians, notably Richard Hofstadter, who, in Harry Watson's words, saw the Jacksonians as "entrepreneurs or 'expectant capitalists' who fought monopoly to advance their own fortunes."³ Writers influenced by the New Left cast an even more jaundiced eye on the Jacksonians—and especially on Jackson himself—by throwing light on Old Hickory's Indian policies, which by current standards (and even among Jackson's contemporaries such as John Quincy Adams) must be seen as racist.

The current view, championed notably by Watson, is far more complex and captures the full irony of the Democrats' situation.⁴ Watson notes that for the Jacksonian Democrats, certain basic ideas of equality went hand-in-hand with deeply reactionary commitments to particular inequalities. Jacksonians were deeply committed to the view that all *white* men were equal. In this, they differed from the Federalist and Whiggish views that society was divided into orders and classes—and more healthy for being arranged that way. The egalitarian side of Whiggery held that all

men, whether Native American or (for the northern Whigs, at least), black, fit somewhere into their continuum. Whigs were thus more resistant to certain racial notions popular among Democrats. As a result, New Jersey's anti-Jacksonian Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen could attack Jackson's Indian removal policy in language that still reads well in the context of today's attitudes. "Do the obligations of justice change with the color of the skin?" Frelinghuysen asked. "Is it one of the prerogatives of the white man that he may disregard the dictates of moral principles, when an Indian shall be concerned?"⁵ This view, not Jackson's, is the one that would receive the loudest applause at a present-day Democratic convention.

The irony of Jackson's Indian policy lay in the fact that it was a radically *inegalitarian* approach rooted in certain radically *egalitarian* ideals. As Jackson saw it, he was clearing Indians from the land in the interests of poor, white men who saw in that land an opportunity for their own self-improvement. Poor whites were clamoring for land, and Jackson meant to satisfy them.

A similar irony can be seen in the politics of Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln's famous foe, who was deeply racist, yet also outspoken in defending the rights of immigrants, especially Catholics, who came under assault from the Know-Nothings in the 1850s. As Robert Kelley notes in one of his essays in this volume, Douglas argued that Democrats "make no distinctions among our fellow citizens." By contrast, Douglas said, the Democrats' political foes had waged "a bloody and revengeful way against Irishmen, Germans and Welshmen."⁶

The ironies of Douglas' politics went further still. Having cast blacks as essentially sub-human, Douglas could offer his notion of "popular sovereignty" as the essence of radical democracy. For Douglas, what could have been more democratic than to propose that the voters in the new states decide for themselves whether to permit slavery or not? George C. Wallace's famous slogan from his Democratic primary campaigns, "Trust the People," was the essence of Douglasism. In the case of both men, one senses that the people they had in mind to trust were white.

Thus, the first great irony of Democratic Party history: The party of Jacksonian equality would essentially be untrue to its own creed until it worked through the implications of its racial policies. Until African Americans were regarded as equal partners—citizens—in the democratic experiment, their rights could be denied, even as Democrats did so using a political language that was, in theory, far more inclusive than the language of its foes.

The second great irony of Democratic history lies in the party's theoretical solicitude for the rights of the average man and its opposition to the "money power," even as it endorsed laissez-faire economic policies that allowed for no state relief to embattled wage earners. This was not

lost on all working-class voters. As Sean Wilentz showed in his fine study of the rise of the New York City working class, *Chants Democratic*, the first Working Men's Party rose up in opposition to the Jacksonians of Tammany Hall.⁷

Yet the radicalism of Jacksonian rhetoric was unmistakable. Jackson saw his war against the Bank of the United States as a class war, a battle against the use of government power on behalf of those who were already economically mighty. "It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes," Jackson declared in his veto message against the Bank. He went on:

In the full enjoyment of the fruits of superior industry, economy and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of procuring like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government.⁸

The class character of Jackson's rhetoric was echoed throughout the party, especially in the big cities, and especially in New York. This was true even in the 1850s, when the party came to see itself as the great conservative force in American life. Faced with a difficult re-election battle from a coalition of reformers that included conservative Democrats like Samuel J. Tilden, New York City Mayor Fernando Wood resorted to radical class rhetoric aimed at pitting the New York working class against the aristocrats who wanted the city to be rid of him. Amidst prosperity, Wood said, workers struggled "for a mere subsistence, whilst other classes accumulate wealth, and in the days of general depression, they are the first to feel the change, without the means to avoid or endure reserves. Truly may it be said that in New York those who produce everything get nothing, and those who produce nothing get everything. They labor without income whilst surrounded by thousands living in affluence and splendor who have income without labor."⁹ It is no wonder that the *New York Times* described Wood's message as "fiery communism."¹⁰

