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## Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

Scholarship Inspired by the Holy Spirit,  
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## THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# Reading the Pope

by Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.

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Learning a new language is never easy. Nor is learning a new author. One of the lessons that I learned when studying classical languages in college was the need to hunker down anew each semester and figure out the distinctive style and syntax of some new author. For us, Caesar was followed by Livy, Horace by Catullus, Vergil by Ovid, and Tacitus by Seneca. For each one there was a distinctive vocabulary, and new genres often brought special difficulties of their own. Like a kaleidoscope or a jigsaw puzzle, the distinctive writing styles of these authors would sooner or later come into focus.

I do not mean to stretch the comparison too far, but there may be something similar in the case of papal writings. We know the main genres from previous experience, but it takes a while to learn the specific ways of each papal author. For Pope John Paul II, for instance, we had to grow accustomed to a very different style from that used by previous popes. In the writings more directly from his hand one had to learn to look below the surface-level indirectness that he had cultivated while guiding the Church in Krakow and having to deal with an oppressive communist regime. Finding the Thomistic steel deep within the phenomenological mist was always worth the while.

With Pope Benedict XVI the reading was so much easier. The clarity of his mind is like that of a clear mountain spring, and even the most difficult theological topics came alive on his pages. His writings exhibited a deep consistency with his predecessors and with the entire Catholic tradition. Yet they had a real freshness, for instance, in the new insights he had about some text of Scripture that often left us with the feeling that we should have had these insights ourselves – they were so obviously true after he pointed them out.

What then about Pope Francis? Presumably *Lumen Fidei* came about as a joint effort, with much of the writing done by Pope Benedict. Our first extended taste of the writing of Pope Francis comes with *Evangelii Gaudium*. We need to take the time to understand this papal author as we did with his forbears. The authenticity of his symbolic communication is already

clear, as in his personal outreach to feed Rome's poor at night and in the gripping photographs of the blessings he has given to people with severely disfigured faces.

What has been troublesome, however, is how to understand Pope Francis aright in regard to a number of off-putting comments in the course of some lengthy interviews that he has given. Comments to the effect that the message of the Church should not be reduced to its stance on topics like abortion, contraception, and homosexuality are accurate in themselves, but they have been interpreted by the media and by some interested parties to suggest that they signal a major change in Church teaching. Alternatively, some have taken them as a kind of "pay back" by newly ascendant liberals for decades of papal conservatism. I have even heard the suggestion that the real intention of these seemingly off-hand comments was to wave away as unimportant certain moral doctrines that no properly theological argumentation could ever possibly unravel, despite the long labors of John Paul II and Benedict to establish the case for them so carefully.

I do not believe any of these scenarios to be the case. Rather, it seems to me that the pope has quite a different program. One can see this program, for instance, by considering how much of the text of *Evangelii Gaudium* is given to showing the need for the Church to be truly missionary. Pope Francis has often explicitly stated that he thinks that we need to be a Church of the poor and for the poor, and that we need to be outwardly directed, bringing the Gospel to the world. There is no capitulation to modernity here, no hint of syncretism, no surrender to contemporary secularism.

As he did in a homily entitled "Illness and Accident," delivered shortly after Easter, the pope here suggests that he would prefer to see a Church that makes mistakes over one that is closed in on itself. In commenting on the way in which Paul and Barnabas were mistaken for divinities when they had done a miracle of healing at Lystra (see Acts 14), the pope emphasized that there will inevitably be mistakes and accidents when we are at the work of evangelization. But it would be an illness for the Church to be excessively focused within and fail to engage in her missionary work. As his appointment of a commission to reform the Roman Curia shows, he is alert to the need for proper care of the Church's domestic arrangements.

This stress on the necessity of the Church's missionary character is authentically Catholic. In a certain respect, I find myself wondering whether there is even

a gentle kind of corrective of one Jesuit by another. Karl Rahner, S.J., for instance, proposed the notion of the "anonymous Christian" as a corollary to his notion that all nature is graced because all of nature is created. If this notion inadvertently contributed to sapping the Church's missionary zeal, the current stress on the intrinsically missionary character of the Church offers an important corrective to syncretistic thinking that regards all forms of religion as more or less equally good. The point here is sounded in a different register, but in content it is at one with Benedict's *Dominus Jesus*.

I would suggest that it is not so much Karl Rahner, S.J. but Jesuits associated with the *nouvelle théologie* like Henri de Lubac, S.J., and especially Jean Daniélou, S.J., who are the inspiration for Pope Francis. Consider, for example, a short but intriguing book by Daniélou entitled *Prayer as a Political Problem* (French original, 1965; English translation, 1967). The title of the book comes from the second chapter, which is a reflection on the problem of religious liberty in modern democratic culture and a valuable resource for our current troubles.

In the opening chapter, entitled "The Church of the Poor," Daniélou suggests three possible meanings for the term, and it seems to be that all three of them are central to the program that Francis has been signaling as central to his papacy. First, "poor" may refer to the destitute, and it seems undeniable from even a cursory reading of the Gospels that it is a high obligation in charity for the Church and for Christians to take care of the poor. But, Daniélou reminds us, the Church cannot consist only of the poor if genuine help is to be provided.

Secondly, "poor" may be a reference to "poverty of spirit." The Beatitudes give us a picture not only of Christ but also of the Christian, and thus they indicate what it looks like to be radically converted. Such a person will truly love God with all one's mind and heart and soul and strength, and love one's neighbor as oneself. Granted, this is what each Christian is called to be and to do. But, argues Daniélou, it would be wrong to understand the membership of the Church as something restricted to this group in a narrow and elitist way. The Church must provide the way to sanctification for all, including those who have progressed only a short distance toward this goal.

Daniélou's third possible meaning for the term "poor" designates those without special rank or privilege or intensity of personal commitment. It includes all the baptized, and it will often be a Church of sinners in need of repentance and certainly in need of sancti-

fication. He recognizes the need that everyone has for God, but he also recognizes that many will presumably not be able to lead lives of radical conversion. Rather, they will get to Mass on Sundays and teach their children the commandments, but they might not be able to withstand the pressures of a persecution, or the rather different but equally difficult pressures of prosperity in a secular culture. What they need is the support of the stability that the Church can provide – schools and parishes and institutions of social charity.

For this kind of cultural support, the Church must be constantly mindful of their on-going needs as well as highly focused on the pressing needs of the destitute. There will be many opportunities for individuals and groups to be animated by the poverty of spirit that is the anchor of the Beatitudes. And for the Church to have the religious liberty that is the condition for

providing this kind of support, the Church must somehow be on good terms with the secular regimes of any given age. Hence, Daniélou's second chapter on "Prayer as a Political Problem," for the constant temptation for the powers of the age will be to concentrate all power and authority in themselves.

I do not claim to know whether Pope Francis ever read Daniélou's work, but perhaps in light of this work we may be better able to read the papal program as articulated thus far. In *Evangelii Gaudium* we have encouragement to rekindle our missionary zeal, to strengthen parishes and homilies, to recommit ourselves to the authentic tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, and above all to renew our personal prayer in our lives. There will surely be other writings that will help us to refine our understanding, but the terminology and the syntax seem to be coming into focus. ✠

## ARTICLES

## William James's "Pluralistic Universe"

by Elizabeth Shaw  
The Catholic University of America

While it may have ruffled a few feathers, William James's 1906 presidential address to the American Philosophical Association was emblematic of his mission and methods. The lecture, titled "The Energies of Men," considered the question of how people might maximize their physical, mental, and moral energies. Given the APA audience, both this subject matter and James's approach to it were unconventional, and perhaps even disappointing and unsettling.

A bit of context. The academic prestige of the natural sciences had been waxing through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, while respect for philosophy and philosophers had been waning, and the APA was founded at the turn of the century in an effort to rehabilitate the reputation of philosophy as a formal discipline. In view of this *raison d'être* of the APA, James's 1906 audience might have expected and preferred a technical, scholarly discourse. Instead, what it got was a lecture that displayed James's propensity for

inquiries that are fundamentally practical and geared toward what might disparagingly be dubbed a "self-help" sort of philosophizing.

In a nod to the technical tastes of James's colleagues, "The Energies of Men" surveys the theoretic aspects of the then competing academic schools of scientific psychology. He accompanies this treatment, however, with an extended discussion of a variety of practical techniques for energy enhancement employed by ordinary people. Yoga, meditation, and the consumption of brandy are among the latter. In this way the lecture exhibits James's eclectic method of pursuing truth and his general disdain for the insular, elitist, clubbish attitudes not uncommon among academicians.

All this may still give rise to furrowed brows and skeptical frowns today. Even so, the irony of this presidential address to the APA is not subtle, and one may argue that it demonstrates James's expansive view of the nature of reality and the appropriate means of finding truth. For James, the earnest searcher will ferret out truth wherever and however it may be found, with an openness to the perspectives and capacities of academics and laymen alike.

“The Energies of Men” is but one installment in James’s study of man, but it gives the reader a taste of how James pursued a multifaceted science of human nature and thereby sought to be a so-called unifier of knowledge. As one scholar has written, his “efforts to promote a psychological-medical-hygienic-physiological-spiritual pragmatic science of man—a project framed in a way that made it impossible to realize within the bounds of any existing discipline—represented the epitome of his drive.”<sup>1</sup>

James himself was trained as a medical doctor; he taught anatomy, physiology, psychology, and philosophy; and he studied and wrote on a host of issues and themes, from socio-political affairs and aesthetics to psychological research and the paranormal. He was interested and learned in many disciplinary approaches, and at the same time not wedded to or confirmed in any one of them. As such, he was perhaps uniquely equipped to appreciate that the most robust science of man would incorporate all angles of approach to human nature and experience. James was concerned to promote better respect, interaction, and cooperation among the disciplines. Moreover, he envisioned a broader, egalitarian network of communication and deliberation extending beyond the academy, which might serve both to advance learning and knowledge and to ameliorate tensions that derived from impersonal, self-serving institutions and structures.

James’s efforts to reform attitudes and approaches to knowledge both within and outside academia are at least partly grounded in his metaphysical vision of the pluralistic universe, which I examine further here. James articulates his pluralism in response to the shortcomings of philosophical monism, and central to his argument is a critique of conceptualization. Simply put, James denies that human intellect and the concepts it forms are adequate to grasp the universe; in fact, reality is such that fully grasping it requires transcending the limits of intellect and conceptualization.

For James, pluralism is a term to express the view that reality is not a closed system and that the possibilities for the manifestations of life are open-ended, neither limited nor determined by material conditions. James’s pluralistic worldview is a valuable counterpoint to the scientism and materialist reductionism that was thriving in the mid and late nineteenth century. To the extent that these attitudes are prominent today—and one is hard pressed to argue that they are not—it is perhaps useful to revisit James’s thought. The conceit of science hinges on science’s own metaphysical presuppositions. Science is suited for grasping only the material dimen-

sions of reality. Insofar as reality transcends these dimensions, science is eclipsed by philosophy and metaphysical attunement, the proper modes of grasping the whole.

In what follows I trace the foundation and sources of this key aspect of James’s later thought as laid out in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912). First, I examine his perspective on philosophical monism, which he also variously and interchangeably refers to as absolutism and idealism. Second, I consider his arguments against monism. Finally, I trace the development of James’s positive thought in response to monism. Here I examine his method of so-called radical empiricism and the pluralistic worldview to which it leads.

## I The Emergence and Appeal of Monism.

**B**efore entering into his exposition and defense of the pluralistic worldview, James begins by sketching its philosophical foils. In order properly to understand and confront monism, James begins by tracing its origins. Lecture I of *A Pluralistic Universe*, entitled “The Types of Philosophic Thinking,” provides something of a genealogy of philosophical systems. It is an introduction that may be read as an exercise of James’s pragmatist “will to believe”: Searching for a God who satisfies the human needs for both a sense of meaning or purpose and a feeling of intimacy or comfort throughout life’s travails, James critiques various philosophical worldviews, and ultimately affirms his own pluralistic vision in accordance with these personal interests and preferences.<sup>2</sup>

James begins with the factors that motivate the development of comprehensive philosophical systems. Initially, he explains, in their primitive experience humans are struck by what might be called the clutter of reality: “Tempests and conflagrations, pestilences and earthquakes, reveal supramundane powers, and instigate religious terror rather than philosophy. Nature, more demonic than divine, is above all things *multifarious*. So many creatures that feed or threaten, that help or crush, so many beings to hate or love, to understand or start at.”<sup>3</sup>

Subsequently, philosophy is born as the human intellect awakens and seeks to arrange this apparent disorder of primitive experience. When philosophizing, humans act as artisans or craftsmen, “selecting objects and tracing relations so as to gratify our intellectual



interests. *We carve out* order by leaving the disorderly parts out.”<sup>4</sup> All men philosophize with the same general goal in mind—namely, making themselves more “at home” in the world—but because of congenital differences in temperament, they necessarily diverge in their philosophical accounts. “Different men find their minds more at home in very different fragments of the world,”<sup>5</sup> James writes, and competing worldviews emerge as men build their philosophical homes with different cosmic materials.

The first basic division among worldviews, James notes, distinguishes materialism and spiritualism. These are the products of men whose temperaments are respectively cynical and sympathetic.<sup>6</sup> The fundamental difference between materialism and spiritualism hinges on the status of the human soul. Materialistic systems seek order by excluding soul from their accounts of reality, at best treating it as “as a sort of outside passenger or alien,” while spiritualistic approaches integrate soul as an important and perhaps central element. Furthermore, spiritualistic philosophies maintain that the fullness of human nature is somehow bound up with the rest of the world—“that the intimate and human must surround and underlie the brutal.”<sup>7</sup> So, with respect to the goal of home-making, the potential of spiritualistic philosophy far exceeds that of materialism.<sup>8</sup> Also, insofar as they seek to explain how soul fits into the cosmic scheme, spiritualistic philosophies undertake a task larger and arguably more difficult than that of materialistic philosophies.

James continues by identifying two stages or subdivisions of spiritualistic philosophy, dualism and pantheism. The former is a traditional theism, which he quickly limns:

The theistic conception, picturing God and his creation as entities distinct from each other, still leaves the human subject outside of the deepest reality in the universe. God is from eternity complete, it says, and sufficient unto himself; he throws off the world by a free act and as an extraneous substance, and he throws off man as a third substance, extraneous to both the world and himself. . . . God and his creatures are *toto genere* distinct in the scholastic theology, they have absolutely *nothing* in common; nay, it degrades God to attribute to him any generic nature whatever; he can be classed with nothing. There is a sense, then, in which philosophic theism makes us outsiders and keeps us foreigners in relation to God.<sup>9</sup>

According to James, dualistic philosophy alienates man in this fashion, painting him as essentially divided

from God, and having at best a unilateral, not reciprocal, relationship to him. From a pragmatist point of view, the independent and self-sufficient God of dualism fails to deliver both the meaning and the intimacy that man craves.<sup>10</sup>

This explains why dualism so often loses out in competition with pantheistic conceptions that grant man greater closeness and access to the divine, thereby conferring a greater sense of unity: “God as intimate soul and reason of the universe has always seemed to some people a more worthy conception than God as external creator. So conceived, he appeared to unify the world more perfectly, he made it less finite and mechanical, and in comparison with such a God an external creator seemed more like the product of a childish fantasy.”<sup>11</sup> Without much discussion, James affirms that the contemporary mind is inclined to adopt such a view, and he broadly attributes this trend to “[t]he vaster vistas which scientific evolutionism has opened, and the rising tide of social democratic ideals, [which] have changed our type of imagination.”<sup>12</sup> As creation is conceived not biblically but scientifically, and as egalitarian sentiments become more widespread and deeply felt, a pantheistic vision placing man in direct and mutual communion with the divine grows more popular.

Pantheism subdivides further, into what James refers to as monism and pluralism. Monism and pluralism agree in uniting the human and divine elements of reality,<sup>13</sup> but for James it is their disagreement that is crucial. For James the terms monism, absolutism, the philosophy of the absolute, and monistic idealism are convertible—all refer to the metaphysical vision in which reality “becomes fully divine only in the form of totality, and is not its real self in any form but the *all-form*.”<sup>14</sup> Pervasive, divine immanence is another way of expressing this vision, where God ultimately coincides with the absolute sum-total of reality’s constitutive parts. Under this view, *that there is nothing* is the only alternative to the all-inclusive fact of reality, which subsumes each of the apparently fragmented, accidental, and perhaps even conflicting “finite data of our experience” under the mantle of the “all-form.”<sup>15</sup>

James considers the thought of some prominent monistic thinkers from the history of philosophy. He names names: Spinoza (the “first great absolutist”), various nineteenth-century thinkers such as R. H. Lotze, J. M. E. McTaggart, Josiah Royce, and F. H. Bradley, and of course Hegel, the preeminent expositor of this monistic brand of thought, who merits consideration in a lecture devoted to himself alone.<sup>16</sup> James commends these

thinkers for their vision, which transcends the naïve impressions of a world in flux and imposes a clean conceptual order upon the chaos of perceptual experience—“a world in which reason holds all things in solution and accounts for all the irrationality that superficially appears by taking it as a ‘moment’ into itself.”<sup>17</sup> Undeniably, this order is aesthetically pleasing and may even be emotionally inspiring.<sup>18</sup> What is more, such a system seemingly fulfills an “intellectual duty” to collect and make sense of all the troubling loose ends of experience; for this reason, it is a worthy fulfillment of centuries of philosophizing.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, James especially lauds the Hegelian insight and success at overcoming the “ordinary logic of identity” through the dialectical method, whereby concepts are not taken as “the static self-contained things that previous logicians supposed, but [rather] generative, and pass[ing] beyond themselves into each other.”<sup>20</sup> No doubt, monism has a certain appeal.

Such praise notwithstanding, the overwhelming thrust of James’s critique is negative. In Lecture II he takes aim at monism’s conceit that it is the exclusive true account of reality: “The great *claim* of the philosophy of the absolute is that the absolute is no hypothesis, but a presupposition implicated in all thinking, and needing only a little effort of analysis to be seen as a logical necessity.”<sup>21</sup> Taking care to explain that he does not wish to argue against monism as a hypothesis,<sup>22</sup> he attacks the assertion of its logical necessity on several levels. Echoing the thought of his colleague and friend Henri Bergson on the inadequacy of intellectual conceptualization, James argues that intellect alone grasps reality in a partial way, one that is indeed shallow and distorted. Penetrating the fullness of reality requires a different tack altogether. Enter James’s advocacy of a mystical approach to reality.

## II James’s Critique of Monism.

In arguing against monism’s claim of logical necessity, James points out that it shares the humanistic nature of all philosophy; that is to say, like all metaphysical systems, it emerges as a function of particular humans’ innate temperaments and preferences. He writes: “All philosophy is the expression of man’s intimate character, and all the definitions of the universe are but the deliberately adopted reactions of human characters upon it.”<sup>23</sup> Monistic philosophers are men who happen to be given to so-called rationalism—“the habit of explaining parts by wholes”—which has dominated the history of philosophy, in contrast with empiricism—“the habit of explaining wholes by

parts.”<sup>24</sup> These temperaments and habits are not deduced from prior principles; rather, they themselves are the fundamental starting points. Monistic philosophy stems, James explains, from two axiomatic principles: (a) the conviction “that the world must be rational and self-consistent,” and (b) “a loyal clinging to the rationalist belief that sense-data and their associations are incoherent, and that only in substituting a conceptual order for their order can truth be found.”<sup>25</sup> Monism is grounded in faith and feeling, and cannot automatically and without examination of these principles make a justifiable claim that it is more authoritatively reasonable than its alternatives.

James also takes aim at certain arguments of monists seeking to destroy their opposition. For example, consider the *reductio* formulated by Lotze: Suppose that distinct beings, *a*, *b*, *c*, and so on, exist independently of each other in the world, as those who argue against monism maintain. Given this supposition, consider the questions of whether, and precisely how, an entity *a* might act on another entity *b*. Can *a* ever act on *b*? If so, what is “acting”? One says that “acting” is exerting influence in some fashion. But this “influence,” then, is yet a third thing, which prompts the further question: How is it that this “influence” acts on *b*? The answer: by some other “influence,” and so on. Barring the absurdity of an infinite regress, we move to a final question, which James paraphrases:

And how in the end does the chain of influences find *b* rather than *c* unless *b* is somehow prefigured in them already?... The change in *b* is a *response*, due to *b*’s capacity for taking account of *a*’s influence, and that again seems to prove that *b*’s nature is somehow fitted to *a*’s nature in advance. *A* and *b*, in short, are not really as distinct as we first supposed them, not separated by a void. Were this so, they would be mutually impenetrable, or at least mutually irrelevant.... They must therefore belong together beforehand, be co-implicated already, their natures must have an inborn mutual reference each to each.<sup>26</sup>

The original supposition of distinct, independent entities thus gives way to a monistic world in which all things are ultimately bound up together as “parts of a single real being,” and any interaction among them is regarded as that being’s self-contained, “immanent operation.”<sup>27</sup> According to this argument, then, monism is true.

In James’s estimation, however, the monist who makes this argument commits the sin of “vicious intellectualism.” A version of the straw man fallacy, vicious

intellectualism is described by James as “[t]he treating of a name as excluding from the fact named what the name’s definition fails positively to include.”<sup>28</sup> It is necessary, according to James, to return to the initial supposition of Lotze’s *reductio* and consider more carefully the nature of the original distinction between *a* and *b*. They might be *said to be* distinct and independent, but truly,

neither abstract oneness nor abstract independence exists; only concrete things exist, which add to these properties the other properties which they possess, to make up what we call their total nature.... Only when we know what the process of interaction literally and concretely consists in can we tell whether beings independent in definite respects... can or cannot interact.<sup>29</sup>

James further clarifies and fortifies this opposition to Lotze in his indictment of Royce, who similarly asserts that the world must be conceived as either complete union or complete disunion. Homing in on the deceptive, “purely verbal character of the operation,” he writes:

Because the *names* of finite things and their relations are disjoined, it doesn’t follow that the realities named need a *deus ex machina* from on high to conjoin them. The same things disjoined in one respect *appear* as conjoined in another. Naming the disjunction doesn’t debar us from also naming the conjunction in a later modifying statement, for the two are absolutely coordinate elements of the finite tissue of experience.<sup>30</sup>

So, in some respect *a* and *b* might be distinct and independent entities, yet in some other respect they might also be joined and dependent; and if this might be the case, we are not required to posit “a single real being” with “immanent operation” in order to make sense of the notion that *a* can act on *b*. Thus, James exposes the monists as mischaracterizing the alternatives to their worldview and peddling a false dichotomy of absolute unity versus absolute disunity.

James also calls into question what I might call the “net rationality” of monism. His critique begins with his noting that there are four dimensions of reality—intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and practical—and that philosophers seek an account of reality that maximizes the “balance of rationality” in these four areas.<sup>31</sup> No single account achieves simultaneous maximal rationality in all four dimensions, for that which “we gain in one coin we... pay for in another,”<sup>32</sup> and monism is no exception to this rule.

True, it may offer an aesthetically sublime picture of the world that serves to bestow upon the universe a

sense of moral order. For example, James quotes Royce: “We long for the Absolute only in so far as in us the Absolute also longs, and seeks, through our very temporal striving, the peace that is nowhere in Time, but only, and yet absolutely, in Eternity.... Through this my tribulation the Absolute triumph, then, is won.... In the Absolute I am fulfilled.”<sup>33</sup> But even though the monistic vision might serve as an emotional salve for men of temperaments like Royce’s, there is no denying that the moral and intellectual dimensions of its rationality are compromised by certain highly troubling and perhaps unresolvable problems.

Particularly compelling are the persistent speculative problems of moral evil and intellectual error. The absolute’s relation to the world of finite experience is a paradox, for “[i]ts perfection is represented as the source of all things, and yet the first effect of that perfection is the tremendous imperfection of all finite experience.”<sup>34</sup> No part of the world of finite experience is understood as alien, in origin or being, to the absolute, and so we cannot but wonder and even lament: Why should an ideally perfect whole comprise itself of the finite, flawed, and fallible parts of our sensory experience? Arguably, monism is morally and intellectually more irrational than rational, which leaves open the possibility that an alternative might surpass it in net rationality. James thus lands another blow to monism by exposing the fact that it is not a decidedly superior alternative.

Perhaps the simplest yet most damning objection is that monism is sheer artifice, an abstraction never found in humans’ experience but arrived at by a process of conceptual extrapolation. Indeed, its artificial nature is obvious insofar as the complete unity of all things that monism posits is flatly contrary to the world of sensible experience. James notes that “philosophers have always aimed at cleaning up the litter with which the world is apparently filled,”<sup>35</sup> but almost invariably, in so doing they have concocted rationalist systems that tailor the world to suit their needs, rather than honestly cleaving to the data of experience. Monistic thinkers, he asserts, are no exception.

James expands on this line of criticism in Lecture IV of *A Pluralistic Universe*, entitled “Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism.” Here James draws upon Bergson’s insights to support his own critique of monistic philosophy. He analyzes the common pathology of such rationalist worldviews and offers a general thesis: All rationalist systems are produced by transposing perceptual data to a conceptual order, and this process may be advantageous from a practical perspective but



inapt from a metaphysical one. In support of this conclusion, he makes use of Bergson's discussion of Zeno's paradox. He begins with a summary of the well-known puzzle of Achilles and the tortoise:

Give that reptile ever so small an advance and the swift runner Achilles can never overtake him, much less get ahead of him; for if space and time are infinitely divisible (as our intellects tell us they must be), by the time Achilles reaches the tortoise's starting point, the tortoise has already got ahead of *that* starting point, and so on *ad infinitum*, the interval between the pursuer and the pursued growing endlessly minuter, but never becoming wholly obliterated.<sup>36</sup>

According to James, the crux of Bergson's solution to this paradox is simply to note that the infinite divisibility of space and time on which it hinges is a fabrication of intellectual analysis and never found in sensible experience. Infinitesimally incremental change is not part of the world we sensibly perceive but rather a derivative of "[o]ur ideal decomposition" of that world.<sup>37</sup> The paradox is better interpreted, then, as no more than a sophism, for it is predicated on false, intellectualist premises. The problem suggested is real only if infinite divisibility is a natural fact, which it is not.