Wood's was a more extreme example of rhetoric that came to Democrats naturally, especially when they needed to rally the downtrodden. Even the conservative Tilden had resorted to such talk, especially in his younger days. As Kelley notes, it was Tilden who, in 1838, spoke of the wealthy as "an organized class which acts in phalanx . . . concentrating property in monopolies and perpetuities, and binding it to political pow-

er." This class, Tilden said, "has established an aristocracy more potent and more oppressive than any other which has ever existed."¹¹

The key for Jacksonians—beyond a lively political opportunism—was the notion that state power could, in the end, only ally with the existing economic powers. In the purest strains of Jacksonianism, to check the power of the state was to check the power of the wealthy. It thus fell to the Whigs, and later the Republicans, to discover the creative uses of federal power in promoting internal improvements, economic development and a stable currency through a national bank. To the Jacksonians, such projects could only enrich the rich—which did not much bother the Whigs.

The transformation of the *laissez-faire*, states' rights Democrats into the party of the New Deal just 100 years after the Jacksonian era is described well at various points in this volume. A central figure in this transformation, as John Milton Cooper Jr. argues in his essay, was William Jennings Bryan. It was Bryan who first saw the potential of applying the rhetoric of Jefferson and Jackson in new ways that would transform the Democrats, slowly, into a party of economic reform.

The opening for the Democrats was created by the collapse of the radical cause inside the Republican party in the 1870s. The end of Reconstruction in 1877 under Rutherford B. Hayes can be seen as the Republican party's decision to abandon the great reform causes preached by the abolitionists and free soilers and to remake the party into a worthy, conservative, pro-business successor to the Whigs.¹² Reformist elements would stay alive in the G.O.P. and have their day again under Theodore Roosevelt. But the identification of the Republicans with the cause of industrial capitalism alienated small farmers and, eventually, industrial workers.

Bryan, as Cooper shows, has been too often seen as a force of reaction, the champion of a dying rural, fundamentalist America. The truth is more complicated. Bryan not only upheld the cause of rural America—and later, during the Scopes trial, creationism. He also championed reform. His causes included women's suffrage, the popular election of senators, the federal income tax, a tougher stand on railroad regulation, a Department of Labor, the reporting of campaign contributions, opposition to capital punishment. The philosopher John Dewey, who can hardly be seen as soft on fundamentalism, saw Bryan as "the backbone of philanthropic social interest, of social reform through political action, of pacifism, of popular education."¹³ Irony was probably a concept alien to Bryan, yet his whole career was dedicated to helping Democrats work through the ironies of being devoted to Jacksonian populism on the one hand and *laissez faire* economics on the other. Bryan and his followers represented the first mass revolt against *laissez faire* inside the Democratic Party.

Cooper rightly sees Woodrow Wilson as the inheritor of many aspects of the Bryan legacy.¹⁴ Although thoroughly southern and conservative in his attitudes toward race, Wilson was the first Democratic president to express sympathy for the cause of organized labor through legislation. In the past, Democrats had largely appealed to urban immigrant groups on cultural grounds; the Democrats were the party of inclusion and openness to outsiders (so long as they were white). Wilson linked this cultural affinity to an economic program which, however cautious, further pushed the Jacksonian legacy in new directions.

The limits of the Wilson breakthrough, however, should be noted. Wilson's attitude toward monopoly remained, in many respects, Jacksonian in spirit. The goal of the Wilsonians was to break up monopolies in the interests of freer market competition. Wilson's "New Freedom" contrasted not only with Eugene V. Debs's socialist approach to the problems of industrialism—an approach which enjoyed significant support in the progressive era—but also with Theodore Roosevelt's "New Nationalism." Roosevelt's doctrine, developed by the social thinker Herbert Croly, saw monopoly in some spheres as inevitable and preferred state regulation, direction, or outright control to trust busting. If regulated corporations "survived for some generations and increased in efficiency and strength," Croly wrote, "a policy must be adopted of converting them into express economic agents of the whole community and of gradually appropriating for the benefit of the community the substantial economic advantages which these corporations had succeeded in acquiring."¹⁵ The Croly/Roosevelt doctrine was thus more "advanced" than Wilson's, being closer to the spirit of social democracy, yet also in the tradition of the Hamiltonian and Whiggish approach that sought to mobilize federal power in the interests of prosperity—and in cooperation with business. In this debate, Wilson was still on the side of his Jacksonian forebears.