Fleshing out this argument, James moves beyond the image of Achilles and the tortoise and explains that the puzzle more generically concerns any process of change. Another image helps to illustrate. If we consider the elapsing of twenty seconds of time, for example, we arrive at essentially the same paradox: Given the intellectualist principle that time is infinitely divisible, we seem forced to conclude that the twenty seconds of time cannot ever elapse. For, as the story goes, in order for the whole segment of time to elapse, its first half must elapse first; and in order for that first half to elapse, *its* first half must elapse; and so on, infinitely. James summarizes:

And this ever-rearising need of making the earlier half elapse *first* leaves time with always something to do before the last thing is done, so that the last thing never gets done. Expressed in bare numbers, it is like the convergent series  $1/2$  plus  $1/4$  plus  $1/8$ ... of which the limit is one. But this limit, simply because it is a limit, stands outside the series, the value of which approaches it indefinitely but never touches it.<sup>38</sup>

In the natural world, by contrast, change does not occur by infinitesimally divisible increments but rather by units that are discrete wholes. Indeed, as James writes, "nature doesn't make eggs by making first half an egg,

then a quarter, then an eighth, etc., and adding them together. She either makes a whole egg at once or none at all, and so of her other units." Similarly, "bottles and coffee-pots empty themselves by a finite number of decrements, each of a definite amount. Either a whole drop emerges or nothing emerges from the spout."<sup>39</sup> Change in our sensible experience occurs and is perceived by thresholds, he asserts, and even though we might be able to subject it to infinite division under our conceptual analysis, in itself it exists as an all-or-nothing affair.

This discussion is relevant to James's indictment of monistic philosophy inasmuch as it serves as an entrée for explicating monism's fundamental problem, namely, the failure of its conceptual order (and any conceptual order, for that matter) to do the work for which it is intended—that is, to provide a unifying account of sensible experience. He rounds out his reflections on Zeno's paradox with a consideration of the inapt application of concepts to the phenomena of motion. With Bergson, James contends that reality is far richer and more complex than any conceptual system intellect can draw up; further, a more authentic grasp of such reality is something accomplished by some form of mystical penetration, not by intellection.

Here he begins by highlighting the contrast between an immediate experience of motion and its conceptual definition. As immediately experienced, motion is "originally a turbid sensation," perhaps akin to the phenomenon of vertigo.<sup>40</sup> A man who experiences vertigo feels "that movement *is*, and is more or less violent or rapid, more or less in this direction or that, and is more or less alarming or sickening."<sup>41</sup> The experience is thus of the bare fact of motion, along with certain of that fact's qualitative features. James notes further that a man may still "intellectualize" the incongruities of his feeling of motion and his real position, location, and other physical circumstances, thereby learning to overcome the affliction, so that he might at least be able to walk without staggering. Analogously, one may get some understanding of motion in general by analysis and mathematical definition, when it is "conceived as 'the occupancy of serially successive points of space at serially successive instants of time.'"<sup>42</sup> But this mathematical definition clearly departs from the original felt experience and, James insists, from sense-reality in general.

Indeed, the mathematical definition of motion, as successive points of space at successive instants of time, flattens the original experience by reducing what is given in at least three dimensions to just these two. Moreover, this is a way of defining the phenomenon of

motion in terms of immobile elements, which prompts James's objection: "Whatever motion may really be, it surely is not static; but the definition we have gained is of the absolutely static."<sup>43</sup> And so, the conceptualized definition of motion is entirely other than the phenomenon it supposedly tracks. While there is "great practical merit" in such an abstract scheme, which James concedes, this merit should not overshadow the fact that the abstract scheme as such fails to grasp the essential nature of the phenomenon originally given. He credits Bergson with this insight:

The stages into which you analyze a change are *states*, the change itself goes on between them. It lies along their intervals, inhabits what your definition fails to gather up, and thus eludes conceptual explanation altogether. . . . To know adequately what really happens we ought, Bergson insists, to see into the intervals, but the mathematician sees only their extremities. He fixes only a few results, he dots a curve and then interpolates, he substitutes a tracing for a reality.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the real phenomena are never penetrated but simply skimmed over. Conceptual schemes provide a means of grasping some part of the fullness of reality, and indeed they are requisite for our navigation through that reality, but we cannot pretend that they are anything more.

Further, James argues that conceptualization fails not only because it interpolates without grasping the essential phenomena but also because it presumes too much and extrapolates without sufficient justification. Concepts may have predictive value in limited contexts and thus be of great practical benefit, yet they are still formed on the basis of experience that is "retrospective and post mortem."<sup>45</sup> They may trace the original phenomena, but because they do not penetrate them, they reveal nothing about why or how the phenomena operate. James writes: "We cannot learn from them how life made itself go, or how it will make itself go."<sup>46</sup> The predictive value of concepts requires that the ways of life's "making itself go" be unchanging, yet "[t]he essence of life is its continuously changing character."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, "in the deeper sense of giving *insight* they have no theoretic value, for they quite fail to connect us with the inner life of the flux, or with the real causes that govern its direction."<sup>48</sup> James thus argues that, in the metaphysical search for a unifying account of the phenomena of sensible experience, the path of concepts necessarily leads to a dead end, and at best they provide only partial, and hence distorted, views of the whole.

And so James argues that monism's claim of logical necessity is absurd, for monism is just another instance of the dead-end conceptual mind-game, played so often, though in different ways, throughout the history of philosophy. Virtually all of Western philosophy has betrayed a bias toward conceptual order—a preference for fixity over change, for universals over particulars, and so on.<sup>49</sup> Monistic philosophers are no exception. James describes them as thinkers who "have invariably sought relief from the supposed contradictions of our world of sense by looking forward to an *ens rationis* conceived as its integration or logical completion."<sup>50</sup> To understand the motive, however, is not to justify the crime.

In making this extended case against monism, James is laying the foundation for his own pluralistic worldview. Central to its development is the transcending of intellect and its concepts, and the adoption of a mysticism or, perhaps better put, an epistemological attitude that is receptively open to the diversity of experiences, sensory or otherwise, that reality may present. "Radical empiricism" is another term James uses to describe this disposition. On the nature of this shift in approach, he writes:

[I]f, as metaphysicians, we are more curious about the inner nature of reality or about what really *makes it go*, we must turn our backs upon our winged concepts altogether, and bury ourselves in the thickness of those passing moments over the surface of which they fly, and on the particular points of which they occasionally rest and perch.<sup>51</sup>

What might we accomplish by turning our backs in this manner? James argues that if we turn directly to the continuity of sensible experience, and if we are intellectually honest, we shall adopt a vision of the universe that is quite unlike that of the unified, all-inclusive, single real being that monism posits. In short, we shall repudiate monism and adopt pluralism.

### III Radical Empiricism and the Pluralistic Universe.

In contrast to philosophy that proceeds by abstraction and conceptualization, James's method of radical empiricism is devoted to this task of directing the philosophical gaze toward the data of experience and keeping it fixed there, so to speak, in a quasi-meditative stance that resists constructing simplifying schema and seeks to grasp the fullness of reality as

experientially given. Radical empiricism does not skim over surfaces or lay out conceptual frameworks that distort reality by flattening it; rather, it seeks to penetrate and understand from within the richness and complexity of reality. “Life is confused and superabundant, and what the younger generation appears to crave is more of the temperament of life in its philosophy,” James writes in “A World of Pure Experience,” the first essay of the collected *Essays in Radical Empiricism*.<sup>52</sup> Radical empiricism is James’s answer to this craving for a “living” philosophy congruous to sensible experience.

Unlike the artificial, concept-driven systems of other philosophers, which depart from and thus fail to give any adequate account of the “inner life of the flux,” radical empiricism is intended to be a wholly experience-based approach that remains close to the suppleness and fluidity of reality. It is empiricism insofar as it “lays the explanatory stress upon the part, the element, the individual, and treats the whole as a collection and the universal as an abstraction.” It is radical insofar as it insists on “neither admit[ting] into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclud[ing] from them any element that is directly experienced.”<sup>53</sup> The “ordinary” empiricism of thinkers like Hume and Berkeley tends to neglect the experientially given conjunctive relations among things and to emphasize their disjunctions. In turn, it leads to the backlash of rationalism, which seeks to reinstate unity and “correct [empiricism’s] inconsistencies by the addition of trans-experiential agents of unification.”<sup>54</sup> Both types of philosophy thus err, while radical empiricism alone evenhandedly endeavors to recognize the genuineness of both the connections and the divisions that experience reveals.

As described and practiced by James, the method of radical empiricism paves the way for a pluralistic vision of the universe. Such a universe is patterned after our daily, concrete experience, in which we grasp a world whose parts are “loosely” connected, or more precisely, a world in which some parts are connected, others not.<sup>55</sup> When we turn to experience, he argues, what we find is a great variety of relations—“of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, and what not”—that are all just as much parts of that experience as the things or terms related are.<sup>56</sup> This is evident when we consider the immediately felt continuity of the stream of consciousness. Anyone who reflects on his own personal history recognizes the continuity that is implicit in change: “What I do feel simply when a later moment of my experience succeeds an earlier one is that though they are two moments, the transition from the one to

the other is *continuous*.”<sup>57</sup> In contrast, however, a similar sort of private reflection also reveals the experience of discontinuity: “[W]hen I seek to make the transition from an experience of my own to one of yours.... I have to get on and off again, to pass from a thing lived to another thing only conceived, and the break is positively experienced and noted.”<sup>58</sup>

Experience presents to us a world that is neither monolithic nor atomistically fragmented, but rather connected in some spots and not in others. Radical empiricism simply takes reality’s disjunctions along with its conjunctions, and does not see either as problematic or needing to be overcome by the imposition of some neat philosophical system with no loose ends. It does not model reality as a completed whole, but instead gives birth to the vision of a pluralistic universe, admitting that “the absolute sum-total of things may never be actually experienced or realized in that shape...., and that a disseminated, distributed, or incompletely unified appearance is the only form that reality may yet have achieved.”<sup>59</sup> James confesses this is “but a sorry appearance.... [It is] a turbid, muddled, gothic sort of an affair, without a sweeping outline and with little pictorial nobility.”<sup>60</sup> And yet for all its aesthetic shortcomings, the pluralism is a more genuine and honest way of accounting for reality as experienced.<sup>61</sup>

James refers to his own project as a “mosaic philosophy,” the image of a mosaic being a metaphor that helpfully draws out a crucial difference between pluralism and the various forms of rationalism:

In actual mosaics the pieces are held together by their bedding, for which bedding the substances, transcendental egos, and absolutes of other philosophies may be taken to stand. In radical empiricism there is no bedding; it is as if the pieces clung together by their edges, the transitions experienced between them forming their cement.<sup>62</sup>

By turning to pure experience, radical empiricism develops a philosophical vision of reality that does not require an intellectual abstraction such as the absolute to bind together its parts. Truly, any such artifice is a rationalist solution to a problem that rationalism itself has wrought; it is a laborious cure for a needless affliction. Pluralism overcomes this serious shortcoming of monism.

Given that the challenge of philosophy is to maximize the rationality of our account of the universe, James suggests the following justification for a radically empirical approach: “May not the flux of sensible ex-

perience itself contain a rationality that has been overlooked, so that the real remedy would consist in harking back to it more intelligently, and not in advancing in the opposite direction away from it...to the pseudo-rationality of the supposed absolute point of view”<sup>63</sup> Monism is superfluous inasmuch as it resolves a false problem; and we are better off, James argues, avoiding the problem entirely by adopting conscientious radical empiricism.

In characterizing the pluralistic vision James begins, “Pluralism lets things really exist in the each-form or distributively.” That is to say, it rejects the grandiose monistic conception of a universal, all-inclusive, “great total conflux” of being.<sup>64</sup> According to the pluralistic account, “nothing real is absolutely simple, ... every smallest bit of experience is a *multum in parvo* plurally related.”<sup>65</sup> It reflects the progressive, temporal, “strung-along” yet still continuous and concatenated nature of our experience,<sup>66</sup> and it gives a world in which the future relations among things are a variety of real possibilities. In contrast to the monistic “all-form [which] allows of no taking up and dropping of connexions,” the pluralistic each-forms are contingently related, and so open-ended possibilities virtually populate the future:

a thing may be connected by intermediary things, with a thing with which it has no immediate or essential connexion. It is thus at all times in many possible connexions which are not necessarily actualized at the moment. They depend on which actual path of intermediation it may functionally strike into: the word ‘or’ names a genuine reality.<sup>67</sup>

Yet the open-endedness of this system does not compromise its unity. Howsoever its future possibilities might come to pass, they are always actualized by paths of real connections.<sup>68</sup> The universe pluralistically construed thus hangs together in much the same manner as our everyday experience of the continuity of consciousness. While it is “not a universal co-implication, or integration of things *durcheinander*,” it is still cohesively unified.<sup>69</sup>

As an open-ended system, the pluralistic universe is continuously in the process of generation and growth. This is a world in which undetermined and unpredictable evolutionary paths may be paved. It is a dynamic, multivariable, and multidimensional setting that exceeds the limits of any conceptual abstraction, as evidenced by the fact that certain logical principles, which function quite nicely in the abstract realm of concepts, break down in the real world. For example, James writes:

More than the more is more than the less, equals of equals are equal, sames of the same are the same, the cause of a cause is the cause of its effects, are other examples of this serial law [of “skipt intermediaries”]. Altho [sic] it applies infallibly and without restriction throughout certain abstract series, where the ‘sames,’ ‘causes,’ etc., spoken of are ‘pure,’ and have no properties save their sameness, causality, etc., it cannot be applied offhand to concrete objects with numerous properties and relations, for it is hard to trace a straight line of sameness, causation, or whatever it may be, through a series of such objects without swerving into some ‘respect’ where the relation, as pursued originally, no longer holds.<sup>70</sup>

Logical principles fail in the realm of the living flux, where things regularly interpenetrate and modify one another. In the pluralistic universe, relations among things are tenuous—things are partially and variably related, and they constantly adjust (or adjust to) one another in and through their relations. Moreover, our epistemological relation to these things is similarly dynamic: “In every series of real terms, not only do the terms themselves and their associations and environments change, but we change, and their meaning for us changes, so that new kinds of sameness and types of causation continually come into view and appeal to our interest.”<sup>71</sup> Pluralism thus maintains that the contingent nature of the future derives from the adjustable, ever-changing nature of the relations among things in the world.

James offers a concrete example that serves both to illustrate pluralism and to support its plausibility. A friend, he writes, proposes that the study of human history might be made scientific if only sufficient data from two historical periods could be collected, and the curve between the two periods accurately traced as a function of the data. Modeling the advance of history in this manner, a science of history might then be used to predict the future by extrapolation. Yet, James notes, any aspirations toward such a science are patently absurd: “We all feel the essential unreality of such a conception of ‘history’ as this.”<sup>72</sup> By contrast, pluralism denies that any such predictive model is achievable, and so it comports with humans’ intuitive sense of the complexity and perhaps even fundamental inscrutability of the movement of history.

James moves from this reflection to an important implication: “if such a synechistic pluralism...be what really exists, every phenomenon of development, even the simplest, would prove equally rebellious to our



science should the latter pretend to give us literally accurate instead of approximate, or statistically generalized, pictures of the development of reality.”<sup>73</sup> The pluralistic universe is slippery, difficult to grasp and to predict. But from the vantage point of radical empiricism, this is its virtue, for this is the world of our experience—one that defies easy formulas and routinely confounds prognosticators. ❧

## Endnotes

- 1 Francesca Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Science, and the Boundaries of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 272.
- 2 See James O. Pawelski, *The Dynamic Individualism of William James* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 117.
- 3 William James, *A Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the Present Situation in Philosophy*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt et al., *The Works of William James*, vol. 4 (1909; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 15.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 In *Pragmatism*, these are the “tough-minded” and “tender-minded” characters. See William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt et al., *The Works of William James*, vol. 1 (1907; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), Lecture I, “The Present Dilemma in Philosophy.”
- 7 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 16.
- 8 James expands on this failure of materialism at *ibid.*, 19: “Materialism holds the foreign in things to be more primary and lasting, it sends us to a lonely corner with our intimacy... From a pragmatic point of view the difference between living against a background of foreignness and one of intimacy means the difference between a general habit of wariness and one of trust. One might call it a social difference, for after all, the common *socius* of us all is the great universe whose children we are. If materialistic, we must be suspicious of this *socius*, cautious, tense, on guard. If spiritualistic, we may give way, embrace, and keep no ultimate fear.”
- 9 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 10 Pawelski summarizes this point at *The Dynamic Individualism of William James*, 117: “The problem with such a God is that he is simply too big. In accordance with James’s view, theism’s claim that both God and truth are complete and independent of us leaves us with no ultimately meaningful purpose. Metaphysically, all is decided, and nothing is left for us to do but to work to establish the ethical will of God on earth as it is metaphysically established in heaven... [And b]ecause he is independent of us, he cannot be affected by our prayers or moved by our pleas for aid. Thus, he is simply too big to provide us with help and comfort when we need it.”
- 11 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 18.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 13 See *ibid.*, 20.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 See *ibid.*, 53.
- 16 Spinoza, Lotze, McTaggart, Royce, and Bradley are treated in Lecture II of *A Pluralistic Universe*, “Monistic Idealism.” Lecture III is entitled, “Hegel and His Method.”
- 17 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 18 See *ibid.*, 28, where he cites Emerson as an example of such reactions.
- 19 See *ibid.*, 29.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 46. At *ibid.*, 47, James writes: “What he did with the category of negation was his most original stroke. The orthodox opinion is that you can advance logically through the field of concepts only by going from the same to the same. Hegel felt deeply the sterility of this law of conceptual thought; he saw that in a fashion negation also relates things; and he had the brilliant idea of transcending the ordinary logic by treating advance from the different to the different as of it were also a necessity of thought. The so-called maxim of identity, he wrote, is supposed to be accepted by the consciousness of everyone. But the language which such a law demands, ‘A planet is a planet; Magnetism is magnetism; Mind is mind,’ deserves to be called silliness. No mind either speaks or thinks or forms conceptions in accordance with this law, and no existence of any kind whatever conforms to it. We must never view identity as abstract identity, to the exclusion of all difference... If thinking were no more than registering abstract identities, it would be a most superfluous performance. Things and concepts are identical with themselves only in so far as at the same time they involve distinction.” Notwithstanding all his opposition to Hegel’s monism and monism in general, James echoes this aspect of Hegel’s thought in Lecture IV of *A Pluralistic Universe*, as he details his own anti-intellectualism in order to bolster the pluralistic worldview.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 22 “Please observe that I go no farther now,” he writes at *ibid.*, 41.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 7–8 (emphasis removed).
- 25 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 55.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1901), 2:386 and 409, quoted at *ibid.*, 56.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 57.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 104.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 103.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 *Ibid.*, 104–5.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 105.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Ibid.*, 106.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 *Ibid.*, 109.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 113.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 110.
- 49 See *ibid.*, 106.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 108.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 112.
- 52 James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt et al., *The Works of William James*, vol. 3 (1912; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 21–44. Originally appeared in *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods* 1 (1904): 533–43, 561–70.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 22. One might question whether it is really possible to adequately execute, achieve, or live up to this radical standard, but I think it is fair to



say that James intends it more modestly as a *modus operandi*, as a guiding principle in an ongoing process of philosophizing that may never be completed.

54 *Ibid.*

55 See *ibid.*, 39. James expressly notes that his own pluralistic view hinges on the notion that there are *some* real connections among things in the universe. Contrary to other versions of pluralism, his own view does not deny all connections; rather, it affirms that there are some and denies that all is connected. See *ibid.*, 40–1.

56 *Ibid.*, 126.

57 *Ibid.*, 25. More broadly, we feel this continuity over the span of our lives, as James writes at *A Pluralistic Universe*, 129: “events separated by years of time in a man’s life hang together unbrokenly by the intermediary events. Their *names*, to be sure, cut them into separate conceptual entities, but no cuts existed in the continuum in which they originally came.”

58 James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 25.

59 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 25.

60 *Ibid.*, 26.

61 Pluralism gives a more authentic account of reality as experienced—particularly regarding our own experience of ourselves, so to speak. Monism places us in the role of “readers” of reality; but at the crux of our experience of ourselves is the feeling that we are “the very personages of the world-drama,” and pluralism restores us to that role (*ibid.*, 27). James writes at *ibid.*, 28: “It is surely a merit in a philosophy to make the very life we lead seem real and earnest. Pluralism, in exorcising the absolute, exorcises the great de-realizer of the only life we are at home in, and thus redeems the nature of reality from essential foreignness.”

62 James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 42.

63 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 38.

64 *Ibid.*, 146, 145.

65 *Ibid.*, 145.

66 *Ibid.*, 146.

67 *Ibid.*

68 Elsewhere he notes the common objection that pluralism destroys the world’s “rational continuity” by introducing novelties “jumping abruptly in, *ex nihilo*.” This objection, however, rests on a false premise, and he offers the following reply: “Novelty, as empirically found, doesn’t arrive by jumps and jolts, it leaks in insensibly, for adjacents in experience are always interfused, the smallest real datum being both a coming and a going, and even the numerical distinctness being realized effectively only after a concrete interval has passed” (*ibid.*, 153).

69 *Ibid.*, 147.

70 *Ibid.*, 151.

71 *Ibid.*, 152. James also writes at *ibid.*, 117: “What really is not things made but things in the making. Once made, they are dead, and an infinite number of alternative conceptual decompositions can be used in defining them.” He thus argues further for the pluralistic universe in the form of a *reductio* that homes in on certain conceptual difficulties, such as those discussed in Lecture IV—regarding Zeno’s paradox, in particular, and the attendant problems of conceptualizing motion and change, as we have seen earlier. Concepts might appropriately name that which is static or past, but with respect to the ever-flowing movement of life—which “buds and burgeons, changes and creates” (*ibid.*, 118)—they necessarily miss the mark.

72 *Ibid.*, 154.

73 *Ibid.*

## Pope Francis and the Culture War

by Kenneth D. Whitehead

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At least partly on account of the current culture war, much has been made of the words of Pope Francis on homosexuality, words which he delivered in the course of an in-flight press interview during his return to Rome from the World Youth Day celebrations in Brazil. While the world press and media, always avid for some new angle in connection with today’s on-going drive for so-called homosexual “rights,” and hence bound to interpret almost anything said by Francis in the light of their own preoccupations, the pope’s mind was focused rather distinctly elsewhere, namely, on the case of an individual monsignor recently appointed by him to a Vatican

position, but now being accused in press and media stories of having once as a Vatican diplomat been involved in “scandalous” homosexual activities. The widespread misinterpretations and misunderstandings that resulted were due more to the media’s pro-homosexual agenda than to what the pope actually said.

Fresh from his triumph in Rio, where more than 3.5 million faithful crowded Copacabana Beach for the closing WYD Mass, Pope Francis in his in-flight press interview replied to an extraordinarily wide range of questions with all the verve and spirit to which we have now become accustomed. It is too bad, though, that in the resulting press and media reports it was his off-the-cuff remarks concerning homosexuality that eclipsed most of the other—interesting—things he had to say. This pope has shown himself adept in expressing himself in plain and even blunt language which it would seem nobody could fail to understand.

Except that, once the topic of homosexuality was broached, most of media reports on the pope's interview seemed to be almost exclusively about nothing but that; and most of them, moreover, at least initially, precisely *did* fail to understand the meaning and import of the pope's words. Typical of not a few headlines couched in almost identical words was the headline in the July 30 *Washington Post* which trumpeted the pope's words: "Who am I to judge?"—referring, it was instantly assumed, to homosexuals. This headline was followed by a sub-heading announcing that "Pope Francis says the Catholic Church shouldn't marginalize gays"—as if up to then the marginalization of homosexuals was what the Catholic Church had chiefly been engaged in.

The widespread and probably inevitable impression created by these words was that Pope Francis had finally had to reconcile himself and come to terms with what much of the world had already long since come to believe, namely, that homosexual behavior was now normal and accepted, and hence that those identifying themselves as "gays" should no longer be judged, faulted, or penalized. Even some Catholics were at least temporarily kept wondering if the pope had not in fact announced some momentous new "change," if not in the Church's actual teaching, then at least in her attitude toward homosexual behavior. Faced with this kind of misunderstanding, New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan even felt obliged to go on both CBS and NBC television to explain that, no, there was no change in the Church's teaching, but merely one in what Cardinal Dolan called "tone."

Of course much of the follow-up reporting on the pope's words soon brought out that there was indeed no change in the Church's teaching; that homosexuality continued to be considered a disorder and homosexual acts a sin; that the pope's words about not marginalizing homosexuals had all along been the express teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (although the *Catechism* does not use the word "marginalize," but rather in CCC 2358 says that there should be no "discrimination" in their regard, and further says that they should be treated with "respect, compassion, and sensitivity"); that the pope was thus really expressing the very traditional view that we must love the sinner while hating the sin; and that, moreover, the pope in his remarks about not judging was never in any case talking about homosexuals in general anyway, but rather was referring specifically to those who, in the pope's words, "accept the Lord and have good will," that is, those who have repented and eschewed active homosexual behavior.