Franklin Roosevelt saw himself as an heir to Wilson, and the New Deal—for all its incoherence—was in many ways the completion of Wilson's project. But pushed by the exigencies of the Depression, Roosevelt also drew into his orbit many of the ideas and individuals who had rallied to his cousin in the progressive era. Franklin Roosevelt largely completed the task, begun by Wilson, of coopting the Republican party's progressive wing for the Democrats. Roosevelt rallied Republicans and former Republicans such as George Norris and Fiorello LaGuardia—to name just two of many figures—to New Dealism. The New Deal thus represented an historic realignment, not only in electoral terms, but also in philosophical terms. In an analysis forever popular among historians, Roosevelt married Hamiltonian and Whiggish means to Jacksonian ends.

And it is important to see Roosevelt's more radical rhetoric not only as a response to left-wing challenges to the New Deal in the mid-1930s,

but also as thoroughly in the tradition of Jackson's bank veto message. FDR's 1936 attack on "economic royalists," on "the forces of organized selfishness and lust for power," and on advocates of "a new industrial dictatorship," cited in Alonzo Hamby's essay, help explain why Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. could trace such a direct link from Old Hickory to Roosevelt.¹⁶

Still, the New Deal left many ironies unresolved. Roosevelt, despite the view of his conservative critics, was no radical. There was a good deal of incoherent stop-and-go in his program, as Hamby makes clear. He was capable of using class rhetoric, as conservative Jacksonians were, in order to mobilize majorities behind a wide assortment of policies. In light of Roosevelt's success in saving capitalism and maintaining support for the two-party system, his achievement can be captured accurately in the subtitle of New Left historian Barton J. Bernstein's important essay on the New Deal, "The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform."¹⁷

There was the additional irony of the continued presence of southern conservatives and segregationists inside the New Deal coalition—and Roosevelt's failure to do much to advance the civil rights agenda. In fact, Roosevelt may have done far more to help resolve the Democratic dilemma over race than he commonly is credited for.

As Hamby points out, one consistency about the Democratic party from the days of Jefferson forward was that it has been, in one form or another, an alliance "between southern agrarians and northern city politicians."¹⁸ The crucial change, as Hamby notes, took place in the 1920s when the balance of power within this alliance shifted decisively toward the northern cities, culminating in Al Smith's nomination in 1928. The political power of the northern and urban wing of the party was augmented by the rise of organized labor, which gave the Democrats what Richard Hofstadter has called their "social democratic tinge." Southern conservatives already saw the direction of events in the 1930s. While they remained nominally aligned with the Democrats, they formed a powerful conservative coalition with congressional Republicans and, after 1938, foiled many of the New Deal's more progressive designs.

If southern conservatives saw the shape of the future clearly, so did African Americans, who decisively switched their allegiances in 1936 from the party of Lincoln to the party of FDR. The more social democratic aspects of the New Deal were of disproportionate benefit to the poor, and thus to blacks. With African Americans finally included in the party of Jackson, the Democrats' populist and egalitarian rhetoric took on a much more inclusive meaning. It would no doubt surprise Stephen Douglas to know that "popular sovereignty," as embodied in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, helped elect the first black governor of Virginia, a Democrat, and

helped make African Americans one of the most important forces inside the Democratic party, especially in the states of the Old Confederacy.

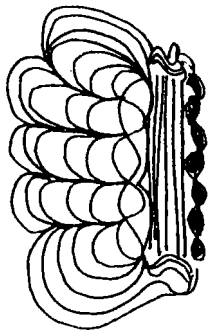
Once blacks were included in the Democratic coalition, the exodus of southern conservatives was inevitable. What is important to remember is that capturing southern conservatives had been the dream of one wing of the Republican party since the Civil War. No less a Republican than Abraham Lincoln, ever the "practical Whig," as the historian Kenneth Stampp called him, had hoped that the party could be refashioned along conservative, Whiggish lines. It took a century, but that is what finally happened. Senator Strom Thurmond, Republican of South Carolina, can thus be seen as a logical successor to Lincoln's friend, the one-time Whig politician and Confederate Vice President, Alexander Stephens.¹⁹ In working out their own ironies, the Democrats helped the Republicans work out some of theirs.