Pope Francis only got into the subject of homosexuality in the first place because a reporter asked him about the appointment he had made of Monsignor Batista Ricca to head the Institute of Religious Works, the Vatican "bank." A secular Italian journal, *L'Espresso*, well known for printing Vatican exposés, had published a story relating that Monsignor Ricca had been involved in what it styled a "scandalous" homosexual relationship years earlier while serving at the pontifical nunciature in Uruguay. In a subsequent story, *L'Espresso* claimed that somebody in the Vatican had "sanitized" Monsignor Ricca's file in order to protect him. The implication was that Monsignor Ricca's appointment should be withdrawn since he had been shown to be part of what had come to be called a "gay lobby" in the Vatican.

These stories in *L'Espresso* had already been labeled "not trustworthy" by the Vatican before the pope was ever interviewed. Pope Francis himself replied to the reporter's question by saying that he had read Monsignor Ricca's file, had found no incriminating information, and the appointment therefore stood. How media reports then turned this brief exchange into worldwide reports that the pope was now declining to "judge" homosexuals and their behavior, however, can only be explained by the assumptions and expectations of media practitioners engaged in today's culture war.

It turned out too that Pope Francis personally knows Monsignor Ricca quite well, since the latter manages the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* where the pope currently resides, and previously managed a priest's house where Cardinal Bergoglio was accustomed to stay when in Rome. The pope's remarks about not judging those who have come "to accept the Lord and have good will," then, were thus intensely personal. They were hardly a declaration of the pope's views on how to treat homosexuals in general.

And at this point the pope launched into a rather extensive discussion of sin, repentance, and forgiveness; he insisted that when a sin repented of is forgiven, God literally *forgets* it—the pope's choice of words. Hence we too should forget it, the suggestion was, not consent to its being dredged up years and even decades later in journalistic exposés. Pope Francis was hardly advocating nonjudgmentalism with regard to homosexual behavior generally, nor was he approaching the subject in the way it is typically treated in the light of today's culture war. As several writers have also pointed out, his approach was not dissimilar to that of Jesus himself in the matter of the woman taken in adultery (cf. Jn 8:2–11).

The comparison was apt (although Pope Francis did *not* add what Jesus found it necessary to add, namely, the admonition, “do not sin *again*” (emphasis added)).

The pope did go on, however, to expostulate quite vehemently on the necessity of making what he called “a distinction between the fact of a person being gay and the fact of a lobby”—a term evidently now current in Italian meaning “an advocacy group.” This was because lobbies, the pope insisted, “are not good. They are bad.” While it was perhaps unusual for the bishop of Rome to be expatiating on “lobbies” at all, this was the term that had been used in the reporter’s question. Moreover, it was included in the title of the more recent article in *L’Espresso*: “*La Lobby Gay*.” The newly media-designated “nonjudgmental” Pope Francis then went on, however, to condemn out of hand what he understood “lobbies” to be: “. . . a lobby of greedy people, a lobby of politicians, a lobby of Masons. So many lobbies. . .” He added: “The problem is not in having this [homosexual] tendency. . . . The problem is the lobbying of this tendency.”

This is as close as Pope Francis ever came to speaking out against the organized homosexual “rights” movement currently engaged in “lobbying” to impose on society so-called same-sex marriage, thereby normalizing and legitimizing deviancy. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Catholic Church, by the nature of her own teaching, is strictly obliged to oppose this bogus homosexual “rights” movement, and she steadily does oppose it. Pope Francis too, when questioned, readily and immediately confirms the Church’s necessary and radical opposition to it.

However, Pope Francis does not seem to want the Church’s strong publicly stated opposition to certain evils in the culture war to be the focus of his pontificate. He is well aware of the threats posed to any kind of Christian life and to society in general through the aggressive promotion of the kinds of evils which are what in fact have brought about the culture war; and from time to time he does speak out against these evils, especially when asked about them. Invariably he gives the Church’s true position when he does. In fact, however, he rarely does speak out on these evils *unless* he is asked about them. As his basic approach, he evidently prefers to accentuate the positive—to focus on the love of God, the truths of the faith, and the benefits—as well as the joy!—of true belief.

During his in-flight press interview, for example, he

was specifically asked why he did not speak out more strongly and directly against legalized abortion and gay marriage. He replied that “the Church has already expressed herself perfectly on this. . . . Nor did I speak out about fraud or lies or other things on which the Church has a clear doctrine.” He added that “young people know perfectly well what the position of the Church is.”

While this may well be the case, the very way the question was posed to him suggests a current of opinion in the Church to the effect that the pope *should* be speaking out more strongly on the kinds of evils that have brought about today’s culture war. He should be doing so precisely because of the inroads certain evils have made and are continuing to make in contemporary society. And there is, of course, a great deal to be said for this point of view. This was surely brought out, for example, by the very way in which the pope’s off-the-cuff in-flight remarks on homosexuality were so badly misunderstood and misinterpreted by both the media and the public: some things have so thoroughly taken hold in today’s society that even the pope supposedly now has to allow for them, regardless of what the Church may have taught.

However, Francis is the pope, and how he thinks his pontificate needs to be conducted is the way that it is going to be conducted. If he believes, as he evidently does, that his emphasis as Christ’s appointed teacher needs to be placed on the positive aspects of the faith rather than on today’s contentious culture war issues, then that is where the emphasis is likely to be placed.

Where the record clearly shows that Pope Francis can be relied on, however, even with regard to typical culture war issues, is that he will never deviate, not even in the slightest, from the teaching of the Church. When asked at one point during his in-flight interview what “his” position was, he promptly replied: “That of the Church. I am a child of the Church.” He confirmed this when questioned about female ordination, flatly declaring, “That door is closed.”

Throughout his entire WYD sojourn in Brazil, as throughout his pontificate to date generally, he has consistently shown himself both willing and able to confirm his brethren in the faith (cf. Lk 22:32). It is a charge from Christ that he appears to take quite seriously. And is this not primarily what we should be looking to the Vicar of Christ to do, rather than expecting him to serve as a kind of general fighting the culture war? ✠

# Catholic Colleges Are Essential Agents of Evangelization

## *How to Form Graduates to Be Apostles of Jesus Christ*

by Msgr. Stuart W. Swetland, S.T.D.

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**I**t cannot be forgotten that Jesus is the reason for Catholic higher education, and his Person and teaching should permeate everything we do.

As Benedict XVI told Catholic educators gathered at The Catholic University of America in 2008: "Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost, every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God, who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4)."

This is why Catholic colleges and universities are so important to the "New Evangelization." Blessed John Paul II stated in *Ecclesia in America*, the post-synodal exhortation on America (71), that "[i]n the overall work of the New Evangelization, the educational sector occupies a place of honor." In this paragraph, the pope made clear what is needed for effective witness to Christ: "Catholic centers of education...will be able to engage in authentic evangelization only if at all levels—including that of the university—they clearly preserve their Catholic orientation. The content of the education they impart should make constant reference to Jesus Christ and his message as the Church presents it in her dogmatic and moral teaching. Only in this way will they train truly Christian leaders in the different spheres of human activity and in society, especially in politics, economics, science, art and philosophical reflection."

Thus an essential starting point for colleges and universities to fulfill their role in the New Evangelization is an explicit Christocentrism that is faithful to the teaching of Christ and his Church and that attempts to integrate faith and reason in all areas of research and study.

Some might protest that evangelization is pastoral work, and universities are about research and education. This is a false dichotomy for several reasons. First, most of our colleges and universities are residential and therefore require a vibrant, faithful, focused pastoral ministry. Second, the research, teaching, and studying that is essential to the nature of a university stem from the innate desire in all of us to know and live in accordance with what is true. But, ultimately, as Saint Augustine taught and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*—the apostolic constitution on higher education—quotes, the search for truth and the search for God are one because God is Truth (John 14:6): "In fact, the blessed life consists in the joy that comes from the truth, since this joy comes from you who are Truth, God my light, salvation of my face, my God" (St. Augustine, *Confessions* X, xxiii, 3). Third, every university recognizes its essential role in forming the next generation of intellectual and social leaders. But this commitment to service (in other words, one's vocation in life) ultimately makes sense only if there is meaning and purpose to reality. Authentic service means helping people discover who and why they really are. As *Gaudium et Spes* 22, teaches, it is only in Christ that man's vocation becomes clear. Fourth, a university is the ideal place for forming disciples who can live completely integrated lives. Where else can the research and formation take place that will allow modern men and women to integrate their faith and their field of endeavor, their love of Christ with their daily vocation of work and family life?

For all these reasons and more, the Catholic university is an essential agent in the New Evangelization.

Practically, what does this mean? Some distinctions must be made, and different Catholic colleges and universities have somewhat different roles to play, given their unique histories and varying demographics; but, minimally, it seems to me that this means that every student (whether Catholic or not) who attends a Catholic college or university should be thoroughly familiar with the person of Jesus Christ and his teachings. They should be well versed in the basic *kerygma*

teaching concerning Christ's life, death and resurrection. They should know that they are all invited to join in the worship and prayer of the community (and if they are not Catholic but choose to become so, into full communion with the Catholic Church).

As well-educated members of a diverse world, our students should all have achieved "religious literacy"—a working knowledge of the basic teachings of the major world religions. Every student should be taught how to live a virtuous life (including the theological, moral, and intellectual virtues) and know of the basic human dignity of each and every person because of their creation in the *imago Dei*. They should be introduced to the social teaching of the Church, especially in those areas where our society is most unjust (life issues, the nature of the family, immigration, and so on). They should see their lives as full of meaning and purpose and be invited to examine and deepen their own faith and reflect on their calling to be servant leaders.

For our Catholic students, we need to do more. We must afford the opportunity for our Catholic students to appropriate their faith on an adult level, making a personal commitment to an intimate, passionate relationship with Jesus and his community, the Church. They should have a working knowledge of at least the basics of Church teaching, as compiled in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. God willing, they will go beyond the basics to begin a life of theological study and prayer that will deepen their faith and commitment.

They should know that they are called to greatness and saintliness, with a vocation to personal holiness and a particular calling or vocation to serve others, especially those most in need. They should be well versed in their majors and understand, in depth, the relationship between faith and reason, ethics and practice in their fields.

We must form our Catholic graduates to be apostles of Jesus Christ, so that they may spread the Good News to others. Obviously, there is much work to be done.

Perhaps a starting point would be recognizing that

such efforts will require more "agents of evangelization" than our current staffing affords. This is especially so if, as many experienced pastors will attest, most evangelization today takes place via peers. This evangelization of "like by like" will mean the need to recruit and train young adults to work to evangelize their peers. Groups like Fellowship of Catholic University Students and The Evangelical Catholic have already begun this work, but much more is needed.

Second, and this will be a painful admission, we have to face the catechetical crisis in our Church today. Our faculty, staff, and students are bright and very capable. But far too many of them have not received an adequate catechetical formation on which to build. There is much need for remedial work in this field. But this ought not to surprise us. Because of the general educational shortcomings in our society, there is all kinds of remedial work going on at colleges and universities: math, science, languages, reading skills, writing, and so on. Why should we be resistant to recognize and address the remedial work needed to be done in catechetics? The talented and creative people at our campuses should be able to develop the kind of college-level courses that would weave together history, art, literature, music, architecture, and our faith tradition, so as to present in a coherent, complete, and attractive way the basic teachings of the Church. Without such an honest assessment, I am afraid that our efforts in the New Evangelization will be like building castles in the sand.

Before his resignation, Benedict XVI finished his *ad limina* visits with the bishops of the United States. His discussions focused on the New Evangelization in the context of American culture; and in one (May 5, 2012), Benedict stated: "It is no exaggeration to say that providing young people with a sound education in the faith represents the most urgent internal challenge facing the Catholic community in your country."

Our Catholic colleges and universities, to be what they are called to be, must rise to meet this challenge. ✠





# Sacral Violence: Reconsidering the Regensburg Address

By John J. Conley, SJ  
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One of the most controversial legacies of the pontificate of Pope Emeritus Benedict is the “Regensburg Address,” an academic lecture delivered during his 2006 visitation of his native Bavaria. Widely derided as a diplomatic and ecumenical blunder, the speech was criticized as an example of Benedict’s political naïveté, bumbling advisors, and chauvinism toward non-Christian religions. With the retirement of Benedict from the office of the papacy, a calmer assessment of the address is possible. It remains a challenging argument on the theoretical roots of religious violence in a distorted philosophy of the divine attributes.

## Controversy Revisited

“Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”<sup>1</sup>

This sentence, embedded in the address delivered by Pope Benedict XVI to the faculty of the University of Regensburg on September 12, 2006, provoked an immediate reaction. Numerous Muslim groups condemned the remark as an attack on the person of the Prophet Mohammed. Even the editors of *The New York Times* dived into the fray. “There is more than enough religious anger in the world. So it is particularly disturbing that Pope Benedict XVI has insulted Muslims, quoting a 14th-century description of Islam as ‘evil and inhuman.’”<sup>2</sup>

The reaction was not confined to words. Rioters denounced the pope’s words in Pakistan, Egypt, and Iran. The murder of an Italian missionary nun in Somalia was justified by an appeal to the inflammatory phrase.

Even the subsequent reaction of the Vatican suggested that Pope Benedict had misspoken on the question of Islam. On September 16, 2006, Tarciso Cardinal Bertone, the Vatican’s Secretary of State, expressed

regrets over the violent response to the Regensburg Address. “The Holy Father sincerely regrets that certain passages of his address could have sounded offensive to the sensitivities of the Muslim faithful, and should have been interpreted in a manner that in no way corresponds to his intentions.”<sup>3</sup> In his Angelus address on September 17, 2006, Pope Benedict himself adopted the rhetoric of regret. “I am deeply sorry for the reactions in some countries to a few passages of my address at the University of Regensburg, which were considered offensive to the sensibility of Muslims.”<sup>4</sup> As the British theologian Michael Walsh noted,<sup>5</sup> no apology was given for the speech itself, but the media controversy surrounding the Regensburg Address quickly reduced it to a diplomatic gaffe and a model of inter-religious insensitivity.

It is my thesis that this standard interpretation seriously misunderstood the address and unfairly painted Pope Benedict as an agent of intolerance. Furthermore, it missed the point of the address, which was to show how the refusal to use reason or the improper use of reason to reflect on God can justify a sacral violence that can disfigure Christianity as easily as it does Islam or any other religious tradition.

## Distortion and Correction

First, let us consider the distortion of Pope Benedict’s remarks. The famous inflammatory phrase was not the pope’s own. He was citing the fourteenth-century Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus in his debate with a Persian Muslim scholar on the respective truth of Christianity and Islam. Paleologus was criticizing the Muslim concept of holy war, the *jihad*, as it was presented in the Koran. The scholarly emperor moves from a criticism of the concept of holy war to a condemnation of any attempt to effect religious conversion through the use of violence.

Pope Benedict clearly does not endorse Paleologus’s frank criticism of Mohammed and of Mohammed’s position on the *jihad*. On the contrary, the pope explicitly distances himself from the emperor’s assessment. He criticizes the dismissive tone of Paleologus’s

remarks. “He addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general.”<sup>6</sup> More substantively, the pope points out that there are other passages in Mohammed which appear to endorse religious freedom and renounce the use of violence in religious matters. “The emperor must have known that surah 2,256 reads: ‘There is no compulsion in religion.’”<sup>7</sup>

Predictably, in the media’s coverage of the Regensburg Address and its subsequent quarrel, such passages disappeared. A complex discussion of religion and violence, buttressed by a nuanced and critical use of a medieval interreligious text, was reduced to the caricature of a Church leader who was culturally insensitive if not the architect of his own religious intolerance.

## Voluntaristic Theology and Sacral Violence

Next, let us focus on the actual purpose of the Regensburg Address. In his September 16 statement, Cardinal Bertone underlines what I believe to be the central point of Pope Benedict in the lecture. In Bertone’s words, the pope’s argument is “a clear and radical rejection of the religious motivation for violence, from whatever side it may come.”<sup>8</sup> It is my thesis that the address attempts to criticize types of philosophical and theological reflection on God that can deliberately or unconsciously justify acts of violence in the name of God. Behind outbreaks of religious violence, of which recent Islamic terrorism is only one species, lie dangerously faulty conceptions of God’s very essence.

Strikingly, Pope Benedict criticizes concepts of God that so radically emphasize God’s transcendence and otherness that God appears to be divorced from reason itself. In such exaggerated portraits of God’s alterity, God’s sovereign will eclipses the other divine attributes. God’s omnipotence overwhelms the divine moral attributes of goodness, justice, and mercy, as well as the divine intellectual attributes of reason and wisdom.

This tendency to create a voluntaristic portrait of God has known both Muslim and Christian variants. “For Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality. . . . The noted French Islamist R. Arbnaldez . . . points out that Ibn Hazm went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own

word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God’s will, we would even have to practice idolatry.”<sup>9</sup> In such a conception of God, even the basic principles of morality are based on God’s will alone, not on features of the nature created by God. Moreover, this will is open to radical change, even to self-contradiction. In such a voluntaristic concept of God, the divine will appears to become an arbitrary force impervious to rational scrutiny. The principles of logic, science, and ethics appear to be the fleeting expressions of a divine will that can swiftly transform itself in punctual expressions of omnipotence.

The Regensburg Address stresses that this temptation to a voluntaristic concept of God haunts Christianity as much as it does Islam. Pope Benedict singles out the work and school of the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus as a cautionary example of the theoretical and practical dangers of focusing on the divine will to the exclusion of other attributes. “In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God’s *voluntas ordinata*. Beyond this is the realm of God’s freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazm and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness.”<sup>10</sup> Such a portrait of God distorts the nature of the God proclaimed by the Church since it suppresses the moral and intellectual attributes of God in favor of the sole attributes of the divine will. Divine omnipotence, the inscrutable source of rational and ethical principles, has become an arbitrary power at the service of a divine freedom that is arational. Unsurprisingly, this voluntarist understanding of God threatens to dissolve the ethical and political orders since it encourages a subjectivist ethics, where the categories of right and wrong are conceived as the expressions of the individual or group will, and an authoritarian state, since the power of the monarch is now the creator of the order of right rather than its servant.

Inevitably, such voluntarist theologies tend to justify a type of sacral violence. If it is omnipotence, rather than reason or goodness, that is the essential attribute of God, the imitation or service of this God by faithful disciples will privilege the use of force in the treatment of infidels. Restraints on this use of force by natural-law appeals to basic goods or inalienable rights will fail, because such appeals point to a fragile nature that is

subordinate to God's sovereign will. Attempts to pursue religious disputes through rational debate rather than armed encounter will also fail, because in the human person as in God, it is the will rather than reason that is the central faculty. For Pope Benedict, theology is a desperately serious business. We act toward others according to the predominant concept of God we propagate in our mosques and our churches. The blood of the innocent shed in a thousand holy wars lies on the voluntaristic idol of an arbitrary God that has distorted both Christian and Muslim thought.

As an antidote to these voluntaristic deviations of theology, Pope Benedict insists on the necessity of reclaiming reason (the *logos*) as a central, if not the central, attribute of God. This insistence on divine reason as a cardinal attribute and as the originating principle of the cosmos is not derived from philosophy alone; it is embedded within Sacred Scripture's revelation of the divine essence. As in many of his other writings, Pope Benedict privileges the Gospel according to Saint John as a witness to the centrality of divine reason. "John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: 'In the beginning was the *logos*.' This is the very word used by the emperor [Paleologus]:

God acts *sun logo*, with *logos*. *Logos* means both reason and word – a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis. In the beginning was the *logos*, and the *logos* is God, says the Evangelist.<sup>11</sup>

Based on revelation, faith itself points to the supreme reason that constitutes God's very essence. When the monotheistic believer scrutinizes the cosmos, he or she should detect not only the power of God manifest in creation but also – or even more so – the reason of God manifest in the cosmos and in the basic principles of its construction detectable through scientific research. In the perspective of the Regensburg Address, it is wisdom rather than omnipotence that constitutes the central divine attribute in an authentic theology.

This emphasis on the divine *logos* also has an anthropological versant. *Imago Dei*, the human person possesses a reason that imperfectly mirrors the divine wisdom. Pope Benedict insists on the real analogy that exists between the divine *logos* and the dimmer human version. "The faith of the Church has always insisted

that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which – as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated – unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language."<sup>12</sup> Unsurprisingly, such a stress on the centrality of reason rather than will in the human person undercuts the recourse to violence that a voluntaristic anthropology often encourages. Rational dialogue, rather than annihilation of the other, becomes the privileged path to pursue religious differences. Enhanced recognition of the reason within the human person leads to greater embrace of human rights, since a recognition of human rationality leads one to the source of human dignity. Religious violence loses its justification as both the human and divine wills are perceived within the larger framework of divine and human reason and in an attitude of nonviolent respect toward the exercise of this reason.

## Conclusion

If the media storm surrounding the Regensburg Address seriously misinterpreted and even libeled it, I do not think it should be received uncritically. If I had had ten minutes with the pope – an old game among Catholic intellectuals – I would have cautioned him on the tone of the address. As the pope suggests in his critical discussion of Duns Scotus, the danger of an arbitrary God is not a problem for Muslims alone. All religious traditions, including Catholicism, share it. Christianity shares the historical danger toward blessing its own equivalents of the holy war. As John Paul II argued in his 1994 apostolic letter *Tertio millennio adviente* preparing the celebrations for the third millennium of Christianity in the year 2000, the Church must examine with sorrow one great blemish in its history, especially during its second millennium of existence. This was the use of the sword to propagate the faith of the Church. "Another painful chapter of history to which sons and daughters of the Church must return with a spirit of repentance is that of the acquiescence given, especially in certain centuries, to intolerance and even the use of violence in the service of truth."<sup>13</sup> The ecclesiastical justification of the use of torture and the death penalty against heretics in the late medieval and early modern period, for example, is a reminder of how easily sacril violence can erupt on Christian soil, carrying elaborate theological arguments in tow.<sup>14</sup> If it is to be heard, the Church's case for the renunciation of

sacral violence and a renewed theology of divine reason must be the chastened voice of a fellow traveler in the paths of religious violence.

The Regensburg Address's warning on the dangers of a voluntaristic theology undergirding the practice of religious violence is not a brief against Muslim extremists alone; it is a warning to all of us on the practical dangers of conceiving God predominantly in terms of will or of power rather than of reason. Behind the practice of religious violence is an eclipse of divine wisdom. The philosophical and theological restoration of the centrality of this reason in our portrait of God is one of the Church's key contributions to the campaign against the scandal of violence undertaken in God's name. ✠

### Endnotes

- 1 Benedict XVI, *Faith, Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections*, delivered in the Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg (12 September 2006); hereafter cited as *FRU*.
- 2 Editors, "The Pope's Words," *The New York Times* (16 September 2006), A12.
- 3 Tarciso Cardinal Bertone, "Statement by Card. Tarciso Bertone" (16 September 2006), n. 5.
- 4 Pope Benedict XVI, "Angelus Address" (17 September 2006), n. 1.
- 5 Michael Walsh, "The Regensburg Address: Reason and Certainty" (19 September 2006), at [www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe\\_islam/regensburg\\_3920.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/regensburg_3920.jsp).
- 6 *FRU*, n. 3.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Tarciso Cardinal Bertone, no. 5.
- 9 *FRU*, n. 4.
- 10 *FRU*, n. 7.
- 11 *FRU*, n. 5.
- 12 *FRU*, n. 7.
- 13 John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 35.
- 14 Written in the heat of the crusade against the Albigensians, Pope Innocent IV's bull *Ad extirpanda* (1254) was the first major papal document justifying the use of torture against alleged heretics and specifying the rules to be used in the Inquisition's practice of torture. The teaching of Innocent IV was solemnly reaffirmed in bulls subsequently issued by Popes Alexander VI, Clement IV, Urban IV, and Clement V at the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311). Aquinas justifies the use of physical compulsion against heretics (*ST II-II*, q. 10, a. 8c) and the death penalty against relapsed heretics (*ST II-II*, q. 11, a. 3).

# A Critical Reading of the Roe v. Wade Decision

by D. Q. McNerny

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It was forty years ago that the Supreme Court of the United States handed down the *Roe v. Wade* decision, and today the country continues to reel from the ill effects of that signal instance of judicial recklessness. Other causes can be cited to explain the steady lowering of the moral tone of American culture that we have been witnessing over the past four decades, but this decision is arguably the chief among them. Here we have the spectacle of the highest court in the land putting a sordid seal of approval on the wholesale killing of innocent human life. A particularly heinous kind of viciousness is thus officially condoned.<sup>1</sup> The decision itself was extraordinary enough, but equally extraordinary—and perhaps this was entirely to be expected—were the arguments which the Court put forth to explain and defend that decision. Taken as a whole, the decision amounts to an elaborate exercise

in missing the point. This is a logical fallacy that can be fallen into more or less unconsciously, simply through carelessness, say, but such was not the case here; the Court's missing the point, its failure to address *the* issue before it, was calculated. The purpose of this article is to show the irrational line of thought which is consistently maintained throughout the *Roe v. Wade* decision. What we have is a house of cards erected on a foundation of sand.

The Court had before it a single very basic question to settle: What is the precise nature of abortion, what kind of act is it? Had the Court seen responding to that question as its first order of business, and had gone about it competently, the case would have been decided in very short order, or, more likely, it would never have been given a hearing in the first place. But the Court deliberately positioned itself so as to be able to evade that question, by adopting the pretense that a yet more basic question, one that had to be settled antecedently, did not admit of a definite answer.



In order to provide an adequate response to the question regarding the nature of abortion, one would first need to have an answer to the question, When does human life begin? Now, of course, this question has already been answered, and definitively. However, the strategy of the Court was to pretend that the question was still open, and this pretense was sustained throughout the entire written decision. Relying upon a supposedly widespread, but in fact non-existent, indecisiveness among the experts regarding the question, the Court, in the end, proceeds to make a judgment which flatly contradicts the position it all along gave the impression it was assuming.

Any educated person in the year 1973 who could honestly plead agnosticism regarding the question of when human life begins would have been someone who had just awoken from a sleep much longer than the protracted slumber of Rip Van Winkle. Modern science has established beyond the shadow of a doubt that human life begins at the moment of conception, when the male and female reproductive cells conjoin, each contributing its 23 chromosomes, to give rise to a single cell organism, the zygote, an entirely new and distinct human being, having a genetic package which is uniquely its own, different from that of the father and that of the mother.<sup>2</sup> The Court, in choosing to feign ignorance where there was absolutely no warrant for it, provides a clear example of vincible, which is to say culpable, ignorance. Working from the erroneous position that the question regarding the beginning of human life was undecided, the Court then developed a series of arguments over the course of the written decision the ultimate conclusion of which, though untenable, was entirely to be expected.

Had the Court acknowledged the fact that human life begins at conception, it would then have had no problem in answering the question regarding the nature of abortion. The logic here is quite uncomplicated. Granted that human life begins at conception, any direct attempt to terminate that life, at any time after it had begun, would be nothing else but the killing of a human being. That much being clearly established, two other questions immediately suggest themselves. What is the status of a preborn human being in terms of moral/legal guilt or innocence? Is a preborn human being a person? One has only to pose the first question to have the answer to it; a preborn human being can be nothing but a completely innocent creature in every respect. With that, the precise nature of abortion is given fuller description: it is the killing of an *innocent* human being.

The more pressing question has to do with whether the preborn human being is a person. The question has proved to be problematic for some, but it should not be so, for if it is acknowledged that the preborn is a human being, then the preborn is necessarily a human person. In effect, these terms, “human being” and “person,” are simply two ways of saying the same thing. How could a human being, at any stage of its development, be anything but a person? If one were to suppose otherwise, that the two, human being and person, are separable, what ontological justification could one provide for that supposition?<sup>3</sup>

Granting, then, that the preborn human being is a person, would not the Court, presuming it admitted as much, then be compelled to acknowledge that he or she had the status of a citizen, was thus owed the protection of the law, and, on a yet more basic level, was someone possessed of rights, the first and most primitive of which is the right to life? Indeed. The strategy of the Court, however, was to keep itself as distant as possible from having to face such pointed possibilities. By the cunning way it chose to handle the pivotal question regarding the beginning of human life, the Court was able to treat the questions regarding human nature and personhood in a purely legalistic way.

The manner in which the Court handled the issue regarding the beginning of human life, besides being a specific instance of missing the point, stands as an example of begging the question, that is, assuming to be true something which is not self-evidently true and therefore has to be demonstrated. The Court committed this fallacy by its contending that it was not the case that the beginning of human life had been clearly established. It was therefore incumbent upon the Court to show cause, to provide evidence for that contention. It offered none, and for very good reason: there was none.

In the early paragraphs of the written decision, which give a general description of the case, we find reference to “the right to privacy,” and this is presented as the foundation for “a woman’s qualified right to terminate her pregnancy” (2).<sup>4</sup> The coupling of those two “rights” becomes the centerpiece of the decision, around which everything else will be structured. We are being asked to believe that there is, first, a clear and indisputable right, the right to privacy, which then serves as the justifying foundation for an additional right, the right to abortion. But this tidy arrangement cannot be allowed to pass as if it had any real legitimacy to it. What we have here, in fact, is a specious right



supporting another specious right. The vaporous “right of privacy” is nothing more than the product of overheated judicial imaginations. It was “discovered,” albeit unstated, among the interstices of the Constitution, in a somewhat desperate attempt to locate legal support for what otherwise would have had to remain suspended in mid-air. The legitimacy of the so-called right to privacy can be challenged on a number of different grounds, one of which has to do with the relationship between rights and responsibilities. No genuine right stands in splendid isolation, but necessarily comes accompanied by responsibilities. We have heard much in recent years about the right to privacy. Who has ever heard any mention made of the responsibilities which go along with that right?

Besides “rights” which are little more than the products of judicial conjuring, we find the Court also alluding, and repeatedly, to another specious notion, which it calls “potential human life” (2, 15, 17, 20), a notion brought in to bolster its fictitious contention that the human status of the fetus is indeterminable. The notion of potential life, as the Court makes use of it, is simply incoherent. If the entity in the womb of a pregnant woman assimilates nourishment and grows, which is incontestably the case, then this entity is a living creature. There is nothing at all “potential” about it insofar as its unmistakable vitality is concerned. One may coherently speak of potential life before a child is conceived, but once conception takes place there is actual human life and nothing else.

We are led to believe that the Court’s decision should be seen as reflecting a “recent attitudinal change” regarding the subject of abortion – “new thinking about an old issue” (3)—and that this is supposedly to be taken as lending additional support to the soundness of its decision. Doubtless there were, in the early years of the decade of the 1970s alterations in public opinion regarding the subject of abortion, but how pervasive were they? It is being suggested to us that the Court was following public opinion, whereas a stronger case could be made for the thesis that it was not so much following public opinion as it was shaping it, by means of the decision it handed down. But however that might be, the real issue has to do with whether or not it is part of the job description of any judicial body, especially when it is deciding a case of this import, to allow itself to be influenced by the ever vacillating configurations of public opinion. Moral right and wrong are not to be determined by a show of hands.

By continuously referring to abortion as a

“medical procedure,” the Court subtly promotes the impression that it is not dealing with something which carries with it deep moral significance. If abortion is, after all, just another medical procedure, then it can be properly assessed according to criteria which are primarily pragmatic in character. The Court’s reasoning, governed by what is essentially a reductionistic way of regarding abortion, has three steps to it. [1] Abortion is simply a medical procedure; [2] in times past this medical procedure was justifiably curtailed by law because it was a dangerous procedure, and the legal curtailment had as its principal purpose the protection of the life of the mother. [3] Today, thanks to our “advancing medical knowledge,” that medical procedure is no longer dangerous, and therefore it no longer needs to be curtailed by law. Evasive reasoning of this kind, whereby the pressing moral issues which are inextricable bound up with abortion are deftly side-stepped, is to be found throughout the written decision.

In Part V of the document the Court begins to get down to specifics in the development of the argument intended to explain and defend its decision. A significant portion of the argument, taking up almost a full seven pages, is presented as a survey of “the history of abortion,” which is undertaken “for such insights as that history might afford us” (8). This historical survey is rather sweeping in scope, beginning in ancient times, carrying through the medieval period into the modern era, and ending with the present day. Interestingly, the survey cites an 1859 AMA committee report that describes abortion as a “frightful crime,” an “unwarrantable destruction of human life,” and calls attention to “the grave defects of our laws, both common and statute,” for the attitude they reflect regarding “the independent and actual existence of the child before birth, as a living being” (12). The “insights” that the Court wanted to glean from the survey turned out to be, not surprisingly, supportive of its bias, due in no small part to the running pro-Court interpretations given to the information presented in the survey.

The message that is clearly intended to be gotten from the survey is twofold: First, whatever moral meaning might be attached to abortion is of a relative nature; abortion is not to be regarded, in itself, as necessarily evil. Second, the attitude toward abortion which is coming to prevail today has to it “a modern cast,” meaning that it reflects a climate of opinion that is more enlightened than those of times past. It is with these considerations in mind, then, that we are to interpret the position taken by the AMA toward

abortion in 1859; that position may now be regarded as effectively superseded, replaced by a more progressive view of the matter, for, after all, the position was simply an expression of an “anti-abortion mood” (12) which was prevalent in the nineteenth century. With that, a life and death issue is reduced to a matter of fluctuating social moods.

The historical survey, while perhaps of some sociological interest, is in point of fact totally irrelevant to the issue at hand. A survey comparable to the one found in the written decision could easily have been made with slavery as its subject. Not only have people held different attitudes toward that peculiar institution over the course of the centuries, but for most of those centuries it was not regarded in an especially negative light, except, doubtless, by the slaves themselves. No less a thinker than Aristotle formulated philosophical arguments in defense of slavery. And then there was the U.S. Supreme Court itself, which in times past gave its official sanction to slavery. In light of these realities, are we to conclude that the morality of slavery is a relative matter, that its rightness or wrongness is to be determined by the dominant moods of the times? Obviously not. Slavery is intrinsically evil, no matter what people might have thought about it, no matter how prevalent it might have been for the greater part of human history, and despite the fact that it continues to exist even today, in the enlightened world in which we deem ourselves privileged to live. The case is precisely the same with regard to abortion, for, like slavery, it is intrinsically evil. In the end, the historical survey functions as little more than a prolonged distraction, masquerading as a serious scholarly contribution to the argument, worthy of being given thoughtful attention as providing additional support for the Court’s position.

In Part VII of the *Roe v. Wade* decision we are informed that “three reasons have been advanced to explain historically the enactment of criminal abortion laws” (14): [1] they were the product of Victorian social concern; [2] they were intended to protect pregnant women, because of the dangers inherent to the abortion procedure; [3] they were intended to protect prenatal life. The Court dismisses the first explanation out of hand, while giving special approving attention to the second. The Court maintained that because of the advances made in medicine since the nineteenth century, abortion can now be regarded as a “safe” medical procedure, and for that reason there is no longer a sound basis for criminalizing abortion. What the Court is doing here, once again, is gratuitously treating abortion

“like any other medical procedure” (15). In times past it was rather dangerous, but today, thanks to improved know-how and advanced technology, it can be performed without undue risk to the mother. Therefore, it should not be prohibited by law. Here we see clearly reflected the Court’s calculated refusal to admit that there is a moral quality which is intrinsic to abortion, taken in itself.

Given the general drift of the reasoning of the written decision to this point, the central feature of which is the Court’s persistent self-imposed ignorance regarding the key issue as to when human life begins, it was altogether predictable how it was going to handle the third explanation offered for the criminalization of abortion – to protect prenatal life. “Some of the argument for this justification,” the Court asserts, “rests on the theory that new human life is present from the moment of conception” (15). Note that the Court sees itself as dealing here with “a theory” (it is later referred to as “a belief”), which leaves the impression that it can reasonably be replaced with another theory or belief, one which can be taken as being more tenable because supported by better arguments. By transforming a fact into a mere theory or belief, the Court thus enables itself to treat that fact dismissively.

In Part VIII of the decision we find that a good deal of concentrated attention is paid to “the right to privacy.” Given the crucial role this fictitious right is called upon to play in the decision, it is easy to see why the Court gives so much attention to it. Having advised us at the outset that its purpose was to resolve the issue before it “by constitutional measurement,” (3) the Court now feels obliged candidly to admit that in fact there is no mention of any right to privacy in the Constitution. Happily, however, the right was nonetheless “discovered” there, doubtless not without some assiduous digging, and its “roots” were exposed in the First Amendment. It was also accommodatingly to manifest itself “in the penumbra of the Bill of Rights.” (16) It is the airy, epiphenomenal quality of this supposed right that has made it so usefully applicable in the hands of activists judges. And so it proved to be in this case, and the Court saw its way clear to reach the determination that “the right to privacy” was “broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy” (16), a “decision” which a few lines later is explicitly identified as a “right.” We should not be particularly surprised at this outcome, for given the murky mode of thought to which the members of the Court had willingly surrendered themselves, they were

probably properly disposed to see the ethereal right of privacy broad enough to encompass just about anything. Like pure potency, it allows itself to be actualized in a countless number of ways.

The Court, in terms of the preselected trajectory it was following, predictably made no attempt to justify the so-called right to abortion taken in itself, that is, without reference to the so-called right to privacy; there was a certain wisdom in this, for any such attempt would have been foredoomed to failure. The indefensible admits of no defense. The Court did, however, approach the issue by indirection, following a consequentialist mode of moral reasoning. Specifically, the Court took the tack of citing various deleterious effects that *could* follow upon an abortion, but, mind you, for the mother only. No consideration at all is ever given to the welfare of the preborn child. One need not make any concessions on behalf of a phantom. With respect to the mother, the concerned Court conjectured that abortion might adversely affect her “mental health,” a category so amorphous so as to be virtually meaningless. The Court also made mention of what it identified as “the stigma of unwed motherhood” (16), leaving the suggestion that abortion on demand would remove that stigma. Has it? Today, in the United States, forty years after *Roe v. Wade*, 41 percent of all children are born out of wedlock; the percentage is markedly higher among certain ethnic and racial groups.

The Court’s key judgment is unambiguously stated: “We, therefore, conclude that the right to personal privacy includes the abortion decision” (17). Casting the reasoning behind this judgment in syllogistic form will help to accentuate its glaring speciousness: Privacy is a right: abortion is included in that right; therefore, abortion is a right. For any syllogistic argument to be sound, its major premise, that upon which the entire argument rests, must be self-evidently true. On this account, the Court’s argument clearly fails, for the existence of a right to privacy is anything but self-evident. The conclusion of the argument is therefore false: there is no such thing as a right to abortion. It must be classified as pure invention. The falsity of the conclusion of the argument can be seen at face value, for it asserts that there is a right to an act which is intrinsically disordered. The staggering import of the Court’s decision can be made starkly evident if, in the argument, and as expressed syllogistically, the killing of innocent life were to be given its proper name: Privacy is a right; murder is included in that right; therefore, murder is a right.

In Part IX of the *Roe v. Wade* decision the Court

directly addresses the question whether any standing should be given to the position that the protection of prenatal life can be considered to be legitimate grounds for prohibiting abortion. Then it asks if there are any grounds for regarding the fetus as a person. The Court concedes that, should it be shown that the fetus is a person, then abortion would be a criminal offense, for the fundamental right to life of a citizen would thereby be violated. The Court notes that those who argue on behalf of the personhood of the fetus cite “the well-known facts of fetal development” (18); this is not a little ironic, in light of the line the Court has chosen to take throughout the argument. The facts of fetal development were indeed well known, but it was the consistently maintained ploy of the Court to ignore them.

We read that the Court is persuaded “that the word ‘person,’ as used in the Fourteenth Amendment, does not include the unborn” (18). The Court then goes on to assert: “In short, the unborn have never been recognized in the law as persons in the whole sense” (20). Here again we have matter introduced into the argument which is quite irrelevant. The information provided by these two statements may be of some interest from the narrow point of view of U.S. legal history, but it has no bearing on the issue at hand. What the Court is erroneously implying here is that the status of personhood is something that can be established in purely positivistic terms; in other words, we are to understand that it is the state, through its laws, that determines who is and who is not a person. Guided by this superficial mode of reasoning, the Court contends that, because there is no reference made in the legal literature of the United States which associates personhood with the unborn, we are entitled to conclude that the unborn are not persons.

It is in Part IX of the decision that we find focused expression of the Court’s quite irrational refusal to accept as fact that human life begins at the moment of conception. The Court willfully blinds itself to that fact, and then persistently traffics in evasive language so as to sustain the fabrication that it is dealing with an unsettled question, referring, along the way, to “the wide divergence of thinking on this most sensitive and difficult question” (19), and, as we have already noted, identifying the fact that human life begins at conception as only a “theory” or “belief.” And, another point noted earlier, the Court continuously makes positive reference to the incoherent notion of potential life, as when it avows “that the fetus, at most, represents only the potentiality of life” (20).

Immediately after calling attention to the position held by the State of Texas, that “life begins at conception and is present throughout pregnancy” (19), the Court presents us with the single most astonishing statement to be found in the whole of this 38–page document: “We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins” (19). This assertion is positively breath-taking for its audacity and its egregious incongruity. But not satisfied with that, the Court goes on to add, underscoring its rank disingenuousness, that “the judiciary, at this point in the development of man’s knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer [to the question of when life begins]” (19). The fact of the matter is that the Court, by its decision, did nothing else but resolve the very question it claimed it need not resolve, providing for it an answer that was to have devastating consequences. By legalizing abortion, it effectively made the negative determination that life does *not* begin at conception, thus resolving the question at the expense of the unborn, while backhandedly attempting to give a respectable twist to its sham agnosticism.

The Court makes reference to the first trimester of pregnancy, adding what is little more than a vague suggestion to the effect that it would not be appropriate to perform an abortion beyond that time period. But of course we know the actual results of the Court’s unconscionable decision: abortion on demand, at any stage of the development of an unborn child, is now part of the American way of life, or perhaps we should say, the American way of death. But *Roe v. Wade* threw open the door wide to even worse degradation, for our culture has now become so callous that it is prepared to concede that the ethereal right to privacy is broad enough to encompass even infanticide.

The *Roe v. Wade* decision, in sum, is a carefully orchestrated, relentlessly carried out, assault on the truth. Facts are dissolved into non-facts, and pseudo-facts are gratuitously granted substantial existence and invested with a magic mantel of legitimacy. The Court had identified its task as the resolving of the issue set before it in a way that was “free of emotion and predilection.” (3) One can only speculate about the emotional states of the seven judges who gave their assent to this decision, but if the written document makes anything clear it is that it was shaped almost at every turn by predilection. Its arguments are composed not so much of reasons as rationalizations; instead of offering cogent

support for a sound judgment, the arguments’ only purpose is to serve as protective and obfuscating shelter for a position that, left to itself, could not survive full exposure to the sun.

The Court quoted from the final report, issued in 1871, of the AMA’s Committee on Criminal Abortion, which had protested vigorously against the “unwarrantable destruction of human life” (12). The quotation reads as follows: “We had to deal with human life. In a matter of less importance we could entertain no compromise. An honest judge on the bench would call things by their proper names. We could do no less” (12–13). Today, we have learned how to compromise when it comes to the matter of human life. We have forgotten how to call things by their proper names. ❧

## Notes

1. One cannot help but be impressed, reading Aristotle’s *Politics*, with the close association he draws between law and virtue. Ideally, the purpose of civil law is to civilize, more precisely, to enable those under the law to become virtuous and to live virtuous lives. St. Thomas Aquinas states the case in his typically direct and succinct manner: “The purpose of law is to make men good” (*ST I-II*, q. 95, a. 1). How lamentably distant the U.S. Supreme Court positioned itself from that ideal in the *Roe v. Wade* decision! Rather than fostering virtue, this decision does just the opposite: it serves actively to foster vice.
2. Today no competent biologists or physician could subscribe to the dishonest position the Court chose to take in this decision. The science of embryology makes clear what biology and medicine unanimously affirm – that human life begins at the moment of conception. Among the countless authoritative sources that could be cited regarding this question (all of which the Court could have found to be easily accessible) is the statement published by the Medical Group of the First International Conference on Abortion, which met in Washington, D. C. in October of 1967. In the report submitted by this group we read the following: “The majority of our group [the vote was 19 to 1] could find no point in time between the union of sperm and egg, or at least the blastocyst stage [the stage that follows immediately after fertilization], and the birth of the infant at which point we could say that this was not a human life.” The report adds: “The changes occurring between implantation, a six-weeks embryo, a six months fetus, a one-week-old child, or a mature adult are merely stages of development and maturation” (Quoted in, Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Willke. *Handbook on Abortion* [Cincinnati: Hiltz & Hayes Publishing Co., Inc., 1975], 9).
3. In the *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origins and on the Dignity of Procreation*, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1987, in the section entitled “Respect for Human Embryos,” we read: “The conclusion of science regarding the human embryo provides valuable indication for discerning by the use of reason a personal presence at the moment of the first appearance of a human life: how could a human individual not be a human person?”
4. In order to avoid the proliferation of footnotes, I have chosen to follow the practice, when quoting from the *Roe v. Wade* written decision, of simply placing after each quotation, in parentheses, the page number of the document where the quotation is to be found. The copy of the document which I am using is available here: <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com>



# Citizenship

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“Who Gets to be French?” is the title Karl E. Meyer gave to a brief essay in the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>1</sup> It is a vexing question: Who or what can be defined as French? When Nicholas Sarkozy was elected president of France in 2007, he fulfilled his campaign promise that if elected he would create a cabinet-level position to address social issues resulting from France’s previous liberal immigration policy. Newcomers from the Middle East or North Africa are known to grumble, “Our passports say that we are French, but we do not feel French because we are not accepted here.” Whose obligation is it to rectify that? The left demands that the host country adjust. Richard Thompson Ford finds that “The right to a cultural difference is now widely (if not universally) understood to be a basic human right, on a par with rights to religious liberty and racial equality.”<sup>2</sup> Here we have yet another right manufactured by the left, with the presumption that the native has the obligation to yield identity to the newcomer.

When the promised cabinet-level post, Minister of Immigration and National Identity, went to Brice Hortefeux in 2007, Sarkozy’s own position was not unknown. In his book, *La République, les religions, l’esperance*, Sarkozy pointedly asserted that the French need to talk about religion and its role in society and to talk also about the Hellenic and Christian sources of French culture. Migrants, he maintained have to be integrated through language and adhere to the principles, values, and symbols of French democracy. Muslims, for their part, have to understand the importance of the secular state and equality between men and women. With the support of Hortefeux and his successor, Claude Gueant, legislation was passed requiring foreigners to meet a language requirement and to profess allegiance to French values. Candidates for citizenship under the Sarkozy initiative are to be tested on French culture and history and are obligated to prove that they can speak the French language as well as an average fifteen-year old can. They are required to sign a document setting out their rights and responsibilities. Applicants will not be able to claim allegiance to another country while on French soil, although dual nationality

will still be permitted. France, with an Islamic minority making up approximately ten percent of its population, has the troubling task of integrating a people who choose to retain their own identity and live among their own kind under their own law.

“To understand a nation,” wrote The French poet, Paul Valéry, “be it England, France, Germany or Italy, one must attend to what each has created in the realm of the mind, expressions of intelligence and learning. The total intellectual and artistic treasure, the accumulated beauty of great works of art—written, sculpted, painted and constructive—is constitutive of a culture that would not exist apart from its roots in a particular national setting.”<sup>3</sup> Every nation of Europe, he notes, is a composite, the result of the different ethnic elements that came to be mixed with her territory. And in none of them is a single tongue spoken. Thus Paul Valéry can say of France, “The French nation resembles a tree several times grafted, the quality and flavor of whose fruit are the result of a happy wedding of very different saps and humors combining in a single and indivisible life.” In a poetic mode, he continues, “Whether we speak of the Capelins, of Joan of Arc, Louis IX, Henry IV, Richelieu, the Convention, or Napoleon, we are referring to one and the same thing, an active symbol of our national identity and unity.”<sup>4</sup>

Does national identity matter? It matters to hosts of immigrants in both Europe and North America who seek to retain not only their inherited customs but also their native language in their adopted country. It matters because traditions, the components of which we call a culture, are specific. One cannot be citizen of the world; identity is local. Identity is the characteristic of a people who have inhabited a land over a period of time, who have developed certain collective habits, evident in their manners, their dress, the feasts they enjoy, their religious bonds, the premium they put on education, and their attention to detail and precision. These are not universal traits but are rooted in centuries past and depend upon a historical consciousness, attention to the deeds of ancestors past.

In book III of the *Politics*, Aristotle offers a short treatise on the nature of citizenship that is worth revisiting. Ancient texts do not always speak to the present, but human nature, being a constant, certain of his observations are relevant to the present discussion.



Residence in a particular place, he finds, does not make one a citizen of that place. He who is a citizen under one regime may not be under another. A citizen, he says, is one whose mother and father were citizens. We know that in Aristotle's day a class of non-citizens had been drawn to Athens by economic opportunity. In Athens the non-citizen had the duty to defend the city but did not have political rights. A certain excellence was required for citizenship. Membership in the political community entailed the ability to take part in the framing of law and participating in judicial proceedings. In socially stratified Athens, the great majority of the population was not enfranchised. This was true not only of slaves but of husbandmen and laborers who were thought to lack the leisure to follow the affairs of state and consequently did not possess the intellectual acumen to participate in the framing of law and/or service in the judiciary. Aristotle recognized that states in their constitutions differ and that in a democracy the husbandman or laborer, who may not be capable of actually ruling, may be capable of choosing his representative. Aristotle defended a principle that France, to its regret, ignored in its colonial period: "Citizenship cannot be extended to colonies or subject cities."

Citizenship and immigration policy are but surface manifestations of an underlying political philosophy. We find professors of political theory arguing that membership in a state does not matter in a fundamental way since we are all members of a global economic association with global obligations. The left typically favors, if not open borders, a liberal immigration policy and is not much concerned about national identity. From that perspective, there is nothing particular to defend. Advocates of what has come to be called "globalism" or "cosmopolitanism" are averse to anything that speaks to the exceptional character of Western civilization or to

its Christian source. John M. Headley, professor emeritus of history at the University of North Carolina, has countered the globalists with a compelling volume, *The Problem with Multiculturalism: The Uniqueness and Universality of Western Culture*.

Starting from the premise, in his words, "The current literary and intellectual fashions that prevail in the life of our campuses suggest that there is nothing unique or exceptional about Western civilization except perhaps its oppressiveness"<sup>5</sup> Headley shows that without an acknowledgment of its classical and Christian sources, Western civilization cannot be understood, even as it repudiates its past in favor of an Enlightenment-based secularism. "In our haste since the 1960s to learn about other civilizations and peoples beyond our own, we have lost our palate for the West, gorging ourselves upon otherness."<sup>6</sup> One finds that in departments of language, history, economics, and sociology, Europe and Western civilization are marginalized if not ignored. Drunk, if not drugged with Derrida, Foucault, and political correctness, none in our educational establishment today looks upon education as a moral transformation of the self in preparation for citizenship and even life. Sarkozy's dilemma, indeed one that faces the whole of Europe, remains how to integrate the immigrant into a society that the newcomer often disdains. ❧

## Endnotes

- 1 April 12, 2012, A-23.
- 2 *Monist*, Vol. 95 No. 1, 2012.
- 3 Paul Valéry, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, trans Denise Folliet and Jackson Matthews (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1962), p. 407.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 408.
- 5 John M. Headley, *The Problem with Multiculturalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012).
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 87.