The danger of seeing Democratic history as a working out of ironies is not only that such a perspective might present too heroic a picture of a party that has traveled crooked paths; it also risks offering a mechanistic view that implies that a long series of events were somehow inevitable. It risks being parodied with Sydney E. Ahlstrom's wonderful tongue-in-cheek aphorism: "History had to happen the way it happened or it wouldn't have happened that way."²⁰

In fact, events often pushed Democrats in certain directions despite themselves. Had the panic of 1893 not happened, the conservative forces represented by Grover Cleveland might have overwhelmed Bryan. Had Theodore Roosevelt triumphed over William Howard Taft in the Republican party battles of 1912, the forces of progressivism might not have moved toward the Democratic party and toward the realignment created by TR's cousin. Without the organizing efforts of the left and labor in the 1930s, Roosevelt might have given the nation a far more conservative version of the New Deal. Without similar organizing by African Americans, the civil rights triumphs might have come later. There was nothing inevitable about John F. Kennedy's solicitude for Martin Luther King after his arrest in 1960 or Lyndon Johnson's boldness in pushing for civil rights and voting rights legislation in 1964 and 1965. These events fundamentally changed the character of the Democratic party—and by extension, the Republican party, too.

But as Ahlstrom might tell us, things *did* happen that way, and for a variety of good reasons.

Still, the fact remains that many of the ironies that have influenced the Democrats through history are still very much with the party. The struggle over race is by no means over. When the Democrats embraced civil rights, they not only drove conservatives out of the party, their approach also endangered the loyalty of what had once been the Democratic



heartland, the white working and lower-middle class. Democrats are still searching for an inclusive approach and language that could speak honestly to both constituencies simultaneously. This may be the ultimate irony of Democratic history: The party that so freely used racism to win votes 100 years ago must now diminish racism and calm racial feelings if it is to win presidential elections in the 1990s and beyond.²¹

There are two other ironies of Democratic history that seem especially relevant—and still unresolved. The first is a clash between two approaches to foreign policy, both rooted in a certain idealism that is easily attacked (or parodied) as moralism. It is the same clash that ultimately split Bryan, the great anti-imperialist who opposed both the Spanish-American War and World War I, from Wilson, the great internationalist who promised to keep us out of war and then fought “the war to end all wars.” When sentiment against the Vietnam War arose in the Democratic party in the 1960s, it was common for the war’s supporters to attack their foes as “isolationists” entirely outside the internationalist tradition of Wilson, Roosevelt, and Harry Truman. Yet opponents of the Vietnam War were entirely within the tradition represented by Bryan—and some of them, following the ideas of Hans Morgenthau and Niebuhr, also saw themselves as part of a “realist” tradition that could be traced to Roosevelt and Truman. The tension between engagement and disengagement, between a principled internationalism and an equally principled opposition to globalism, runs right through the American soul—and right through the Democratic party.

The Democrats also face the tensions between their deeply rooted populist economic rhetoric and the need to manage growth in a global market economy where capital is increasingly free to move. A party which in Jackson’s day could manage to bash the rich and simultaneously run a radically laissez-faire economic policy is no doubt nimble enough to find new language for the 1990s. Finding policies will be harder. Like all reformist and social democratic parties in this era, the Democrats need to convince wary voters—ultimately through action—that government intervention in the marketplace can also produce growth and equity. If growth and a modicum of greater economic equality are incompatible, or are seen as such by voters, then the Democratic project may once again be engulfed by the ironies that are the plague and the glory of the oldest political party in the world.

The greatest challenge to the Democrats is the same as it has always been. If there is a consistency through the party’s tortured history, it is that Democrats have sought to be the voice for an America of diversity and at the same time be the party best able to speak for the nation as a whole. Here, the ironies of Democratic history fully reflect the ironies of American history in which a nation struggled to find a unifying national vision

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and set of commitments even as it sought to accommodate visions brought to our shores from around the globe.