# Europe Adrift: The Fate of Self-Government in Europe

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The Catholic University of America

“How can one consent to a regime that is not founded on consent?” is a question Pierre Manent raised in, *The City of Man*,<sup>1</sup> a volume much neglected on this side of the Atlantic. It is a question he readdressed in his *Democracy Without Nations*?<sup>2</sup> and one often raised, if not in the idiom of Manent, at least implicitly by others contemplating the future of Europe, indeed of Western democracy itself. *The City of Man* was written when the European Constitution was still under consideration. The proposed constitution, when submitted to public referenda, was not passed by all member states of the European Union, a condition of its adoption. Shelved temporarily it reemerged, after some tampering in Brussels, as the Lisbon Accord, which was not put to referenda but approved instead at the ministerial level.

Worthy of note is that on December 5th, 2012, Felix Unger on behalf of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts presented to Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, “A Manifesto for Europe.” A few sentences from that two-page manifesto are all that is needed to capture its drift: “Europe is a place of freedom, tolerance, and peace, conditions for the coherence of a multidimensional society. . . . Nationalism is the biggest opponent of the European integration project. . . . The European Parliament must be strengthened.”<sup>3</sup> Well, should it be?

Still a third view is that of Vaclav Klaus, former president of the Czech Republic: “The highest guarantee of individual freedom,” he writes, “is the democratic nation state, and in that sense a continental union, controlled by one central authority is an obvious danger.”<sup>4</sup> Democracy without citizens, he maintains, is an oxymoron; a nation is qualitatively different from a mere community of states. In his 2012 book, simply entitled, *Europe*, Klaus is primarily concerned with the present economic situation of Europe, but he is not oblivious to cultural decline. He speaks of the unbearable burden of the welfare state and the additional burden imposed on the economy by the environmentalists, by the absurdity

of fighting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and the counter-productivity of fashionable antidiscrimination measures. He is aware that over half of the regulations that affect European lives are made by administrators in Brussels.

These conflicting views point to an intellectual cleavage, between a traditional commonsense view of the *polis* and human association and a transnational or cosmopolitan view of citizenship favored by Brussels. European countries, Manent is convinced, are no longer sovereign, nor do they aspire to retain their identity. European nations are caught between their old identity and that of a new European Union (EU). In *Democracy without Nations*, Manent pointed out that after Maastricht the EU’s bureaucratic contrivance detached itself from the national political bodies that formed the union. The artifice, Manent finds, took on a life of its own. “Europe” crystallized an idea endowed with legitimacy, suppressing all others, and that idea became equipped and fortified with institutional mechanisms capable of reconstructing all aspects of European life. Instead of increasing self-governance, Europe’s new instruments of governance shackle it more with each passing day, promising an infinite extension that no one wills and no one knows how to stop. Enlightened despotism has returned in the form of agencies, administrations, courts of justice, and commissions that lay down the law or create rules, ever more meticulously contrived. In creating an uncontrollable bureaucracy, Europe, in effect, has institutionalized the political paralysis of democracy, so much so that its nations cannot control their borders let alone their economies and distinctive cultures. And yet, Felix Unger, speaking for like-minded members of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, urges that the European Parliament be strengthened. How to account for the discrepancy between what may be called a commonsense view of a nation and that of the cosmopolitan elite?

One answer is provided by Dorothy Sayers in her Oxford Union Address of 1947.<sup>5</sup> One may call it the tragedy of ignorance. The intellect of the West, she believes, has been so corrupted as a result of what she calls the “lost tools of learning” that the repudiation of traditional Western culture has gone almost unnoticed.

If we are to produce a society of educated people fitted to preserve their intellectual freedom amid the complex pressures of our modern society, we must [look to the past]. . . . Right down to the 19th century, our public affairs were mostly managed, and our books and journals were for the most part written by people brought up in the homes and trained in places where that tradition was still alive in memory and almost in the blood. Just so, many people today who are atheist or agnostic in religion are governed by a code of Christian ethics which is so rooted that it never occurs to them to question it. But one cannot live on capital forever. However firmly a tradition is rooted, if it is never watered, though it dies hard, yet in the end it dies.

Sayers makes it clear that classical learning opens one to the wisdom of the past. It is almost axiomatic: good books breed not only good citizens, but lay the ground for good leadership.

When did the West begin to lose its hold on the rationality that traditionally informed its culture? Some date it to the Reformation, others to the challenge of British empiricism, still others to the Enlightenment, notably to the thought of Rousseau, Hobbes, and Locke, whom Manent calls, “the great progenitors of liberal thought.” Then there is Montesquieu, whose *Spirit of the Laws* weakened the authority of the ancients, and Kant’s famous *Critiques* that emancipated faith from reason. A convincing account of Europe’s repudiation of ancient principles, classical and Christian, is to be found in Brad S. Gregory’s *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*.<sup>6</sup>

Manent himself places a great weight of responsibility upon the idealism of Hegel that imposes rather than finds order in nature. “Once the will,” explains Manent, “emancipates itself from nature, nature can no longer have value as a comprehensive framework in which one dwells and interprets human things.”<sup>7</sup> Once the intellect finds itself in a position of “causal sovereignty,” as with Hegel, it can interpret the world at will.

Manent finds that for any discussion of citizenship there is no better place to start than ancient Greece, where it was commonly recognized that no power other than virtue can sustain the body politic. Virtue is

to be understood here in a plural sense, as comprising both moral and the intellectual virtue. “Ancient conceptions of virtue,” writes Manent, “in both their pagan and Christian versions have man passing from a certain state of nature to a more elevated state.”<sup>8</sup>

Manent accuses Montesquieu of undermining this conception of human perfection by politicizing the virtues, reducing them to pragmatic instruments of the state. For Montesquieu virtue or good behavior is valued primarily in the interest of peaceful, social, and comfortable living. Far from being desirable in itself, virtue in the people is a desirable means to the protection of physical life.

In his attempt to understand the social and intellectual currents that run through Europe, Pierre Manent comes to no specific conclusion except that Europe, as it has many times in the past, stands in need of the grace of God. “Many upright minds and noble hearts continue to take their bearings from Antiquity and Christianity, . . . [from] those dead and dying stars, Athens and Jerusalem.”<sup>9</sup> Yet in the end, it must be acknowledged, “Modern man flees from the law that is given him and seeks the law that he gives himself. He flees the law given him by nature, by God, or that he gave himself yesterday and that today weighs on him like the law of another.”<sup>10</sup> ❧

## Endnotes

- 1 Pierre Manent, *The City of Man*, trans. Marc A. LePain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- 2 Pierre Manent, *Democracy without Nations: The Fate of Self-Government in Europe* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2007).
- 3 Felix Unger, “A Manifesto for Europe,” Annual Report of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Salzburg, Austria, 17–18.
- 4 Vaclav Klaus, *Europe: The Shattering of Illusions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 30.
- 5 Dorothy Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” Available as a pdf at: [http://freepdfdb.org/pdf/the\\_lost\\_tools\\_of\\_learning\\_by\\_dorothy\\_sayers\\_32443454.html](http://freepdfdb.org/pdf/the_lost_tools_of_learning_by_dorothy_sayers_32443454.html).
- 6 Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Revolution: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).
- 7 Manent, *City of Man*, 161.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 204.

# The Secular Leviathan

by Jude P. Dougherty  
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“**T**he secular leviathan” is the term Christopher Dawson used three-quarters of a century ago to designate the political and cultural left of his day. He was convinced that the secular leviathan is vulnerable only at its brain. Few would deny that, but from what vessel is the harpoon to be thrown?

Change will not come from the universities or from their acolytes in the media. The academic sector speaks with one voice, and global media amplifies that sound with incalculable effects. To the near exclusion of all other voices, the secular anti-Christian spirit has come to pervade the academic world. Those who dissent from the liberal *Zeitgeist*, with a few notable exceptions, find no home in major private and state universities in North America, although the situation may be somewhat better in Europe.

There was a time when the secular spirit was less aggressive and discourse was possible between defenders of the tradition and radical intellectuals such as Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell. An example is provided by the 1948 BBC Radio debate between Father Frederick Copleston, S.J., and Bertrand Russell on the existence of God. In that debate the moral implications of the denial of God’s existence are clear. Russell acknowledges the implications of his own position. He may have been a practical atheist, but philosophically he admits only to being an agnostic.

This debate is noteworthy because it is an exchange that is not likely to be duplicated on any major radio or television network today. For one thing, there would not likely be an audience. For another, today’s atheism is aggressive, advanced by a partisan media that allows no opposition. Some of the most widely followed BBC television mystery series gratuitously have their protagonists declare their atheism, as if that were a normal attitude in the populace with which the fictional character needs to identify. Universities who hire militant atheists do so in the name of diversity and are lauded for their openness. But one is not likely to find a representative of an Aristotelian realism or a disciple of Aquinas on those same faculties.

The lopsided hiring practices of major universities

was recently brought to the attention of the public by Mitch Daniels, president of Purdue University, who pledged to promote academic freedom upon taking office in January of 2013. Emails obtained by the Associated Press and reported by the *Washington Times* show that Mr. Daniels, the former governor of the state of Indiana, worked during his second term as governor to eliminate what he considered liberal breeding grounds at the state’s public universities. Those email messages show that he tried to effect a cleanup of college courses that he judged to be nothing more than “propaganda,” proposing also an examination of what is “credit worthy” within a university curriculum. Free-speech advocates were quick to call Mr. Daniels’s efforts “shocking.” Members of the faculty were reported to be to be “horrified” and “appalled” by his proposals.<sup>1</sup>

Catholic colleges and universities are not exempt from the secular *Zeitgeist*. Father Wilson Miscamble, a member of the Holy Cross community at the University of Notre Dame, in an interview given to the Cardinal Newman Society, speaks of the difficulty of controlling the curriculum in the light of the declared mission of the university. In that interview and in his recent book, *For Notre Dame: Battling for the Heart and Soul of a Catholic University*,<sup>2</sup> he attributes the loss of the university’s Catholic identity to the careless hiring practices of the 1970s and 80s, hiring practices that took place without regard for the university’s *raison d’être*. “Some faculty hired at Notre Dame have no interest in Notre Dame as a Catholic institution and some dislike its being a Catholic university. They have no enthusiasm for hiring Catholic scholars.” Father Miscamble goes on to say, “We require students to take philosophy and theology, but we have no sense that what they take in those courses is what could be described as a Catholic education.”

Is it possible, given the dominance of the secular, liberal, anti-Christian spirit that pervades the academy and a left-oriented and manipulative global media, to force a debate about some of the larger issues that confront Western culture? Vaclav Klaus, former president of the Czech Republic, surveying the current European situation writes, “There are many indications that the entire civilization of the West is in a political, economic, and social crisis.” He does not hesitate to place the blame on the eclipse of classical learning.<sup>3</sup>

In support of his position Klaus quotes Professor Petr Fiala, then rector of the University of Mesaryk, Brno, who in an essay entitled, “Europe and the Weakening of the Occident,” fears the broad consequences of an Occident in decline.<sup>4</sup>

How the secular *Zeitgeist* came to dominate the ruling elite is a story in itself, but this is not the place to provide even a cursory account. The question for those who view matters from the broad perspective of a Christopher Dawson or a Vaclav Klaus is this: how can the culture be revitalized to reflect the neglected Hellenic and Christian sources of Western culture? Can it be done without a radical return to classical learning and a dispassionate examination of the historic role that Christianity has played in the shaping of Western culture?

A generation ago, Mark Van Doren of Columbia University and Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer Adler of the University of Chicago promoted the value of a liberal education as an alternative to the progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey. Mortimer Adler produced a list of one hundred “Great Books of the Western World,” a list that began with Homer and proceeded through Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, and Shakespeare to selected contemporary authors. A handful of colleges adopted a “great books” curriculum, and there are many institutions that call themselves liberal arts colleges, but the great books and liberal arts colleges are no match for the universities that train the elite ruling class and their compliant jurists. There is a direct line between the liberal *Zeitgeist* of the university and public policy.

Daily we read of judges’ overruling referenda or staying laws duly passed by legislatures. The common-

sense choices of the electorate are easily voided by an activist judiciary ruling in the light of some abstract philosophical principle. Couple that fact to a monolithic media with an agenda and we find imposed on society such outcomes as same-sex marriage, late-term abortions, assisted suicide, and questionable immigration and voting policies, all unknown a generation ago. On both sides of the Atlantic we hear the refrain, “This is not the country I was born into.” This is cause for pessimism to be sure, but there are faint signs that even the secular, anti-Christian intellect is beginning to see the consequences of ill-conceived liberal policy. This is especial true when authorities are faced with the integration of Islam within Western societies.<sup>5</sup> It is now widely conceded that leftist social engineering at both the federal and local levels is responsible for the fiscal collapse of Detroit.

If these reflections lead to any conclusion, it is this: without fairness on the part of big media, the secular leviathan is invulnerable. ❧

## Endnotes

- 1 *Washington Times* (July 17, 2013), A-8.
- 2 Wilson Miscamble, *For Notre Dame: Battling for the Heart and Soul of a Catholic University* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine’s Press, 2013).
- 3 Vaclav Klaus, *Europe: The Shattering of an Illusion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 157.
- 4 Petr Fiala, “Europe and the Weakening of the Occident,” *Kontexty*, no. 4 (2011): 6.
- 5 Cf. Christian Joppe and John Torpey, *Legal Integration of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).





# The Cultural and Philosophical Roots of the Culture of Death and Abortion

by Arland K. Nichols

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**“If we ever once perceive the root and dig that up, we can be very sure that the branches will be permanently gone. But as long as the root remains, when we cut off the branches we do hinder the growing and keep it somewhat down, but they may not always fail to spring up again.”**

—ST. THOMAS MORE, *The Four Last Things*, 48.

**T**his past year marked an inauspicious anniversary—forty years of nation-wide abortion on demand since *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*. As tragic days go, January 22, 1973 is among the most devastating in our nation’s short history. On that hapless day the Supreme Court of the United States of America liberalized American abortion law by squashing the laws of the States and declaring abortion a legal right of women for virtually any reason and at any time. The disastrous effect on society, marriage, families, women, and of course, the unborn, cannot be minimized.

As we grapple with the sad reality of forty years of nationwide abortion on demand it is necessary to identify the roots of the poisonous vine that is the abortion regime and culture of death. If we will free our nation from the strangling vine, we must identify and properly uproot the whole plant—roots and all.

Blessed Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, identifies three distinct but interrelated roots: 1) the contraceptive mentality, 2) an exaggerated notion of freedom as absolute autonomy and finally, 3) a blindness to God.

## Abortion and the Contraceptive Mentality

**R**oe and Doe did not appear out of the blue. Rather, they were preceded by a cultural shift that would clear the road for abortion on demand and “facilitate the spread of abortion” (EV 13). It is necessary to come to terms with the enabling cultural trend that gained strength in the 1960s and continues to this day—the contraceptive mentality.

Prior to 1930 contraception was universally condemned by all Christian denominations, and Christians, by and large, followed their Church’s teaching. But during the twentieth century one denomination after another changed its teaching. American Christians rapidly embraced oral contraception upon its approval by the FDA and a new cultural mentality became ingrained in the American psyche.

Through the 1960s and 70s contraception became accepted by many as an essential element of married life. By the time *Humanae vitae* was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1968, the horse was well out of the barn and the outright dissent directed at the Church’s consistent teaching would all but burn the barn down. Catholics were immersed in the secular cultural trend and sexual intercourse had become inwardly focused on pleasure—children had little, if anything, to do with it. Sex was about freedom and fun! As a result, when a woman found herself pregnant in spite of her best efforts to prevent conception, children were viewed as an “accident,” the failure of contraception. Something went wrong.<sup>1</sup> This mentality would “prime the pump” and even necessitate access to abortion on demand.

As Blessed John Paul II observed in *Evangelium vitae*, “[t]he life which could result from a sexual encounter thus becomes an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception” (EV 13). A solution had to be found; abortion access was necessary to “clean up the mess.” Ironically, it is often claimed that contraception reduces the need for abortion, but the sordid history and abortion numbers that climb with contraception access

tell a very different story. The expansion or legalization of abortion in a country is almost always preceded by introduction or acceptance of contraception. Contraception is the proverbial Trojan horse.

The contraceptive mentality—a *de facto* tendency against life—has led to a wider acceptance of abortion. Blessed John Paul II recognized this: “the negative values inherent in the ‘contraceptive mentality’ . . . are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived. Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church’s teaching on contraception is rejected” (EV 13). Contraception is far from a solution to abortion, but is instead, intimately connected, “fruits of the same tree.”

Skeptical? Consider the telling words from the Supreme Court’s *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992): “Abortion is customarily chosen as an unplanned response to the consequence of . . . the failure of conventional birth control. . . . For two decades of economic and social development, people have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society, in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail.”

In short, the court maintains that abortion was a necessary fixture of American society because the intimate relationships of Americans are wholly dependent upon contraception, which often fails them. John Paul II was right when he wrote in 1995 that “[t]he close connection which exists, in mentality, between the practice of contraception and that of abortion is becoming increasingly obvious” (EV 13). Greater awareness of the obvious is necessary if we are to successfully reverse the cultural root, the contraceptive mentality that feeds the scourge of abortion.

## Right to Privacy and Absolute Autonomy

**T**he contraceptive mentality is deeply related to the second root of the culture of death. The Court argued that a right to abortion was a constitutive element of the so-called right to privacy. This impossible to define “right” represented the enshrinement of an impoverished belief in freedom as absolute autonomy in the American legal system.

In *Evangelium vitae*, Blessed John Paul II identifies the “individualistic concept of freedom” as the “begin-

ning” of the culture of death (19). John Paul notes that freedom as it is commonly understood exalts the solitary man to such a degree that freedom becomes license to do whatever is willed. Ultimately, this perverts and destroys freedom. John Paul writes, “when freedom is made absolute in an individualistic way, it is emptied of its original content, and its very meaning and dignity are contradicted” (EV 19). The dominant cultural belief is that freedom is freedom from moral norms instead of freedom for the good or freedom for excellence. As Saint Paul reminds us, slavery is the just dessert for such an abuse of freedom (cf. Romans 6:16-19).

Since we are social beings and live out our freedom in community, the inescapable result of freedom as absolute autonomy is that individuals are pitted against one another. Each man becomes in a sense his own god, the arbiter of good and evil, the sole and exclusive executor of his human estate. “This view of freedom leads to a serious distortion of life in society. If the promotion of the self is understood in terms of absolute autonomy, people inevitably reach the point of rejecting one another. Everyone else is considered an enemy from whom one has to defend oneself” (EV 20). Abortion, the argument is easily made, is paradigmatic of such an unfortunate definition of freedom.

With absolute autonomy, “rights” language is scripted and corrupted to serve as handmaid of relativism and individualism. As noted, in the United States this notion of freedom has been enshrined into law as a “right to privacy,” which is an ambiguous catch-all term that essentially allows individuals to do whatever they please as long as it can be deemed “private.” To be sure, the state does recognize some limits to this “right to privacy.” There are, however, few limits to privacy and autonomy with respect to the “social” issues. The “right to privacy” increasingly protects and promotes aberrant moral behavior in the areas of abortion, euthanasia, contraception, homosexuality, and pornography, to offer but a handful of examples.

The root of the societal emphasis on a right to moral and social evils (and the legal protection thereof) and the subsequent attack on fundamental rights, such as the right to life and religious liberty, is found, in part, in “the mentality which carries the concept of subjectivity to an extreme and even distorts it” such that the genuine rights of vulnerable or inconvenient populations are simply ignored or directly attacked (EV 19). This is made possible when the highest good to be protected is “privacy” or “absolute autonomy.” Since absolute autonomy pits individuals against one another,

it is the powerful alone who benefit from protection of their autonomy and privacy. The weak are left out in the cold.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of abortion where the powerful act as though the human being killed is not a human being at all. The powerful may also recognize the humanity of the embryo but claim that these embryonic human beings do not possess any rights. Or, it is often claimed that the right to privacy of the woman trumps the right to life of the human being in her womb. The unborn are already potential victims in any regime which has enshrined absolute autonomy as the highest value.

One need look no further than the *Roe v. Wade* decision for a prime example of this distortion as the Supreme Court refused to acknowledge and recognize the readily available scientific evidence pertaining to the time when life begins, claiming that it was simply not possible to establish. That the court deliberately remained ignorant—no small accomplishment given the scientific data already available in 1973—makes clear that even though ours is an age in which we are ready to claim our own rights, ironically and tragically we deny the most fundamental rights of the powerless when we perceive them to be an obstacle to our ability to act autonomously.<sup>2</sup> Blessed John Paul II observes that this tendency in contemporary culture manifests a Promethean attitude—we declare ourselves the arbiters of life and death.<sup>3</sup>

A year prior to *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, the majority argued in *Eisenstadt v. Baird* that the right to privacy necessarily entailed a woman's right to contraception. "If the right to privacy means anything" the Court claimed, "it is the right of the individual . . . to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child." The principle articulated above not only creates a woman's "right" to suppress her fertility, it also logically follows that a person should be free to no longer bear a child, and thus to terminate a pregnancy. *Roe* and *Doe* would follow a year later and declare that abortion was a legally protected means to terminate a pregnancy. These "reproductive rights" remain, in the eyes of the court, an essential element of privacy.

We face an all encompassing, moral, cultural, social, and political problem rooted in an inadequate notion of freedom. The view of the dominant culture and the courts is that freedom means absolute autonomy, which makes necessary a right to privacy that in turn entails a

right to make oneself infertile, and finally, to even take the life of a human being *in utero*.<sup>4</sup> It is believed that such actions are "legitimate expressions of individual freedom, to be protected as actual rights" but, as Blessed John Paul emphasizes, "[t]hese attacks go directly against respect for life and they represent a direct threat to the entire culture of human rights" (*EV* 18).

If we will protect authentic human rights, we must first reject and replace the modern notion of freedom, expressed so starkly in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and the mystery of human life." Such a relativistic and individualistic notion of freedom ultimately leads to the destruction of the innocent. Further, the culture of human rights is undermined by an exaggerated notion of freedom as absolute autonomy.

We must rehabilitate freedom, recognizing that it is indeed a gift to be used for both the benefit of the individual and the benefit of others.

## Blindness to God

Blessed John Paul II writes: "freedom negates and destroys itself, and becomes a factor leading to the destruction of others, when it no longer recognizes and respects its essential link with the truth" (*EV* 19). Since God is the source of all truth, it is blindness to Him that inevitably leads to societal support for acts which demean and destroy man.

When God is no longer known as lawgiver, judge and, indeed, Truth itself, man perceives freedom as the legitimate rejection of objective truths. What he declares arbitrary standards are, in fact, objective truths and universal norms.

John Paul recalls the objections of conscience and refusal of the Egyptian women to comply with Pharaoh's command to kill their newborn males. They choose the good out of fear of God and obedience to His law. Awareness of Him and knowledge of His law prevent the women from doing grave evil. "It is precisely from obedience to God . . . that the strength and the courage to resist unjust human laws are born" (*EV* 73). When there is no God, the choice to kill a newborn (or the unborn as the case may be) appears to be a legitimate choice of self-preservation. "Don't judge," we are told, "you haven't walked in her shoes. Only she can decide what is best for her." Self-interest and its handmaid, relativism, become the sole arbiter of what is worthy of choice.

When freedom, out of a desire to emancipate itself from all forms of tradition and authority, shuts out even the most obvious evidence of an objective and universal truth, which is the foundation of personal and social life, then the person ends up by no longer taking as the sole and indisputable point of reference for his own choices the truth about good and evil, but only his subjective and changeable opinion or, indeed, his selfish interest and whim (*EV* 19).

Having rejected objective truth and being beholden to “his selfish interest and whim,” man’s blindness to God has a profound impact on our understanding of the dignity of persons. “When the sense of God is lost” John Paul explains, “there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life” (*EV* 21). In the Catholic tradition, we tend to speak of dignity in two ways: human dignity and personal dignity.

Human dignity is either elevated by virtuous acts or it is lost by misuse of freedom and the choice for vice. Blindness to God inevitably diminishes human dignity as man uses his freedom for evil. In doing so he becomes less like God. Blindness also leads us to no longer perceive personal dignity, the permanent endowment of every person as an *imago Dei*.

The image of God is not seen in the unborn child, who is considered a burden or impediment to development, success, and the exercise of absolute autonomy. While blind, we move to one of two extremes: We attribute to the individual the status of god, thus reducing human dignity, and we demean the other by treating him as though he is just another animal whose life can be taken at will.

If man exalts his own freedom and at the same time fails to perceive in every human being an imprint of God’s divine image, attacks upon human beings who represent a threat to his absolute autonomy are inevitable.

Blindness to God leads “to an extremely serious and mortal danger: that of confusion between good and evil, precisely in relation to the fundamental right to life” (*EV* 24). It is only in God’s light and by recognizing that we are made in his image and likeness that the person can understand that he is neither beast nor God, and insofar as we treat him as one or the other we threaten and preclude the potential for good.

Once we head down this road we, individuals and society, become desensitized to both the evil we have habitually chosen and to greater depravities. This leads to further enshrinement of evils into the law and a gradual darkening of the individual’s ability to distinguish good from evil. “[I]n turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect for

human life and its dignity produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God’s living and saving presence” (*EV* 21). Unable to discern God’s presence, God is deliberately driven out of the public square, giving rise to abortion and other symptoms of the culture of death.