Roosevelt may have been the Democrat most gifted in accomplishing this task. He succeeded by speaking a language of an inclusive common citizenship. The New Deal won acceptance, said Mark Lilla, a neoconservative writer, "in no small part because Franklin Roosevelt spoke *to* citizens, *about* citizens."²² The New Deal was no doubt a complex collection of interest groups. Yet as Schlesinger has argued, the New Deal worked because it was seen as representing "a concert of interests," not a collection of "sectarian veto groups."²³

The party's historic purpose of giving voice to minorities and dissenters—from Catholics and Jews in an earlier age to feminists and cultural rebels in the 1960s and 1970s to gays and lesbians today—has often created dissonance with many of its traditional supporters. Democrats have succeeded best at this task when they have managed to integrate their commitment to minority rights with a vision for the nation as a whole. As Michael Barone points out in his essay, the New Deal was undergirded by a democratic popular culture that was accessible to all wings of the party, and thus to all Americans. Charges of being "alien" or "elitist" simply bounced off a coalition that, in fact, included millions of immigrants and their children, as well as a large share of the country's intellectuals.²⁴ The New Deal, in Lilla's words, "succeeded in capturing the American imagination because it promised to be a great act of civic inclusion."²⁵

It is a neat trick to uphold the rights of minorities *and* to offer a national vision; to speak of the possibilities of the federal government *and* to celebrate the virtues of localism—including, in Ronald Reagan's famous phrase, the values of "family, work and neighborhood"; to be the party that heralds individual rights *and* greater equality. It is, indeed, ironic that one party has tried to do all these things. It often has failed to keep these goals in balance, and then it has lost to a Republican party that is often more coherent and more sure of its goals. But when the Democrats have succeeded, they have been the force that kept the First New Nation young, forward-looking and optimistic.²⁶ It is the Democrats often thankless task to manage its own ironies, and thus America's.

NOTES

1. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribners, 1952), 8.

2. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945).

3. Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: The Noonday Press/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 256. Richard

Hofstadter's chapter on Jackson in *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) is central to understanding the revisionist view. For a New Left view, see Michael A. Lebowitz, "The Jacksonians: Paradox Lost?" in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, Barton J. Bernstein, ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 65-89.

4. See Watson's *Liberty and Power*, and also his essay in this volume.
5. Frelinghuysen quoted in Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 109. For a fine treatment of John Quincy Adams' courage on the Indian and slavery questions, see Leonard L. Richards, *The Life and Times of Congressman John Quincy Adams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. 95-112, 148-154.
6. Robert Kelley, "A Portrait of Democratic American in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" in chap. 4 in this volume.
7. Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), esp. 172-216.
8. Jackson's veto message quoted in Watson, 146.
9. Wood quoted in Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 228.
10. *New York Times*, quoted in Stampp, 228.
11. Kelley, "A Portrait of Democratic America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century."
12. See Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), esp. 186-215. See also Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), esp. 564-612.
13. The list of Bryan's reform commitments appears in Garry Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 99. Wills offers a fine treatment of Bryan on 97-107. The quote from Dewey appears in Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 178.
14. John Milton Cooper, "Wilsonian Democracy," in chap. 9 in this volume. The Croly quote is drawn from John Judis, *Grand Illusion: Critics and Champions of the American Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1992).
15. Judis's fine essay on Croly appears on 23-45.
16. Alonzo Hamby, "The Democratic Moment: FDR to JFK," in chap. 11 in this volume.
17. Bernstein, "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform," in *Toward a New Past*, 263-288.
18. Hamby, "The Democratic Moment."
19. Stampp on Lincoln and Stephens, *The Era of Reconstruction*, 46.
20. Ahlstrom is quoted in Leo P. Ribuffo, *Right, Center, Left: Essays in American History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 15.
21. My own treatment of the race issue here is necessarily cursory. For whatever they are worth, my own views on the subject can be found in E.J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1992), 77-97, 335-338, 366-367.
22. Mark Lilla, "What is the Civic Interest?" *The Public Interest* 81 (Fall

985): 76.

23. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Liberal Opportunity," *The American Prospect* 1 (Spring 1990): 10-18.