Consider as an example the recent court case in Reno, Nevada: 32 year old Elisa Bauer has the mental capacity of a 10-year-old and through unknown circumstances she became pregnant. Her adoptive parents/guardians of twenty-six years, Reverend Bill and Amy Bauer, were told by a doctor that abortion and permanent sterilization were in her “best interest.”

The Bauers took umbrage, recognizing that such actions were not in Elisa’s best interest either medically or morally. Both physical and moral health would be at risk if abortion and sterilization were forced upon her. Dragged into court, the Bauers had to fight so that Elisa would be permitted to carry her pregnancy to term. Otherwise, the Judge would secure a court-ordered abortion and sterilization because this was in her “best interest.” The legal team articulated the family’s religious objections to abortion, noting that the Bauers are a religious family and raised their daughter in the faith. The judge, the Honorable Egan Walker, responded that religion and concomitant ethical beliefs had no role to play in the decision:

In this room the religion of the situation is legally irrelevant. The Supreme Court has been clear. The founding fathers of our country who were all deeply religious men and woman . . . were very clear in the United States constitution and the Nevada constitution carries the same requirements that religious issues are not relevant to decisions under law. . . . What I’m saying is this is not a religious decision. This is a legal decision.

Here we see a judge who has deemed the religious beliefs of a citizen to be of no consequence. To his mind, religion, ethics, morals had nothing to do with recognizing Elisa’s “best interest.” The Bauer’s religion is characterized as “religious feelings” and such “feelings” are deemed “irrelevant” and even potentially harmful to securing Elisa’s well-being. Here you have a judge blind to God and insistent that those in his court be equally blind.

A strict secularism prevailed giving rise to an inadequate understanding of the person threatening her true well-being. “Consequently, when the sense of God is lost the sense of man is also threatened and poisoned” (*EV* 22). Judge Walker’s understanding of law leaves no room for religion, fosters intolerance toward religious belief and thus it allows him to seriously consider the possibility of a forced abortion and sterilization. This is a clear



example of John Paul's admonition that when blind to God, "[a person] no longer considers life as a splendid gift of God. . . . Life itself becomes a mere 'thing,' which man claims as his exclusive property, completely subject to his control and manipulation" (EV 22).

Unfortunately in the United States, such an example is representative of, current trends and not an exception. Increasingly we see God's name being removed from the public square. Removal of Ten Commandment monuments at courthouses, the suppression of prayer in public places, and the repeated omission of "under God" by politicians when quoting the Declaration of Independence are just a few examples of the exclusion of God in society.

"Once all reference to God has been removed, it is not surprising that the meaning of everything else becomes profoundly distorted" (EV 22). Such a distortion came into full view during the election of 2012 when at the national convention of the Democrat Party there was a groundswell and majority support for the removal of any mention of God from the entire party platform.

Perhaps it is no surprise that the very individuals who booed God and cheered for his removal from mention in the party platform are among the most ardent promoters and defenders of abortion and contraception on demand. Sadly such individuals believe and live as though God does not exist. Such a denial opens the pathway to a political agenda that represents a full frontal assault on the right to life and religious liberty. John Paul expresses his concern with great urgency:

We have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: the eclipse of the sense of God and of man, typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism, which, with its ubiquitous tentacles, succeeds at times in putting Christian communities themselves to the test. Those who allow themselves to be influenced by this climate easily fall into a sad vicious circle: when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life (EV 21).

The loss of the sense of God removes from man's purview the standard and measure of his action. The virtuous life is not chosen; indeed, it is not even perceived or recognized as a good. As virtue and beatitude fall away they are replaced by a myopic pursuit of efficiency and self-centered pleasure. Intolerance toward objective norms becomes standard.

The life that poses a threat to efficiency, or maximal state of pleasure becomes a threat and man declares himself the "author of life," choosing to take his own life

through suicide, prevent a new life from coming into existence through contraception, or taking the life of the nascent child in the womb (cf. EV 23).

Man must be conscious of God's presence—his face looking upon him. Only in light of the Truth, can human beings recognize the social evils in their midst and the sin that is chosen through the misuse of freedom. As a culture and even as individuals, we are blind to the gravity of the evils we bring upon the innocent precisely because we have not allowed his light of truth to shine down upon us.

Blessed John Paul II notes that King David is made aware of his sin precisely because he recognizes he has chosen evil before the eyes of God. "My offences truly I know them; my sin is always before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned; what is evil in your sight I have done" (Ps 51:5-6). David is capable of such perception because he has heard the word of God through the prophet Nathan.

If we will transform our culture of death, we must first restore man's sight so that he might see God and reject a vision of man that has no place for him. Blessed John Paul II believed that blindness to God was the most serious root that feeds the culture of death. "Thus it is clear," he writes, "that the loss of contact with God's wise design is the deepest root of modern man's confusion" (EV 22).

God is the source, measure, and goal of man and we will be blind to the egregiousness of the affronts to life that are characteristic of the culture of death as long as we remain so blind. This blindness, along with an impoverished notion of freedom and the contraceptive mentality, are at the root of a culture that is permissive toward affronts to the dignity of the human person. If we will transform our culture from a culture of death to one that cherishes the dignity of every human person these three roots must be uprooted and replaced by God's Truth, a Christian anthropology, and openness to new life. ✠

## Endnotes

- 1 See my "My Living 'I Love You'", *Ethics and Medics* 38, n. 2.
- 2 "At another level, the roots of the contradiction between the solemn affirmation of human rights and their tragic denial in practice lies in a notion of freedom which exalts the isolated individual in an absolute way, and gives no place to solidarity, to openness to others and service of them" (EV 19).
- 3 "On a more general level, there exists in contemporary culture a certain Promethean attitude which leads people to think that they can control life and death by taking the decisions about them into their own hands" (EV 15).
- 4 Some such as Peter Singer, Alberto Giubilini, and Francesca Minerva have even taken this reasoning to its logical conclusion and argued for infanticide or "after-birth" abortion.

# The Body Is Not a Mere Tool for the Expression of Feelings: How to Counter Dualism

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by Dr. Hanna Klaus

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executive director of the Natural Family Planning Center  
of Washington, D.C.

Most of the young couples I meet during Natural Family Planning instructions have never heard of dualism but at some level they are open to rejecting it. One of the classic forms of dualism was Manicheanism, according to which there are two powers – good and evil, or God and Satan – but they were equally balanced. Other forms contrasted the mind with the body. (See for instance <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/>.) Today’s dualists say that the human body is sub-personal, part of the world that the “person” is called to dominate, that one can manipulate or use one’s body to express any desires. While the culture treats fertility as if it were a disease to be isolated or removed chemically or mechanically from the body, those who seek natural methods of family planning obviously are open to learning to understand the couple’s cyclic fertility in order to make informed choices about when to attempt conception. Given that their choice flies in the face of the dominant culture’s practices, it is instructive to review how we arrived at this position.

Until the Church of England’s Lambeth conference in 1930 no religious body made serious efforts to separate sex from procreation, but Lambeth approved the use of then-available contraceptives for married couples. Pope Pius XI soon published *Casti connubii* which restated the constant teaching which prohibited interference in the conjugal act to make it intentionally infertile, but appeared to subordinate the love-enhancing role of the conjugal act to the procreation of children. Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* spoke to the two ends of marriage, but John XXIII found it necessary to appoint a commission which reported to his successor, Paul VI. Thirty-eight years after Lambeth Pope Paul VI had to

issue the encyclical *Humanae vitae* to remind his flock that the use of contraceptives was still wrong.

When *Humanae Vitae* was issued, the only known natural methods for the regulation of births were calendar and temperature rhythm. I had not learned much about either except that they were reputed to be ineffective. My first reaction was to think, “It’s good to know what we can’t do, Holy Father, but what *can* we do?” The question was intensified by a patient, a female student at our medical school who wanted to have sex with her fiancé but did not like the pill because it wiped out her affect, and neither of them liked barriers. As she was telling me all this, she suddenly exploded and said, “Why do I have to change myself around to have sex, why can’t I be me?” Parenthetically, neither she nor her fiancé were Catholic. I had no advice to offer other than waiting for marriage if she did not want to conceive before she graduated. Providentially, the first American publication of Dr. Billings’s book came across my desk soon after, and a charismatic couple and I prayed and cursed our way through it. But it proved that the Billings method was solidly grounded.

At the meeting of Billings Ovulation method teachers in Melbourne, Australia in 1978, John Finnis, professor of philosophy and ethics at Oxford, presented the intellectual history of what had become formal dissent to Paul VI’s encyclical. Among others, Professor Louis Janssens of Louvain had begun by advocating the use of the birth control pill during breast feeding because nature sometimes allowed ovulation during this time. Never mind that this drug passes through the milk into the baby and can cause severe damage – theologians are not expected to know these things. Janssens’s colleagues then prodded: if there was no theological contraindication to temporarily sterilizing a woman, what was the objection to permanently sterilizing her? He had to acquiesce. But since no method was beyond failure – after all, one does not add anything to the sexual act to make it procreative – why not allow fail-safe abortion as a backup? By this time Janssens realized

he had crossed a line and responded that the problem was physicalism; “We have to assume the biological into the human.” As I, a simple obstetrician listened to all of this, it dawned on me that we *don’t* have to assume the biological into the human. It is already there, and has assumed great dignity because of the Incarnation.

When the debate about abortion heated up in the early 1970s, I began to talk to groups about embryonic and fetal development. I don’t think I affected many abortion decisions. Later, realizing that conventional contraception had done nothing to reduce the abortion rate, I began to teach the Billings Ovulation Method of natural family planning, thinking that the natural method would be more acceptable than the fertility-suppressing contraceptives. In those days most of the advocates of NFP spent much time talking about the side effects of hormonal contraception, while few other than I spoke about the fact that barriers whether physical or chemical – seriously diminish the marital relationship by attempting to remove half of its meaning. In the process contraception reduces the partners to being means to an end, rather than being nonsubstitutable individuals joined in a covenant relationship.

Some of the women who came for instructions had a history of abortion. The majority of abortion-seekers in the 1970s were teens and young women. It dawned on me that the only way to stop abortion was to prevent the crisis pregnancy. How to do that? My high risk group of pregnant teens at St. Louis University Hospital was made up of girls 13 to 15 years of age. I handled their prenatal care, delivered their babies, and followed them after delivery. All had known about contraceptives and where to get them; none had used them. Why not? They were not articulate, but the gist was that they did not want to use them. Something about contraception repelled them.

Thinking about where these girls were developmentally began to shed some light. At puberty each person has a number of personal developmental tasks. Perhaps the most important among them is ego identity, of which gender identity is an essential component. When a girl begins to menstruate, she knows at some level that she is not only becoming a woman, but also that she is biologically capable of becoming a mother. She needs to integrate this understanding into her self-understanding in order to grow toward maturity. She is also at the stage of the personal fable which Erickson has described as thinking of oneself as being on center stage all the time. In that situation, there are no grays, only blacks and whites. If then the doctor, the “god in

white,” tells the girl that she needs to take a contraceptive to remove her fertility from her body, what might she “hear”? If she needs medicine against her fertility, her fertility is some form of sickness. But she considers it an important part of herself. So she either does not take her pill, or takes it irregularly, and conceives. Parenthetically, the current campaign to reintroduce the IUD is designed to override the daily choice needed to take pills correctly, suggesting that women still resist removing part of themselves from an act meant to signify complete, mutual self-giving and complete, mutual acceptance.

At any rate, I thought that if I could teach my girls how to recognize and accept their fertility rather than suppress it, they might behave differently. At the very least, they might refrain from intercourse during the time of recognized fertility. That was the beginning of Teen STAR® (*Sexuality Teaching in the context of Adult Responsibility*). Instead of limiting their sexual relations to the time of infertility, they abstained, period. Most virgins maintained their virginity, and half the sexually active girls stopped having sex. The program has been extended to males, and, interestingly, their behavior is similar to the females’. Once young people begin to understand and value their bodies, they no longer view them as mere tools for implementing the whim of the moment, but see their bodies as the physical expression of their person. Then they behave in ways that tell us that they value themselves by making deliberate behavioral choices rather than behave impulsively. That’s very countercultural, but after mastering Teen STAR® students in many cultures tell us that they have more self-confidence, make their own decisions, and easily resist pressures to engage in behaviors which they consider inappropriate.

Our culture considers the body as a tool of the person to carry out any desire. And if our own body can’t provide the necessary means, any other one will do. If a woman wants to start a family when her own ova are no longer fertilizable, donor eggs are sought. Genetic continuity is dismissed as unimportant by those who promote this practice. Yet, when insemination with donor sperm is proposed to an infertile couple, the husband who accepts does so most reluctantly. Studies have shown that children conceived by such heterologous sperm donation generally do not receive the same paternal guidance as children born from their biological parents. Moreover, consider that children often want to know their biological parents and take steps to learn their identity. Even previously closed adoption files may

now be opened in several states when the child reaches majority. It's all part of needing to know who we are, and part of that includes our ancestry.

Thankfully, for those who believe, the identity of the ultimate Father of us all is known. But to come to know him we needed him to come in a form where we could not only hear, but also touch him. So he became man, and taught us that we are all made in his image. Seen in this light both the dignity of the human person and the boundaries of attempts at change become clear. Our bodies are not simply tools for the expression of feelings or for the implementation of desires. We *are* our bodies. Blessed John Paul II referred to our body as the “quasi sacrament of the person” (*Laborem Exercens*) and our bodies and souls have equal value in God’s eyes. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that we will not reach our full perfection until we are reunited with our resurrected bodies in Heaven. How that will be accomplished, no one knows, but as St. Paul says,

“let him who made the promise see about keeping it.” In terms of assisting infertile couples, anything which assists nature is welcome, but nothing which replaces it (*Donum vitae*). But even prior to these legitimate activities in the service of spousal love, we need to value ourselves as gifts of God – ambassadors for Christ – and behave accordingly.

The medical literature is replete with studies of discontinuation rates of contraceptive steroids due to side effects, while an analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth by *Child Trends* (2002 to 2006-8) found that the only method of family planning whose use increased were the natural methods, and only among the 15-19 year age group. Clearly there is increased appreciation of natural processes. We *are* our bodies, after all. ✕

See [www.teenstarprogram.org](http://www.teenstarprogram.org) for information about the Teen STAR® program.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Sister Sandra Schneiders, *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World*. Paulist Press, 2013. 800 pp.

Reviewed by Anne Barbeau Gardiner

In her recently published book, *Buying the Field*, Sister Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M., declares, “Religious do not believe in the Church; they believe in the Church.” She explains that the Church for them is simply the “context of their faith,” not the “object.” Do they not profess each Sunday to “believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church”? Surely the Church in the Nicene Creed is the “object,” not just the “context” of their faith! She defends the mystery of the Resurrection in *Buying the Field*, but attacks the mystery of the Church. Nuns, she insists, vow obedience to God alone, not to the hierarchy. They choose to hear no other “voice” but that of God and God’s people.<sup>1</sup> Does she not realize that the government of the Church, instituted by Jesus Christ himself, touches on the essence of these mysteries?

According to Sister Schneiders, post-conciliar nuns have learned to distinguish sharply between “divine and ecclesiastical authority.” She calls it “idolatry” to acknowledge that someone can take “God’s place among his or her fellow human beings” and thinks Sister Anne Patrick is right to say that *Veritatis splen-*

*dor* has a “serious limitation,” because it conflates “the transcendent Truth associated with the Deity with the pronouncements of the hierarchical magisterium.” Can dissent fly any higher than this—to deny that the pope, in doctrine and morals, is the conduit of transcendent truth?<sup>2</sup> Of course, this is not news. Almost thirty years ago, in *Women and the Word*, the same author said that the “theological fact” that women share the identity of the Christ in their baptism shows the “heretical character” of the 1977 Declaration against the ordination of women.<sup>3</sup> Here a Catholic sister calls the Church’s teaching “heretical”! One may well ask where she is coming from.

Sister Schneiders explains that nuns like herself (she calls them “ministerial Religious”) are “true prophets,” in the line of Jeremiah, Amos, and Jesus, rather than flattering “court prophets.” For this reason they suffer “persecution” from the contemporary equivalent of the “Sanhedrin.”<sup>4</sup> In *Prophets in Their Own Country* (hereafter *Prophets*), she speaks of the Vatican’s methods in the “apostolic visitation” of 2009 as “violent” and “totalitarian if not fascist.” The “closest parallel” to the “visitation” that she can think of is the Inquisition, where she says those suspected of heresy were executed after refusing to confess under torture. She also finds an “instructive parallel” in the trial and execution of Jesus, who opposed “the

satanic domination systems in power.” Here she suggests that the Church’s government is part of the kingdom of Satan, and she keeps making this suggestion throughout *Buying the Field*. She asserts that Jesus died for liberating the oppressed, “especially those oppressed by religious power.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Sister Schneiders, dissent from the magisterium is justified because the Church is sinful. Yet as a Catholic she must know that the Church is the Bride of Christ washed clean every day in the sacrifice of the Mass. In *Beyond Patching*, she says it is a “non-negotiable” belief that the “hierarchy is the root of sinful structures.” It must be “eradicated” and replaced with a “discipleship of equals.” In *Buying the Field*, she laments that Vatican II left in place both the hierarchy and the pope’s claim to supreme authority. She then declares: “Hierarchy understood as sacralized patriarchy . . . is sinful.”<sup>6</sup>

Well, surely the Church without its 2000-year-old government would be an anarchy. In her view it is an “abuse of power” that under Canon Law (#590) nuns are supposed to obey the pope as their “highest superior.” She calls this an example of “creeping primacy,” analogous to the “creeping infallibility” that tries to make “ordinary Church teaching binding in conscience.” While the hierarchy has the “coercive power” to demand the obedience of nuns by threatening them



with expulsion from their congregations or with excommunication, she says, it does not have the “moral right” to do it. For such use of “coercion” she calls the institutional Church “the Babylon of ecclesiastical violence.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition, she justifies dissent because truth nowadays is a matter of votes. She asserts that Catholics who refuse to listen to the Church on contraception, women’s ordination, and homosexuality should have the last word. She wonders why nuns are asked to uphold teachings that the Church herself “cannot present persuasively enough to evoke reception by even the majority of Catholics.” In 1968, when Paul VI issued *Humanae vitae*, Catholics “by a very large majority,” refused to accept it, and among them were theologians who found the encyclical “incoherent and indefensible and its pastoral imposition destructive.” Far from mourning their disobedience, Sister Schneiders hails it as having brought about “moral maturation” and rejoices that Catholics learned to follow their “conscience even when it opposed Church doctrine and law.” Soon, too, they were ignoring obligations like Sunday Mass attendance and yearly confession. In *Beyond Patching* she is glad that contemporary Catholics can “stand on their own moral feet” and no longer equate what the pope declares with what is “morally good.” In *Prophets*, she calls these disobedient Catholics “faithful” and their conscience “well-formed,” when she writes: “The vast majority of faithful Catholic couples use contraception according to their well-formed consciences.”<sup>8</sup> She happily reports, too, that there has been a similar “non-reception” on the “impossibility” of women priests and the “intrinsically disordered” nature of homosexuality.<sup>9</sup>

For the past forty years, Sister Schneiders explains, Catholic feminists have been in dissent, taking anti-Church positions on “contraception, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, and abortion,” as well as on “women’s ordination.” They’ve been “busy being church” instead of trying to reform the Church’s teaching. In *Prophets*, she boasts that nuns have been on the “front lines” regarding marriage and procreation, homosexuality, women’s ordination and “other issues the Vatican would like to declare ‘settled,’ or ‘closed,’ or ‘forbidden.’” Where the hierarchy has not been able to persuade “the majority of the Church’s members” of their teachings, she contends, “there is genuine (even if forbidden and condemned) pluralism of belief and behavior, and even actual valid and legitimate (even

if forbidden and condemned) dissent in the Church.” She warns her fellow nuns that they “must resist” any Vatican attempt to coopt their “prophetic ministry” and to make them uphold Church teaching “against their own theologically well-grounded judgment, mature experience, and pastoral sensibilities.” Note well that she justifies the sisters in their private dissent from the Church on the basis of their being “well-grounded.” Grounded in what? A majority vote? Does truth depend on votes? She explains that the sisters help people “discern” (her favorite word) what God is asking of them, “which often enough cannot be fully identified with official teaching or policy.”<sup>10</sup> What kind of discernment would be opposed to the infallible guide in spiritual matters?

The author offers high praise for dissenters in *Buying the Field*, especially the “highly visible” ones who have supposedly endured “persecution” for defending “gay people, women called to ordained ministry, married priests, the divorced and remarried, or other victims of ecclesiastical repression.” She names her heroes of the resistance: Teresa Kane, RSM, Joan Chittister, OSB, Roy Bourgeois, MM, Roger Haight, SJ, Ivone Gebara, OSA, and Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ. Moreover, she credits them with the kind of courage Jesus had when he faced down “the oppressive Temple hierarchy.” She also lavishes praise on officially condemned groups like *Dignity* and *Catholics for Choice* for being “willing to suffer for the good of the Church.” One may well ask, what Church? In addition, she marvels at the “stunning courage of the LCWR” in supporting the “health care reform legislation.” In the course of these reflections, she presents the Church’s teaching on homosexuality thus: that God created some human beings “naturally morally deformed by objective disorder.”<sup>11</sup>

Autonomy is one justification for dissent that Sister Schneiders harps on. She insists over and over that nuns make their vows to God alone, not to Church officials. And so, they cannot serve as “agents of the institutional Church” any more than Jesus served as an agent of “institutional Judaism.” When they make a vow of obedience, it means only that they are committed to “discernment” of what God is asking of them, which may be “not only different from but opposed to what is ‘on the books’ of the official Church.” How do they discern that God’s will is not what the Church teaches? By listening to “all relevant voices,” by looking at the “signs of the times,” and then by acting “for the good of real

people in concrete situations.” While this “discernment” may lead to “dissent,” it is not to be interpreted as sinful disobedience, but rather as “mature critical engagement.” She contrasts “childish” obedience with “mature” and “adult” dissent. When a bishop tries to forbid a congregation from inviting a certain speaker, the sisters can forcefully and maturely resist his demand, rejecting such “blanket mind control.” Just as Jesus was executed for having reached out to the “oppressed,” so nuns must be ready “to remain faithful to God, as Jesus did, no matter what the cost.”<sup>12</sup> *Buying the Field* is filled with this hubris, Schneiders’s ongoing comparison of Catholic dissenters to Jesus Christ.

Once God’s will has been “discerned,” Sister Schneiders says, it is imperative for us to follow it rather than “to submit to human authority.” Here the Vicar of Christ is reduced to merely “human authority,” while private judgment is elevated to divine status. For centuries, she adds, Catholics held an “erroneous understanding of authority and obedience,” but now the “faithful” realize that “no human authority, including that of the pope, is absolute” and that what the pope commands is not “necessarily the will of God.”<sup>13</sup> Still, she concedes that whatever decision we may reach after private discernment will be fallible, so we must not think that God stamps our decision with “infallible approval.” Our choice may not reflect “objectively and substantially ‘what God wants done,’” but is just a “sincere effort” to reach the “best decision.” The upshot, then, is that she tells us to abandon an infallible guide in spiritual matters and to use a fallible guide—our own limited judgment. She admits that “discernment” may even cause us to commit what, in the teaching of the Church, is an intrinsically evil act, like arranging for an abortion: it is a “difficult process” by which I must decide “what I am called to do here and now, in response to the concrete situation in which I find myself,” such as whether to “procure an abortion.”<sup>14</sup>

In *Prophets*, Sister Schneiders warns that the hierarchy defines obedience as “total, blind, and absolute submission of thought, word, and deed, interiorly and exteriorly to office authority.” She argues that the Holocaust shows how “profoundly immoral” it is for anyone to “follow orders” mindlessly just because they come from “someone in authority.” The implication here is that the Church, the Bride of Christ, could actually command us to do something evil, like a fascist government. She urges us to go only this far and no farther in obedience—to

regard the Church's "authority" as a claim to be "heeded" and "considered." However, "heeding responsibly" may mean "declining" to comply. Catholics who have "moral maturity," she explains, regard the Church's official positions only as the "starting point of conscience formation," not as the "end." On the other hand, those who obey the Church's teachings are "magisterial fundamentalists."<sup>15</sup>

Sister Schneiders puts all her eggs in one basket: the ideology of feminism. She measures God, the Bible, and the Church by this one rule. First, the Fatherhood of God is only a "metaphor" which, if taken literally, "traps" the mind in an "untrue" idea of God and "an idolatrous divinizing of human maleness." (Strange that our Lord, when he taught us the Our Father, never warned us that we might be committing idolatry—a mortal sin—if we took his prayer literally.) Second, the Bible, "a male-centered account of male experience," can only be called "the word of God" as a "metaphor," for it is "biased" and "even erroneous" at times. Therefore, it must not be "invested with the inerrancy of divinity." Third, the Church, originally a "discipleship of equals," was perverted into a hierarchy by the age of Constantine. Thus, in her view, the Gates of Hell have prevailed against the Church, and as a result, the sacraments "are experienced as instruments for a sacralized subjugation of women."<sup>16</sup>

In their conflict with the hierarchy, feminist nuns experience a deep "existential anger" that Sister Schneiders feels is "not only justified but mandatory, just as was Jesus' anger at the oppressive hypocrisy of the clergy of his day." The "ministerial Religious" are prophets who must be ready for "persecution" and "even crucifixion."<sup>17</sup> Note here again how she compares Catholic dissenters to our Lord and suggests that any discipline the Church might apply to them would amount to the Passion of Christ. She reports that there have been discussions recently about whether the effort to remain "canonically Religious" in an "abusive" Church is "worth the suffering." She replies that even if a congregation should lose the approbation of the Church, the nuns can still "exist, profess and live the vows," because the laity would have no problem with a community that had lost its "canonical status." Only the Church would be "impoverished."<sup>18</sup>

Surprisingly, she finds fault with Vatican II, though she generally sees it as having put an end to 400 years of "sclerosis" in the Church. Her complaint against the Council is that in chapter 3

of *Lumen gentium* it upheld the hierarchy of the Church.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps her most audacious statement, though, is found in her rejection of *Dominus Jesus*, the Declaration issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on August 6, 2000. She dismisses this Declaration, approved by Pope John Paul II, as a mere reiteration of what Catholics formerly believed, and then pontificates as follows: the "obvious truth" is that "people were not good in spite of their 'false religions' but precisely because of what they believed and practiced."<sup>20</sup> Go figure.

## Endnotes

1. *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2013), 650, 445, 453, 360. [Hereafter *BF*]
2. *BF*, 619, 506-7, 725, n. 13.
3. *Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament and the Spirituality of Women*, 1986 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986), 4, 55. [Hereafter *WW*]
4. *BF*, 73, 541, 638, 648.
5. *Prophets in Their Own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2011), 9, 18, 75, 91. [Hereafter *Prophets*.]
6. *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, orig. 1991, rev. ed. 2004), 26-27 [Hereafter *BP*]; *BF*, 418, 429.
7. *BF*, 500-501; *BP*, 107.
8. *BF*, 509, 520-521, 546; *BP*, xvii; *Prophets*, 105-106.
9. *Prophets*, 106.
10. *Prophets*, 25, 105-6, 121.
11. *BF*, 431, 439, 491, 535; *Prophets*, 131.
12. *Prophets*, 23, 120; *BF*, 539.
13. *BF*, 524, 521.
14. *BF*, 586, 563.
15. *Prophets*, 94, 97, 120; *BF*, 566-67, 527.
16. *WW*, 25, 27, 37; *BP*, 38, 43, 52, 3.
17. *BP*, 107.
18. *BF*, 544, 498, 502-3.
19. *BF*, 602, 645-46.
20. *BF*, 629, 602.



Christoph Cardinal Schönborn. *Happiness, God & Man*. Edited by Hubert Philipp Weber. Translated by Michael J. Miller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010. 225 pp. \$16.95

Reviewed by Steven J. Meyer, *The University of St. Thomas School of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, TX*

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the current Archbishop of Vienna, former student of Joseph Ratzinger, and co-editor of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is an internationally well-known figure. Ignatius Press carries English translations of his books, a few of which have been reviewed in previous *FCS Quarterlies*. In one of his most recent works, *Happiness, God & Man*, Schönborn gives the reader a collection of miscellaneous writings (including homilies, lectures, commemorative and commencement addresses, and essays) relating to happiness and its apparent opposite, suffering. Given that it is a collection of disparate texts written for different occasions, this book is not a systematic treatment of happiness in the strict sense. There is no index, and the answer to the question "what must I do to be happy?" is implied, not systematically developed.

The book contains five thematic parts concerning happiness. The first explores personal happiness in two pieces: "What Makes one Happy?" and "Love and Friendship in Thomas Aquinas." Part II explores happiness in the Bible, including why Jesus singles out unhappy people, and asks how Europe can re-discover hope today. Part III consists of four homilies delivered at liturgies for four Austrian celebrities. These include a tribute to Otto von Hapsburg followed by three homilies at the funerals of Franz Cardinal König (Schönborn's predecessor as archbishop of Vienna) and former Austrian presidents Thomas Klestil and Kurt Waldheim. Part IV addresses the painful devastation of the failed ideology which promised happiness in the twentieth century. It consists of two speeches delivered by Schönborn at Mauthausen, Austria in 2005 and at Yad Vashem, Israel in 2007. Part V explores themes of happiness, love, suffering, trials, forgiveness, and the path to God in literature, namely, in the works of Gertrud von Le Fort, C. S. Lewis, and William Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*.

Perhaps some of the most delightful passages in *Happiness, God & Man* are those in which Schönborn reveals bits of personal information about his own faith. In "Happiness and Beatitude," for example, he claims that he forgot the contents of practically every sermon he heard as a child. Yet, one particular sentence of one sermon stands out in his memory, "We were created to be happy" (15, 16). About this statement he writes, "I remember precisely the strong interior feeling, the joyful surprise and consent, that this sentence evoked in me: Becoming happy, being happy, is not something forbidden;

it is God's most characteristic will for us, his creatures. I am destined for happiness, and happiness for me; it awaits me, and I may joyfully expect it. If it comes to pass, I am allowed to accept it" (16). This line, "We were created to be happy," besides being a thematic opening for the book, was delivered by an unnamed priest who was a "witness" to happiness, that is, a man who exhibited cheerfulness, kindness, and generosity despite his ill health. Schönborn explains that this man's joyful existence helped inspire his later decision to join the priesthood.

One might also find it interesting that Schönborn is a fan of the works of C. S. Lewis. In an essay titled "The Theme of the Battle in C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy," Schönborn briefly summarizes the plots of *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength* in order to focus on the journey made by Mark and Jane Studdock and how their quest for happiness could be like our own. In a second essay about Lewis, a previously unpublished manuscript, titled "I am going to my beloved," Schönborn examines the opposite of happiness through one of Lewis's most enigmatic novels, *Till We Have Faces*. About this novel Schönborn writes, "The story that C. S. Lewis tells is the story of a love that has not yet learned to let the beloved be free, one that confuses loving with having or owning. Orual's love for Psyche is above all self-love. Orual herself complains about her own loss, her pain. Because Psyche will not and cannot belong to her, Orual's love turns into hatred" (160).

*Happiness, God & Man* includes fifteen pieces, all of which are accessible to the layperson, and contains something for everyone who has ever wondered about the Christian perspective toward happiness and suffering. Its thoughtful essays could be helpful to teachers of such courses as social justice, anthropology, morality, liturgy, eschatology, Holocaust studies, and, of course, the literature of Gertrude von Le Fort, C. S. Lewis, and Shakespeare. May Cardinal Schönborn continue to bless readers with his work on humanity's important and enduring questions.



Cardinal Donald Wuerl, *New Evangelization: Passing on the Catholic Faith Today* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013). 91 pp.

Reviewed by Steven J. Meyer, S.T.D.,  
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One gets the sense of excitement in the recent book by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the current Archbishop of Washington, D.C., and the relator—also referred to as the moderator or general secretary—of the fall 2012 synod of bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. His book, titled *New Evangelization: Passing on the Catholic Faith Today*, gives a passionate and insightful reflection on the main points of the new evangelization in light of the conclusive fifty-eight propositions from the synod held in Rome from October 7-28, 2012. Preaching and witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ for the sake of salvation has been a part of the mission of Christianity since its inception. We were reminded of this at Vatican II, particularly *Lumen gentium* 17. Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi* reflected on a new age of evangelization in the Church. (Karol Wojtyla was the relator of the synod from which *EN* came.) Blessed John Paul II, considered the father of the New Evangelization, called for evangelization to be new in ardor, methods, and expression (17), and Pope Benedict XVI has made the New Evangelization a priority. Of this last point Wuerl writes,

I found it particularly interesting that, as the synod was closing, Pope Benedict announced that he was consolidating the work of the New Evangelization and catechesis in the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization. The Congregation for the Clergy had previously overseen the work of catechesis. Our own bishops' conference, in its reorganization a few years ago, did something along the same lines by creating a Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. All of these structural reorganizations are meant to highlight the continuity between and the overlapping of efforts of evangelization, catechesis, and outreach to those who have already been baptized. (17-18)

Wuerl's book is divided into eight chapters, each having summaries and a reflective piece to be used for personal or group study. Chapter 1 considers a whole range of activities as evangelization. Chapter 2 treats the context of evangelization today, namely, a growing surge of secularization, atheism and religious indifference. Chapter 3 addresses the root of evangelization as still about the *kerigma*, the core of the Good News. Chapter

4 reflects on the Church as the home for evangelization. Chapter 5 connects the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church as the founts for evangelization. Chapter 6 outlines the past, present and future of parishes as centers for evangelization. Chapter 7 sketches the theological components of evangelization, and chapter 8 advocates that the work of evangelization depends on all of us.

There are many points which I found interesting. For the sake of a review, I will limit myself to four. First, all evangelization begins with Jesus Christ and it is the mission for those who follow Christ to share the Gospel, *evangelium*, or Good News. This not only is the duty of priests and religious but also needs to be part of the mission of the laity. As the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, puts it, "The laity go forth as powerful proclaimers . . . when they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world" (*Lumen gentium*, 35, quoted on p. 16). Fittingly for the laity, the family is a special place where evangelization should take place.

Second, we live our faith in the context of a secular view of life. Wuerl writes, "Secularism—the total lack of religion and belief—is rapidly enveloping our society and Western culture, leading to generations of people who do not know the foundations of the faith" (30). Secularism offers a limited view for faith and has produced a couple of generations of baptized Catholics who do not know the foundational prayers of the Catholic faith. Wuerl does not say "generations of Catholics do not know what the Church teaches," but "generations of Catholics who do not know basic Catholic prayers." Secularization is a reality not only in Europe and the United States; it is a global phenomenon. Evangelization in Europe and America took place over centuries where the parish was at the center of social life for local Catholics providing a venue for passing on the faith. Religious sisters and brothers were more numerous, and the family was supported by society. Today the faith is imparted by sound bites over



semesters, slogans over explanations, and we are experiencing a decline in priests and religious vocations. The local parish is less important in a highly mobile society. Wuerl writes, in what now has become a well-known quotation, "It is as if a tsunami of secular influence has swept across the cultural landscape, taking with it such societal markers as marriage, family, the concept of the common good, and objective definitions of right and wrong" (25).

Third, the sacrament of the New Evangelization is penance, as suggested by Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Proposition 33 states that the sacrament of penance should return to the center of the Church's pastoral ministry. "The Light Is On for You" is a campaign in the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, highlighting the joy of returning to the sacrament of reconciliation. One wonders, what type of effects on parish life and spirituality would occur if Catholics were actively and continuously invited and provided a time for the sacrament of reconciliation?

Fourth, theology, especially the areas of theological anthropology, Christology/soteriology, and ecclesiology, lay key foundation stones for the work of the New Evangelization. As proposition 30 states, "Scientific theology has its own proper place in the university where it must carry out dialogue between faith and the other disciplines and the secular world. Theologians are called to carry out this service as part of the salvific mission of the Church. It is necessary that they think and feel with the Church (*sentire cum Ecclesia*)" (77). Wuerl writes, "While it is important that the New Evangelization be alert to the signs of the time and speak with a voice that reaches people today, it must do so without losing its rootedness in the great living faith tradition of the Church already expressed in theological concepts" (77-78 and 82).

*New Evangelization: Passing on the Catholic Faith Today* consists of important insights by Wuerl on the topic. The tone is enthusiastic as well as evangelical, in the sense that Wuerl relates information from a stance of faith, not as an impartial reporter. The book would work well as a text to read and discuss in both parish and university study groups. Members of the Fellowship should be aware of how the subjects of theological anthropology, Christology, soteriology, justification,

faith and reason, and ecclesiology have important connections, when properly understood, to the task of the New Evangelization. Normally, within a year or so following a synod of bishops, an apostolic exhortation is published on the topic. Wuerl's work can be read with profit both now and as a companion to the future apostolic exhortation on the New Evangelization.



Robert Spencer. *Not Peace but a Sword—The Great Chasm between Christianity and Islam*, San Diego, CA: Catholic Answers Press, 2013. 251 pp.

Reviewed by Steve Weidenkopf,  
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Robert Spencer has written twelve books on the history and teaching of Islam and has presented seminars on the subject to the U.S. Central Command, the FBI, and elements of the U.S. intelligence community. In this most recent work, *Not Peace but a Sword*, he asks the fundamental question, "Is cooperation with Muslims really a good idea?" His book centers on the differences rather than the similarities between the Catholic faith and Islam "and how in certain important ways we may *not* be able to get along, and indeed should not work closely together (even as we strive always to preserve harmonious relations)." Ever since Peter Kreeft's 1996 book, *Ecumenical Jihad* (and his 2010 follow-up, *Between Allah and Jesus*), it has been fashionable in certain Catholic circles to advocate for a closer cooperation between the Church and Islam at least in the arena of combating secularism. Indeed, the Church has already cooperated on the international stage with Islamic countries at the 1994 United Nations World Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and a year later at the World Conference on Women in Beijing. Proponents of Kreeft's strategy point to the similarities in certain foundational teachings between Islam and the Catholic faith, specifically to the understanding of total submission of one's will to the divine will. Advocates of this strategy tend to minimize the history of conflict and persecution of Christians under Islam as well as the current expression of violence in the form of terrorism. Spencer reminds the reader that Islamic *jihad* is not something confined to the past or

even a teaching exclusively embraced by "militant or radicalized" Muslims but is a core tenet of Islam as taught by its founder Muhammad. It is the pursuit of *jihad* that has substantially lowered the population of Christians in the most ancient lands of the Church. Spencer provides very startling statistics: the Christian population in Turkey in 1920 was 15 percent of the total—it is now 1 percent; in Syria the Christian population has fallen from 33 percent to 10 percent in the same time period. Perhaps a more chilling statistic is the decrease in Christians from the birthplace of Christ. In 1948 the number of Christians in Bethlehem was 85 percent—it is now 12 percent. Of course, the reasons for the decrease of Christians in these areas in the twentieth century is varied but past and recent history illustrate that Islamic persecution is the main factor. Spencer also provides a compelling argument that the interest for ecumenical collaboration against secularism is solely from the Christian side and this desire for an ally blinds Christians to the very substantial differences between the Catholic faith and Islam.

The main sections of *Not Peace but a Sword* focus on the differences in theology between the Catholic faith and Islam including the link with Abraham, the Trinity, Jesus, and morality. Spencer highlights the Muslim belief that Islam was presented originally to the Old Testament prophets but that Jews and Christians later perverted the true teaching. This is a crucial piece of information for Catholic apologists or those who wish to dialogue with Muslims, since this belief presents Christians as apostates and highlights that "virtually all Muslim attempts at outreach to Christians are actually thinly veiled invitations to accept Islam, not genuine efforts at dialogue and mutual understanding."

Islam shares many of the same characters and stories from the Bible and, for this reason, many Christians believe there is a shared foundation for dialogue. Spencer meticulously documents that the supposed similarities are, in reality, tremendous differences. Although the Qur'an echoes the Bible, there are major omissions. As an example, the story of Moses in Exodus is found in the Qur'an but not in its entirety. A key missing ingredient is the specificity of the Ten Commandments. The existence of the commandments is mentioned but they are not individually listed. In Genesis, God tells Adam the names of the animals instead of God allowing Adam to name them. More importantly, there is no understanding or teaching that God created



man and woman in the divine image, which profoundly impacts any discussion of cooperation between the Church and Islam on life issues. The most fundamental distinction between Islam and the Catholic faith centers on the Trinity. Unfortunately, that disagreement is based on an erroneous Islamic understanding of the Christian mystery. Islam believes the Christian Trinity to consist of three gods, Allah, Jesus, and Mary. Additionally, Islam does not conceive of God as a Father primarily because the concept of fatherhood is limited to the physical world in Islam. Jesus is rejected as the “son of God” in Islam simply because God does not have a wife. Indeed, the Qur’an rejects the Fatherhood of God no less than twelve times. Additionally, Islam does not view God as Love; we are not his beloved adopted children but rather his slaves.

Jesus is mentioned positively in the Qur’an and Muslims revere him; however, their understanding of who Jesus is differs immensely from Christians’. Islam embraces and borrows heavily from Gnostic and heretical texts (“gospels” of Thomas and Barnabas) and fashions an understanding of Jesus based on them. In Islam, Jesus is a divine being who visited earth and took on a fleshy garment (akin to Nestorius’s teaching). The Crucifixion is seen as an illusion and not an actual physical punishment that led to Jesus’ death. Quite interestingly, Muslims believe Jesus will return at the Last Judgment but will come to eradicate the Jewish and Catholic faith and restore and spread Islam throughout the world.

Many who advocate for close collaboration between Catholics and Islam focus their efforts on moral issues. However, this strategy is fraught with peril, as Spencer demonstrates that Islam has no conception of moral absolutes which stems from the example of Muhammad who justified his warriors’ destruction of a pagan caravan during one of the sacred Arab months when fighting was forbidden. Muhammad’s justification set the stage that “any moral law can be set aside for the good of Muslims.” As another example of “convenient morality,” Muhammad taught that lying is permissible in wartime and when a husband needs to keep peace with his wife in the house.

On the surface it appears as if Islam and the Catholic faith hold to similar beliefs about marriage, and in an age where the very definition of that institution is under attack, some may think it prudent to enlist the help of Muslims in fighting against the secular agenda. Spencer, however, illustrates the potential pitfalls inherent in such a belief. “The

Muslim understanding of marriage and sexual morality differs so greatly from the Christian understanding that it renders those similarities void of meaning.” Spencer defends his position by focusing on Islamic acceptance of polygamy, divorce, and child marriage. Polygamy is widespread in the Islamic world and even practiced in Western countries with large Muslim immigrant populations. The acceptance of polygamy in Islam originates with the personal example of Muhammad who had fourteen wives. Divorce is allowed in Islam for any reason but is one-sided. A man can divorce his wife at any time and for any reason—provided he waits for a period of three months to ensure she is not pregnant. Once more, the example of Muhammad provides justification for behavior considered abhorrent in Catholic tradition: child marriage. Muhammad’s favorite wife, Aisha, was six when they married, although consummation occurred at nine (he was fifty-four). Child marriage is still practiced in many Islamic countries, and Spencer cites a UNICEF report that indicates more than half of the girls under eighteen in Afghanistan and Bangladesh are married. Islamic belief and practice concerning polygamy, divorce, and child marriage, coupled with teachings on contraception (allowed), abortion (allowed), temporary marriages (practiced by the Shi’ites as a way to avoid fornication), and sex slavery, “reveals fundamentally misplaced principles about sex, marriage, and women such that any alliance based on putatively shared values will founder on the ineluctable fact that these values are not actually shared at all.”

Spencer’s book is a shot across the bow for those who believe an alliance with Islam against the forces of secularism is strategically viable (although, it may be tactically viable in certain circumstances). This does not mean, and Spencer makes this point repeatedly, that Catholics and Muslims cannot work together in areas of mutual concern. Indeed, he references the Church’s teaching on respect for other religions, specifically the Second Vatican Council’s statements on Islam in *Lumen Gentium* (#16) and *Nostra Aetate* (#3). While these documents urge Catholics to “forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare...” (*Nostra Aetate*, 3), Spencer correctly stresses the need for Catholics to enter into such dialogue with full knowledge of the very fundamental differences that exist between the Catholic

faith and Islam. As Spencer points out, “any attempt at legitimate and peaceful dialogue must proceed not by ignoring, denying, or glossing over differences but by confronting them honestly and charitably.” That is the focus of his book and he accomplishes it with aplomb.

The only slight criticism this reviewer can offer is the lack of a discussion on the development of the Church’s understanding of Islam. Although Spencer touches on this topic in chapter 3, when discussing the historical context of the Second Vatican Council and how the conciliar fathers’ view of Islam at that time shaped conciliar teaching, his work would benefit from a brief survey of previous theologians, papal and conciliar statements. Highlighting the fact that earlier Christian writings (from St. John Damascene and St. Thomas Aquinas and revived in the twentieth century by historian Hilaire Belloc) viewed Islam as a Christian heresy and not as a separate faith would greatly bolster his thesis.

Finally, the book contains, as a wonderful epilogue, the transcript of a debate (really a dialogue) between Spencer and Dr. Kreeft at The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in Merrimack, New Hampshire, on November 4, 2010. The debate centered on the question of whether “the only good Muslim is a bad Muslim”—meaning not that every Muslim is bad but that those whom the Western media describes as “good” or “moderate” Muslims are actually “bad Muslims” because their rejection of *jihad*, polygamy, child marriage, and so on is a clear violation of central and foundational Islamic tenants. The debate is quite lively and very informative. After reading the transcript, this reviewer wished he had been in attendance.



Ryan, Alan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. ix + 670 pp.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty  
The Catholic University of America

Having written books on the philosophy of John Stuart Mill, Bertrand Russell, and John Dewey, Alan Ryan knows whereof he writes. Ryan is professor emeritus of politics and a former warden of New College, Oxford. The book is a collection of thirty-three essays written over a period of more than forty-five years and, one must say they are all well written, given the turgid prose of much

contemporary philosophy.

The present collection begins with an introduction wherein Ryan describes his understanding of liberalism and offers some thoughts on the nature of freedom and of rights, property, and “social justice,” topics inextricably intertwined with one another. “Liberalism, as I understand it,” he writes, “is essentially a modern creed, but not simply a nineteenth and twentieth century one. Its modernity lies in the fact that it is, not in logic, but in fact, an offshoot of Protestant Christianity. . . . There is no economic or political reason why liberalism could not have arisen in Athens in the fourth century B.C., but Greek religion and ethics would have had to be very different.” Liberalism required a particular intellectual and moral outlook and ways of conceptualizing moral and political issues that existed in no ancient society but did not require any social, economic, or political structure. Contrasting ancient and modern notions of “tolerance,” Ryan finds that ancient religion was generally less concerned with orthodox belief than with proper ritual. Within Greek and Roman cities, tolerance with respect to logical belief did not extend to the performance of appropriate rituals, especially that of sacrifice. Blasphemy as an affront to the gods, on the other hand, was not tolerated because it was considered dangerous, on the assumption that, if permitted, the city might lose the good will of the gods.

In his attempt to define “liberalism” Ryan gives a short list of liberals that includes John Locke, Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton, T. H. Green, John Dewey, Isaiah Berlin, and John Rawls. He finds that they do not agree on many positions associated with liberalism, for example, the boundaries of toleration, the legitimacy of the welfare state, and the virtues of democracy. They do not even agree on the nature of the liberty that liberals ought to seek. Ryan also finds that liberal political concerns have altered over the past three centuries. Consequently, he believes that it is best to speak of “liberalisms” rather than “liberalism.” In fact, liberals, conservatives, and socialists can best be identified only issue by issue.

In a section entitled, “A Theory for Society” and following, he finds that “[t]he identity of societies and their political institutions is very largely a matter of collective memory. As an organized political entity, a society has internal and external obligations that are binding on it only because it has a persisting identity as that society.” What applies to society does

not apply in the same way to the state. “Society is a realm of both formal and informal associations, a realm in which public opinion plays some coercive role but leaves much scope for voluntary associations. In a manner of speaking, society is a plurality of smaller societies. The state, by contrast, is essentially the realm of coercively sanctioned coordination, and its essence is that it has no competitors or alternatives.”

Speaking of the state, Ryan reminds the reader that historically, liberals at one time have thought that liberalism was threatened by democracy and at another that liberalism entailed democracy. “What liberalism is always committed to,” he says, “is constitutional government.” How this is achieved has no fixed answer. If democracy is just a matter of majority rule, it is a contingent matter whether the majority will subscribe to liberal views. Liberal government of whatever type must be limited government. Freedom of conscience, freedom of occupational choice, privacy, and family rights all place limits on government. In the United States, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the tripartite separation of legislative, executive, and judiciary powers of government have preserved the limited government of its founding principles.

In Ryan’s account, liberalism places a high value on liberty and equality. Liberals in the classical tradition supposed that in the pursuit of racial and sexual equality, once a “level playing field” had been achieved, the field would remain liberal. Modern liberals, by contrast, believe that the playing field needs constant attention. A critic might say, a constant tinkering with human nature.

Among his many historical treatises one finds essays on Ryan’s contemporaries, Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper, and John Rawls. In addressing the liberalism of Karl Popper, to focus on one, Ryan finds that Popper’s philosophy of science not only supports his liberalism but also is in fact an expression of it. Popper, well aware that majority rule may be inconsistent with liberty, was forced, perhaps under the influence of F.A. von Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom*, to concede that although equality may be a good thing, it is excessively costly in terms of liberty.

One does not have to subscribe to Ryan’s brand of liberalism or agree with all of his textual interpretations to appreciate the insight provided in nearly every essay assembled for this volume.



John M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. xiv+442 pp.

Reviewed by Jude Dougherty,  
The Catholic University of America

The six ways are, in the order discussed, the Socratic way, the two Aristotelian ways (theoretical and practical), Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism, and Platonism. As Cooper observes, philosophy in antiquity was pursued not merely as an intellectual discipline but as a guide to the good life. No one, it was commonly thought, can lead a fully satisfactory life without the intellectual basis and motivating force provided by philosophy.

As traditionally conceived, philosophy is composed of three branches, metaphysics, natural philosophy (physics), and moral philosophy. Unlike physics and metaphysics, moral philosophy is a practical subject, one that concerns all men because it deals with questions of how one ought to live. With Pierre Hadot, Cooper explores the transformation of philosophy as a way of life into what it is today—a subject of theoretical study. In that discussion, Cooper makes three points: 1) major Greek philosophers from Socrates onward shared one fundamental assumption that post-Renaissance philosophers continuing to the present day came to reject, namely, the power of the inquiring mind to attain truth. 2) Within the Greek world, philosophy was conceived as the pursuit of wisdom and ultimate truth, indeed as the final and sole authority as to what is really true. 3) Greek philosophers also shared in common the view that only if philosophy is grounded in truth does it have the power of moving us to action. Cooper finds this basic principle expressed in the *Protagoras* where Socrates speaks of the psychologically decisive power of knowledge, the power of truth. In the interest of leading the good life, Socrates proposes that “we live our lives from some set of argued-through, rationally worked out, rationally grasped and rationally defended ideas about the world and our place in it.”