24. Michael Barone, "A National Party in a Diverse Nation," in chap. 14 in this volume.

25. Lilla, "What is the Civic Interest," 76.

26. The phrase "The First New Nation" is Seymour Martin Lipset's, see Lipset, *The First New Nation* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1963).

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19

Divider Title: _____

CUTTING WASHINGTON DOWN TO SIZE

It's Time To Devolve Power to States and Communities

BY KATHLEEN SYLVESTER

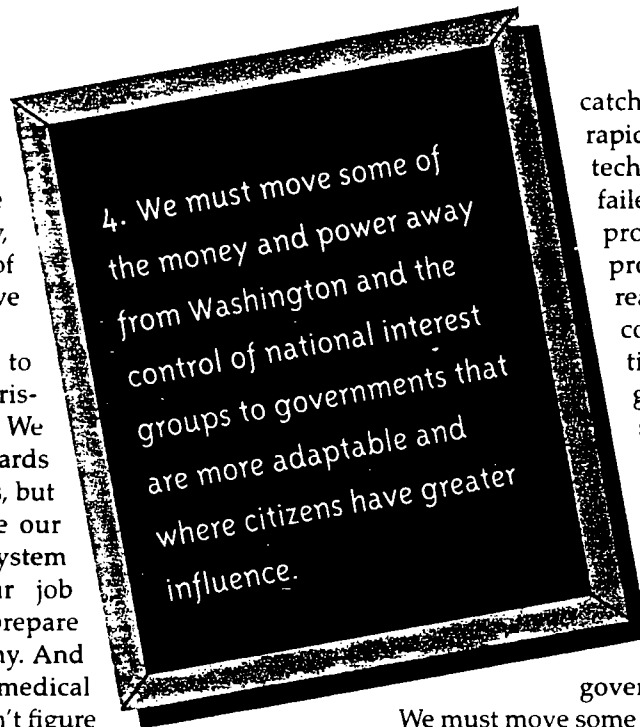
On Election Day, American voters said no to a government that no longer serves them well. The mid-term election was an angry, visceral reaction to the failure of the central government to solve real problems.

Little wonder. We continue to raise spending for police and prisons, but the streets aren't safe. We continue to impose more standards and raise more taxes for schools, but our schools still don't educate our children well. Our welfare system perpetuates dependency. Our job training programs fail to prepare workers for a changing economy. And in a nation with world-class medical care, the federal government can't figure out how to ensure decent health care for everyone who needs it.

Because voters don't trust government, they used every option available to them at the ballot box Nov. 8 to limit its power: term limits, tax limits, and thousands of citizen-initiated ballot measures to circumvent their own elected officials. Finally, they voted overwhelmingly for candidates who told them that government is "broken." Angered over government's failure to change, voters chose to change the players.

The message was unmistakable: Make government deliver. But there is only one way to do that, and that is to change the nature of government itself. The fact is, centralized government—limited by budget constraints, harnessed to archaic service delivery systems, and hamstrung by special interests—is ill-equipped to respond to citizens' needs.

While the centralized bureaucracy was once a progressive, modernizing force, it has become a brake in the Information Age. The bureaucracy is forever playing



catch-up with a marketplace that rapidly absorbs and adapts to new technologies. Washington has failed to grasp the lesson that has produced a revival of American productivity: that a central bureaucracy is no longer critical to coordination and communication among individuals and groups. Indeed, it can hinder such efforts. The federal government has in effect become a victim of its outmoded "headquarters" mentality.

The radical—and practical—solution is a fundamental redistribution of power from the national government to states and localities.

We must move some of the money and power away from Washington and the control of national interest groups to governments that are more adaptable and where citizens have greater influence. This "devolution" of power should begin with a formal reassessment of the federal system, taking into account the legitimate interests and capabilities of each level of government. The next step would be an orderly realignment of power and authority, including the authority to raise revenues, aimed at returning the federal system to an effective partnership.

♦ In 1995, the President should convene a Federalism Convention—including governors, congressional leaders, and some local representatives—with a goal of developing a plan to restore the balance of power among states, localities, and national government.

♦ Because Congress would have to be the main instrument of implementation, the President should ask its leaders to appoint a Select Joint Committee on Federalism to address these same issues, and to represent the legislative branch at the Federalism Convention.

'Governance' Is the Issue

While conservative critics compellingly argue that "government" is the issue to be addressed, it is important to bear in mind that today's broad-ranging federal government reflects the broad-ranging concerns of the American people.

The real issue is "governance." How does government carry out the public will? Make decisions? Which level is best suited to execute what programs? Who should pay? And how can government ensure citizens a voice? Those are the questions our leaders should be asking because citizens want government to do better. The conservative "slash-and-burn" attack on government is both opportunistic and cynical.

In his first year in office, President Clinton rose above the politics of cynicism by insisting that the fragmented and rule-driven federal bureaucracy could change. He launched an ambitious plan to "reinvent" the federal government, and made it a serious endeavor by appointing Vice President Al Gore to run it. Six months later, the President endorsed a series of bold suggestions about how to make the federal bureaucracy work better and cost less. The initiative has been one of the most popular of the Clinton Presidency; many of its ideas are already changing government.

The Vice President's report addressed only the internal workings of the federal bureaucracy. Two other reforms are equally critical to reinventing government. First, the many special-interest subsidies that bloat the federal budget should be abandoned. A framework for considering this question and recommendations for specific cuts have been laid out in detail by Robert J. Shapiro (see article on page 26).

The second critical reform is one that politicians, especially those in Washington, are reluctant to address: shifting power. Which government responsibilities would be better devolved to state or local governments?

The idea for such a shift is not new. The argument was well articulated in the early 1980s by reports from the Robb-Evans Commission and the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, and more recently by David Osborne in the Progressive Policy Institute's *Mandate for Change*. Office of Management and Budget Director Alice Rivlin in 1992 proposed a thoughtful and detailed plan for "sorting out" and swapping the functions of government to make Washington and the states more efficient and productive.

Yet the idea has not advanced. One reason is money. States and localities legitimately fear that the federal government would pass the buck without the bucks.

The demise of federal revenue sharing and the "Reagan revolution," which shifted responsibilities to the states with no accompanying federal funds, are fresh memories in state capitols and city halls. Another reason is politics: Congress cannot resist plunging into every issue of public concern.

Consider the decision to fund midnight basketball. Is midnight basketball a worthy program? Yes. Is midnight basketball a federal function? No. Yet earlier this year, Congress passed a \$31 billion federal crime bill that includes—among its hundreds of provisions—federal funding for this program to keep young people in poor neighborhoods off the streets at night.

The amount of money designated for midnight basketball is minuscule; the goal sensible and laudable. But absent a radical change in the way our federal system operates, midnight basketball is not destined to be a one-time federal demonstration showcasing the benefits of recreation as a crime-prevention strategy. Midnight basketball will gain a constituency and congressional patrons. And it will become a categorical grant program, funded year after year by federal tax dollars, whether or not it reduces crime.

Politics Breeds More Bureaucracy

When citizens voice concern over an issue—whether it's crime or immigration or homelessness—the federal government responds with programs or subsidies. If public sentiment generates political interest in an issue, that interest establishes a permanent basis for federal involvement. Constitutional, fiscal, or even practical considerations rarely figure into such decisions. As federalism scholar John Shannon explains, "Politics has become the major determinant of federalism, largely replacing questions of legal authority."

The result is over-centralization: a vast web of federal agencies and programs created with good intentions, conflicting missions, and overlapping responsibilities. These programs and subsidies live on in the federal budget, supported by constituencies and special interests. They are rarely subject to reevaluation or competition. If a program doesn't work, it is easier for Washington to add another layer of solutions than to admit defeat.

If crime is a middle-class concern, Congress *will* pass a crime bill. But what should that bill include? How much should the bill cost? And how do the bill's provisions affect other levels of government? These questions are rarely asked by a Congress and a President eager to please voters. And state and local governments are reluctant to question this approach, because in this era of

scarce resources, they'll take money from Washington any way they can get it.

Year by year, the proportion of the federal budget that is inflexible—committed before the budget process ever begins—is growing. About 16 percent of the federal budget is now available for domestic discretionary spending. This is part of the phenomenon aptly described by author Jonathan Rauch as "demosclerosis": government's progressive loss of the ability to adapt.

The constraint on the central government's resources doesn't always prevent it from acting, however. If the federal government cannot fund a program, it often uses mandates to compel state and local governments to carry out its judgments by imposing federal standards in areas such as worker safety or environmental protection. Many of these mandates reflect legitimate federal concerns; many do not. And federal dollars to fund this compliance are rarely as forthcoming as the mandates.

Still, that hasn't slowed the mandates. By some estimates, states must dedicate as much as 20 percent of their revenue to complying with unfunded mandates. The states, in turn, can impose mandates on local governments. Thus inflexibility insinuates itself into every level of government. Demosclerosis is spreading.

A National Priority

To reverse the trend, devolution must become a national priority, and the President must lead the effort. Working with Congress and with state and local officials, he should launch broad negotiations to redistribute power between the federal government and the states, alter revenue-raising authority, and develop new strategies to foster truly cooperative federalism. This should not be an academic exercise, but the highest priority of the political system.

Reconsidering how well the federal system works would carry forward national tradition. The federal system has never been static. The relative roles of government levels have been defined and redefined by the courts and shaped by national crises for two centuries.

The activist central government evolved in response to grave circumstances that only a national government could address: the economic consequences of the Depression, the national security interest in waging three foreign wars, and the extension of constitutional protections to all citizens during the civil rights struggle. Our fundamental national concerns for economic security, national security, and equality must not be lost in the rush to condemn federal activism.

Today, we face a new crisis of governance. To ask diffi-

cult questions about how well our system works is not to make a choice between less government and more government. Rather, it is to seek a sensible and equitable redistribution of government power to make it more efficient, more subject to fiscal discipline, and more responsive and accountable to the people who pay the bills. A serious public effort at "sorting out" government's roles and functions should include the following questions:

- ◆ *Is this a job for government?* The inexorable expansion of federal power over the past 60 years has usurped responsibilities formerly borne by community institutions, families, and individuals. The first question we must ask is whether or not a given activity is a legitimate task for government or should be entrusted to private or civic actors.

- ◆ *Who would do the job better?* The federal government has advantages in areas such as social insurance and interstate matters. States and localities are generally better at delivering services. Any sorting out should also take into account the increased capacity of state and local governments. In the 1980s, when revenues were scarce and many federal responsibilities were shifted to states, they responded. The states took advantage of new technologies and professionalized their workforces. At the same time, their legislative bodies became more representative.

- ◆ *Where is the fiscal discipline and flexibility?* Because most states and localities must balance their budgets, shifting power to them ensures a degree of fiscal control. In the 1980s, states proved they were willing and able to raise taxes, and many diversified state-local revenue systems to balance property, income, and sales taxes with user charges. States and localities make tough decisions about priorities, and they also roll back tax rates when revenues permit.

- ◆ *Who can ask citizens what they want?* One critical advantage of such a power shift is that it will enable "market testing" of ideas. When states and local governments make decisions about priorities, citizens join in the priority-setting process. At the state and local levels, citizens decide all the time what they value enough to pay for. They support or reject ballot initiatives; they approve or disapprove tax increases and bond issues earmarked for specific programs; they lobby their legislatures and city and county councils; and they serve on citizen advisory panels. Increasingly, too, citizens are reclaiming authority over public institutions—demanding school reform and safer communities and working in their own communities to accomplish those goals.

- ◆ *Who has a compelling interest in doing the job?* States

and localities have already honed their capacity for economic development because it expands their revenue base. States dare not allow themselves to fall too far behind their more aggressive neighbors for fear of losing their tax base. Localities have an interest in providing education and police protection because their voters demand services. Control of programs should stay where those programs are delivered. Important redistributive functions, such as basic funding for income-support programs, must reside with the federal government.

♦ *How can equity be assured?* Poorer states and localities cannot compete on equal terms with wealthier jurisdictions. The federal government should provide some balance by offering special financial assistance to the poorest states; states should also provide financial aid to localities with weak revenue bases or extraordinary needs. Revenue capacity, revenue effort, and service demand must all be taken into account.

♦ *Where will the money come from?* The most difficult issue to resolve will be financing. If the federal government were to devolve certain functions or roles to the states, there would be an irresistible federal impulse to claim any savings for new programs or deficit reduction. A promise by Washington to state and local governments to leave the money alone would be hollow: Any power shift must ensure that states or localities have fiscal capacity to do the job well.

Jefferson and Hamilton believed that applying one basic question to all federal activities was critical to the survival of the federal system: "Is this a proper function of the federal government?" The nation's recent elections confirm the need to ask the question once more. ♦

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