Cooper finds it important to note that for Aristotle ethical knowledge is fundamentally political. The *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* are practical treatises, he insists, and not at all theoretical or contemplative in character. It is evident for Aristotle that while happiness may be the highest good, it can be achieved only in a political community. Happiness necessarily entails virtuous qualities of mind and

character. Here Cooper brings out a facet of human nature recognized by Aristotle but not often discussed. “No one is to take part in the philosophical study of ethics and politics without first having, as a result of early upbringing and education, acquired good and virtuous habits of feeling. Without such intuitive feelings one is not open to grasping the reasons why one sort of behavior is a good thing for oneself and the other bad.” Absent the openness provided by early habituation, one will either not listen to rational explanation or not understand even if one does listen. Only by having these intuitive feelings is one ready to pay attention to what reason dictates.

The Stoics followed Aristotle in declaring happiness to be the end or highest good for which all actions are to be done. Happiness for the Stoic consists in living in agreement or in accord with nature. Living in agreement with nature means that one thinks the same way as the world itself under the governance of the world mind or the god Zeus. Living virtuously means that one thinks the same thoughts about one’s life, its circumstances, its successes and failures as Zeus himself thinks about them.

In the section on Skepticism, Cooper makes a number of interesting observations. The Skeptic firmly believes in the power of the intellect to achieve knowledge, but for him the quest for knowledge is endless. The Skeptic keeps investigating and must take care to remain a skeptic. He can’t fall into the negative position that truth is beyond the power of the human intellect to discover it.

Turning to Plotinus and other Platonists of late antiquity, Cooper finds that in common they held that to enrich and deepen our lives as rational animals, we must disengage ourselves from material pursuits and lift ourselves out of the sensual order. This is notably true in Plotinus, for whom the human good consists in actively living the life of intellect. From the Platonist point of view, “[t]rue philosophy establishes for us that we are pure intellects, and therefore have our own existence as elements within the intelligible, spiritual, true reality, turned in consciousness to it.” Philosophy teaches us that our good consists only in the active life of our intellects and in pursuit of those virtues that enable us to lead that life.

To the six ways of life in the ancient world, one could add Cooper’s own. Early in the book Cooper examines a way of life that is not merely philosophical, namely, that of Christianity. The early Church Fathers, he acknowledges, looked upon philosophy as a preamble to faith,

as the rational preparing one for revelation, truth not reachable by intellect alone. Cooper adopts the gnostic point of view, coming down on the side of Julian against Constantine.

Beyond doubt *Pursuits of Wisdom* is a compelling introduction to the perennial value of classical philosophy. Implicitly, it is a critique of Hume, Kant, and others, if not the Enlightenment itself.



Klaus, Vaclav. *Europe: The Shattering of Illusions*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. Xvii + 180 pp.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty  
The Catholic University of America

Vaclav Klaus, during his tenure as president of the Czech Republic, was undoubtedly the foremost senior European politician, who within the system forcefully spoke out in the name of liberty and democracy against the centripetal pull of Brussels and its ever-increasing detachment and alienation from the people who are affected by its European Union’s policies. He was equally forceful in his denunciation of the environmentalist movement, which he saw as economic foolishness. He was not alone, of course, or the first to speak out against the centralization of power in Brussels or the global warming hoax. Pierre Manent in *Democracy Without Nations*<sup>1</sup> and George Cardinal Pell of Australia, an international figure, notably early on called attention to the global warming hoax.

An economist by university training, Vaclav Klaus began his political career in 1989 as finance minister of the Czech Republic. Subsequent appointments led to his election in 2003 as president of the Czech Republic and re-election for a second five-year term in February 2008, a position he held until March 2013. As president he frequently warned his peers that because of increasing bureaucratic control from Brussels, the European Union was moving the Continent toward the one-party system that for forty years he experienced under the Soviet domination of Czechoslovakia. The ruling elite in Brussels, he finds, cannot tolerate opposition any more than the Communists.

Addressing the economic costs of the global warming policies pursued by the ecologists, Klaus was insistent: “It is no longer socialism that is the greatest danger to freedom, democracy, market economy and prosperity: it is the ambi-

tious, arrogant, unscrupulous ideology of environmentalism,” an ideology, he adds, that has nothing to do with nature or natural science.<sup>2</sup>

Klaus laments the naiveté of those natural scientists who strictly apply scientific principles in their own discipline but completely disregard those principles whenever they move into another field of systematic study. Scientists, he advises, should not be naive about the political effects of their publicly stated scientific opinions. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Marxists have effectively used humane and compassionate slogans, such as “caring for the disadvantaged,” “ensuring social equality,” and “fostering common welfare,” to advance their goals. Environmentalists are doing the same under similar noble-minded slogans, often expressing concern more about nature than about people, as notoriously exemplified by the Earth First movement.

The global warming movement, Klaus is convinced, has become a symbol and example of the clash between truth and propaganda. Much as in the case of Communism, environmentalism is utopian, establishing goals impossible to attain. Efforts to advance its programs typically can be carried out only through restrictions of freedom by the dictates of a small elitist minority over the overwhelming majority.<sup>3</sup> Klaus publicly entered the global warming debate with his *Blue Planet in Green Shackles*. In that book he argues that ecological central planning is even more dangerous than economic central planning. He is convinced that the drastic restrictions imposed by Brussels on European economic activity to meet the imaginary problem of global warming has drastically slowed the market economy. Convinced that there is no scientific evidence for global warming, he documents the slowing of the market economy through environmentalism. From a historical perspective, he claims that whenever Europe was free, without the straightjacket of social engineering projects, there was prosperity.

In *Europe: The Shattering of Illusions*<sup>4</sup> Klaus offers a forceful critique of the Eurocrats who dogmatically believe that “European integration is good,” no matter what it brings. What was initially a drive for closer economic integration was rational and enjoyed popular support in the original six countries that became the European Economic Community. The emphasis was on “economic” cooperation, a free trade area, and a common agricultural policy. But there soon became a drive for the abolition of national identities. Jean Monnet, one of the



founding fathers of the European Union, in a speech delivered as early as April 30, 1952, said, “Europe’s nations should be led towards a superstate without their people understanding what is happening.”<sup>5</sup>

At its founding it was believed that only a united Europe would be big enough and strong enough to compete with the United States and the Soviet Union. (China, India, and Brazil were not the considered competitors.) Klaus insists with Pierre Manent that “the highest guarantee of individual freedom is the democratic nation state.”<sup>6</sup> The European Union of today is qualitatively different from a mere community of states. “Under the pretext of eliminating wars and competing with other continents, we see the birth of a false internationalism, a freehand for ambitious politicians and the bureaucracy (thanks to the elimination of local political responsibility and accountability) and a new social order.”<sup>7</sup> Jacques Delors decades later would speak of “the soul of Europe.” The bureaucracy in Brussels would publish a map of Europe filled with the names of regions instead of states. Leonardo da Vinci thus became a European painter, not an Italian painter.

Klaus is convinced that the entire civilization of the West is in a political, economic, and social crisis. “The debt crisis, the gradual loss of competitiveness, the permanent decline in economic growth, the crisis of the welfare state, the increasing regulation in all walks of life, the festering of social conflicts, the problems of immigration . . . the omnipresent manipulation of the media and many other issues, all of these indicate that the word ‘crisis’ is the right one to use.”<sup>8</sup> The way out of the present European crisis is possible, he maintains, through the renewal of economic and civic freedoms. The way out is through “the alleviation of the unbearable burden of the welfare state and other equally unbearable burdens imposed on the economy (reaching its worst so far in the struggle against CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) through increased competitiveness and flexibility in all walks of life and business, through economic liberalization, deregulation and desubsidization.”<sup>9</sup> In the last pages of *Europe* he concluded, “Let us not look for inspiration in other worlds. When Europe was free, without the straightjacket of social engineering projects, there was prosperity.”<sup>10</sup>

With the completion of his term as president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus found a base in the Cato Institute of Washington, DC, from which he has lectured widely but not with the extensive media coverage that he so richly deserves.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Manent, *Democracy without Nations? The Fate of Self-Government in Europe* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Vaclav Klaus, *Blue Planet in Green Shackles: What is Endangered: Climate or Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Competitive Enterprise Institute, 2008), 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Vaclav Klaus, *Europe: The Shattering of Illusions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> As quoted by Klaus in *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Klaus, *Europe*, 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.



D. Q. McInerny, *An Introduction to Foundational Logic*. Elmhurst Township, PA: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2012. 420 pp., \$39.95.

*Reviewed by Catherine Peters, graduate student at the Center for Thomistic Studies, University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX*

D. Q. McInerny’s *Introduction to Foundational Logic* is a clear account of the foundations of logic and a solid introduction to the process of logical thinking. More technical than his *Being Logical: A Guide to Good Thinking* (Random House, 2004), the engaging manner of presentation McInerny displayed in his earlier logical study is evident in this one as well. He resists the temptation to present logic primarily in terms of the structure of arguments. Although the form of arguments is vital to logical thinking, argumentation can be fully appreciated only once the sources of logic are understood. Ignoring the foundation for logic, he warns, can “engender an arid, mechanical attitude” toward logic (182).

McInerny grounds logic in the three acts of the intellect and guides his reader from simple apprehension’s formation of ideas (chapters 2 through 5), through judgment’s joining of ideas to form propositions (chapters 6 through 8), to reasoning’s assemblage of propositions into arguments (chapters 9 through 13). He finishes this work by considering inductive reasoning (chapter 14) and fallacious reasoning (chapter 15). A brief appendix is included for each chapter for those who wish to delve more deeply into particular points referenced in the text. Each chapter is also accompanied by review questions and exercises that reinforce the most important elements of the

chapter. These review materials would be particularly helpful to those using this textbook in a course.

Beginning, as noted above, with a general introduction to logic as both a science and an art, McInerny discusses the three acts of the intellect in chapter 1. It is here that he discusses the relation between sense and reason, thus incorporating the philosophy of knowledge within his treatment of logic from the outset. Throughout his study, “arguments”—defined by McInerny as “linguistic vehicles that convey the efforts of the human mind to arrive at the truth of things” (9)—are the primary focus of this work. These preliminary points are thus made for the end of clarifying arguments, the heart of logic.

Chapters 2 through 5 examine the formation of ideas through simple apprehension, the first act of the intellect. McInerny’s expansive account of ideas references several points: the expression of ideas, the question of universals, the relation of ideas to signs, the distinction among univocal, equivocal, and analogous terms, the categories, definition, and division. Ideas must be clearly understood because they are the basic building blocks of propositions and, in turn, of arguments. McInerny alerts his reader to the importance of forming ideas well and of re-examining ideas, reminding us of Socrates’ claim that the unexamined life is not worth living. “What is an unexamined life?” McInerny answers: “one made up of unexamined ideas” (79).

Having introduced ideas as the “elementary stuff of human knowledge,” McInerny turns in chapters 6 through 8 to judgment, the second act of the intellect. It is this act that puts ideas together into propositions to determine their truth or falsity. He begins by presenting the first principles of human reasoning (identity, contradiction, excluded middle, and sufficient reason) before turning to the structure of propositions themselves. McInerny’s characterization of these principles as having “no truths antecedent to them” (106) encroaches on the domain of metaphysics, but he does not address the question of how logic relates to metaphysics. The topics he does address, though, are extensive, and include various forms of propositions, their quantity and quality, criteria for truth, truth tables, obversion and conversion, the square of opposition, and immediate inference.

Armed with the logical prerequisites of ideas and propositions, McInerny devotes the rest of this work (chapters 9 through 15) to reasoning itself, the third act of the intellect. It is from reasoning



that arguments finally appear. Following an introduction to reasoning and argumentation generally (chapter 9), he focuses on syllogizing specifically (chapters 10 through 13). Beginning with the anatomy of syllogisms, McNerny discusses their figures and moods, rules, and some variations (such as polysyllogisms, sorites, and enthymemes) before looking at conditional or hypothetical forms of reasoning. He subsequently considers inductive reasoning in chapter 14, including a particularly clear account of the four causes, the discovery of which is “the principle purpose of inductive reasoning” (299).

McNerny’s final chapter examines ways that reasoning can be flawed. The study of fallacies is important, he points out, because “in mastering logic . . . the first order of business is of course to know how things go right, but it is also important—and I am almost tempted to say equally important—to know how things go wrong” (327). He presents here, then, six general rules of syllogisms that when broken result in formal fallacies before ending with twenty-one fallacies related to language.

Although logic is always important for all areas of human inquiry, McNerny’s foundational presentation comes at a particularly suitable time in light of the 2011 *Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy* from the Congregation for Catholic Education. Addressing specifically the education needs of theologians, the decree asserts the importance of philosophy to human life itself, and reminds the faithful that “the Church strongly encourages a philosophical formation of reason that is open to faith, while neither confusing nor disconnecting the two” which trusts in “the capacity that reason has to serve the truth” (8). The decree explicitly states that logic and philosophy of knowledge are indispensable in the teaching of philosophy (*Norms of Application*, article 51.1 and 60) and calls for some instructors to be dedicated to this specialty (article 61). McNerny’s presentation of logic within the context of the three acts of the intellect offers a holistic treatment of logic united with philosophy of knowledge. In this way, the reader is led in the study of logic assisted by philosophy of knowledge, the two disciplines reinforcing and clarifying each other.

In brief, McNerny presents in his *Introduction to Foundational Logic* an extensive and clear account of the source and forms of argumentation. Grounding logic in the three acts of the intellect aptly unites logic with its natural companion, the philosophy of knowledge.

Throughout this work, McNerny shows his expertise in logic and his desire to share the art of correct reasoning with others, especially with students. In so doing, he helps his readers become “more proficient thinkers, and thus more proficient pursuers of truth” (183). Indeed, as he explicitly reminds us and implicitly models throughout this work, the motive of everything one does in logic should be a “steady, unvarying commitment to truth” (354).



Sally Satel, Scott O. Lilienfeld. *Brainwashed: The Seductive Appeal of Mindless Neuroscience*. Basic Books, 2013. 256 pp., \$26.99.

Reviewed by Dr. Mark S. Latkovic

SCIENCE & SOCIETY:  
SOME REFLECTIONS ON  
NEUROSCIENCE AND ITS USES

Noted psychiatrist and AEI fellow Sally Satel was interviewed by *USA Today’s* science reporter Dan Vergano on C-SPAN2, BOOKTV’s indispensable *After Words* program (see <http://www.booktv.org/Watch/14584/After+Words+Sally+Satel+Brainwashed+The+Seductive+Appeal+of+Mindless+Neuroscience+hosted+by+Dan+Vergano+USA+Today+Science+Reporter.aspx>) about her new book, *Brainwashed: The Seductive Appeal of Mindless Neuroscience*, coauthored with psychologist Scott O. Lilienfeld (Basic Books, 2013). Contrary to what the book’s title might imply, the authors are not “mindless” critics of the new brain science. Nor would it be in any way correct to say that they see no value at all in its use. Rather, they oppose the *mindless* ways it is being used in such areas as law, addiction, and marketing. And they bemoan the problems such use creates for society on many different levels. All this becomes clear in the course of the interview, as it is also clear in the book.

Here I would like to focus on one particular issue discussed in the interview as well as in the book, and offer some friendly criticism of Dr. Satel’s view. The issue is the relationship between the brain and the mind, and the implications our view of this relationship has for thinking and free will, and ultimately, the implications it has for how we understand the human person. Is the person a *free embodied spirit*? Or is he or she simply a *determined thinking brain*?

Thinking: brain states or  
spiritual power?

Early in the interview, Satel says, “We all know that everything we feel and think . . . ultimately has a neural correlate, is ultimately a product of brain activity. There is no question about that.” And later in the interview, when discussing the field of neurolaw and the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), that is, brain scans, which Satel admires but also is skeptical of, she claims, “We know that the brain enables the mind, which creates mental states.” She expresses the same point in the book by saying that without the brain there is no consciousness (see 154).

We can agree that the brain is absolutely necessary for consciousness, but it is not sufficient for it, since thinking is not an operation performed by the brain, even if we can grant that there are “neural correlates” to our knowing and willing. Thinking is a spiritual activity, not a material one, as St. Thomas Aquinas showed in the *Summa contra gentiles* (book 2, chapter 66; see also Benedict M. Ashley, *Healing for Freedom: A Christian Perspective on Personhood and Psychotherapy* [The Institute for Psychological Sciences, 2013], 183–203, for a treatment of Aquinas’s five arguments showing the immateriality of human intelligence).

Choosing: determined or free?

Then, toward the end of the interview, the subject of free will and determinism is taken up in the context of neuroscience. Satel states that most philosophers and neuroscientists are determinists and, she asks, if determinism is true, is it compatible “with being morally accountable?” Before answering the question, Satel argues (rightly, in my view) that it is one “for philosophers, not for scientists.” Although scientists can of course shed great light on the question.

Speaking not so much for herself on this question but for these deterministic philosophers, though seemingly sympathetic with their approach to it, Satel argues, “Many philosophers reconcile moral responsibility with determinism,” or as she puts it, they reconcile it with the fact that human “activity is the product of material brains.” This reconciliation is possible, according to Satel, if the following holds true: “We can modify those actions based on reason. . . . [So] even if we are determined, then it’s legitimate to hold people [morally] accountable.”

Of course, this argument seems to beg the question of the nature of reason itself.

If reason is but a byproduct of a material brain (and why wouldn't we think that if we equate the mind with the brain?), then this only pushes the question back further: How do we know that our reason itself is not in some way already determined to function in the way that it does, that is, as determined?

### Persons: conscious brains or embodied minds?

With Satel, we can both welcome and be wowed by the advances of neuroscience, while also questioning its tendency to "overreach." But we must also reject, as Satel would herself, the idea that the human person can be identified with his or her brain and brain states (see the epilogue of *Brainwashed*, 149-154). And yet, if our thoughts and feelings are but "products"—albeit very complex ones!—of the brain's work, it may be difficult *not* to affirm that Bob's brain *is* Bob. That does not bode well for those of us who want to uphold the dignity of the human person as an embodied being—a view founded principally on the affirmation of man having a spiritual principle, that is, an immaterial and immortal rational soul.

It is good to have doctors of such wisdom and courage as Sally Satel. It would be even better for us if she could be nudged to question the reigning materialism of the field of neuroscience and its popularizers in the media and elsewhere. At times, given her many legitimate and insightful criticisms of the uses of neuroscience today (for example, the brain disease model of addiction), she seems to come close to such a critique, but does not quite get there. Nevertheless, the interview and especially her book are well worth our attention amidst the anti-human reductionism of so much contemporary "mindless neuroscience."



Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom. *Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011. 286 pp.

Reviewed by Marie George

When asked to review *Clouds of Witnesses*, I was expecting a book on canonized Roman Catholic saints of Africa and Asia. Only one chapter of the book is devoted to a Roman Catholic, Ignatius Cardinal Kung, and his cause for canonization has yet to be opened. The book's purpose is, rather, to give a partial account of how the work

of specific individuals who were not foreign missionaries led to the amazing spread of Christianity on the continents of Asia and Africa in the last hundred years or so. The account it provides is intriguing, and my brief review here does not do justice to it.

I do sometimes question whether particular individuals Noll and Nystrom included in this volume fit the description of living "remarkable lives of faith and leadership in the midst of trying circumstances" (cover blurb). At the same time I find it fascinating how God was able to use less than orthodox individuals to spread Christianity in a way that foreign missionaries could not. Take, for example, William Wadé Harris. On the one hand, he accepted polygamy. On the other hand, while only hundreds converted to Christianity in the eighty years during which foreign missionaries had been active in the Côte d'Ivoire, in the ten following years, after Wadé passed through the country, the number rose to between 200,000 and 300,000. Then there is the Indian Sundar Singh who later in life became enamored with Swedenborg's thought and claimed that Swedenborg had spoken to him in a vision. Yet despite his heterodoxy, it is likely that "a Christian sadhu [religious mendicant] was living testimony that the Christian faith might be more than just an adjunct to Western power" (166).

The book is also fascinating insofar as it portrays appropriate acculturation of the faith and the difficulties of weeding out what in the culture is incompatible with Christianity. For example, the Anglican African Bernard Mizeki took heat for setting up his community in a sacred grove; but this was part of his strategy to fight native practices such as the killing of twin babies. Pandita Ramabai worked to eradicate the various abuses of women dictated by the religious-social structure in India; among other things, she founded homes for child widows who otherwise would be mistreated or even killed. Many other social transformations were initiated because the individuals in question lived according to the gospel. For example, John Chilembwe's wife, Ida, encouraged young African girls to delay marriage, educate themselves, and take greater responsibility for practicing their faith. Albert Luthuli was a leader in the peaceful resistance against apartheid in South Africa. Shi Meiyu was one of the first Chinese women to attend a coed medical school in the United States. Upon her return to China, she set up a nursing school where she trained some

500 female nurses both in nursing skills and in Christian evangelism, thus enabling these women to minister to both the minds and bodies of the thousands of sick people.

The difficulties posed to the spread of Christianity by the political climate of the day are another recurring theme in the book. For example, missionary activity in Africa and India was often linked with British imperialism, either in fact or in people's minds, and so homegrown evangelists needed to take a stand in regard to the British presence in their country. One approach was that of Byang Kato, who worked to establish African schools of higher education in theology so that African Christian leaders would be able to receive proper theological training without going abroad. China is another example of a place where politics posed an obstacle to the spread of Christianity. In the 1950s churches were faced with the decision of whether or not to join the national organizations for churches that were supervised by the government. Yao-Tsung Wu was a major figure in the national organization for all Protestant Christian churches. Wu believed that joining was the only way to keep Christianity from being destroyed. He was thus responsible for opening the door to the government dictating what churches could or could not teach. Wang Mingdao and Ignatius Cardinal Kung, on the other hand, each spent more than twenty years in prison for refusing to join the government-run religious coalition that Wu promoted. Mingdao started a movement of small, mobile, underground house churches that grew to the tens of thousands, allowing Christianity to thrive without government interference. (Wu's misguided decision to support the government oversight of churches is another example of how God brings good out of evil, as there are Chinese who would not have learned about Christ who did so through the government-affiliated churches.)

Noll and Nystrom are upfront about the book's shortcomings. Sometimes they had few or questionable sources. The authors also had to limit themselves to a relatively small number of individuals (seventeen) and so the book falls short of presenting a complete picture of the spread of Christianity in Africa and Asia, and perhaps presents a skewed picture of it. Despite these limitations, I recommend this engaging, well-written book to anyone interested in missionary work, ecumenism, and the history of the spread of Christianity.

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Rev. Joseph. W. Koterski, S.J.  
President of the Fellowship

*The Human Condition and the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Christian M. Rutishauser, S. J., Jersey City, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., (2013), hardcover, 258 pps.

## ERRATUM

On page 45 of the last issue (Volume 36: Numbers 1/2), the final line was inadvertently omitted from *A Layman's Brief Glance at Gaudium et spes* by Thomas W. Jodziewicz. It should read:

Finally, there is an enduring scholastic admonition that is fundamental to *Gaudium et spes*: *Omne quod est in aliquo est in eo per modum recipientis*: "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver." Accordingly, daily engaged in the modes or forms and tones of modernity, the laity are encouraged particularly to embrace faithfully this "beauty so ancient" while sharing it anew. There is never any alternative. But, thankfully, as we embrace our antimodern *dependency*, grace is ever abundant. ✕

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# Thomas More's *Utopia* and Catholic Social Doctrine

by J. Brian Benestad, Ph.D.  
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Thomas More's *Utopia*, properly understood, can make a significant contribution to the enrichment of Catholic social doctrine. More composed *Utopia* as a dialogue divided into Books I and II. To begin making the case for my assertion, I will focus on a small section of Book I and say nothing about Book II, which is a long description of the Utopian regime.

Book I reveals how author Thomas More places himself (henceforth, Morus) in the dialogue with his friend Peter Giles and a mysterious stranger by the name of Raphael Hythlodæus (meaning "expert in trifles" or "well learned in nonsense"), a native of Portugal. The setting of the dialogue is Flanders, where Morus had gone in the service of King Henry VIII along with the virtuous and learned Cuthbert Tunstall. They had the task of resolving a commercial dispute between King Henry VIII and Charles, the prince of Castille.<sup>1</sup> After a break in the discussions taking place in Bruges, a city in Flanders, Morus traveled to Antwerp on business and there received a visit from Peter Giles, whom Morus described as learned, virtuous, modest, and possessed of all the qualities of the perfect friend. Morus also says about Giles that "in no one is there a more prudent simplicity," no doubt thinking of Jesus' exhortation recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: "Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be prudent as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt 10:16).

After attending mass on a weekday, Morus ran into Peter and Raphael, who were talking in the street. Peter introduces Raphael to Morus and tells him about Raphael's renunciation of his patrimony in favor of his brothers, his traveling like Ulysses and Plato, his travels with Vespucci on three of his last four voyages, further travels through many countries with five companions, his particular interest in philosophy, and his extensive knowledge of Greek. After Peter finishes his introduction, the three of them retire to a bench in the garden (along with Morus's personal servant, John Clement,

who does not participate in the conversation) and begin to converse.

It would take too long to recount the twists and turns of the conversation which Raphael dominates. I will recount just the very beginning and the end. It begins with a few comments by Morus about the person of Raphael, followed by the promise to summarize the conversations that led up to Raphael's narration of the Utopian institutions and customs. The conversation gets underway when Peter and Morus urge Raphael to be of service to his fellow human beings by becoming an adviser to a prince. Morus, invoking the qualifications of Raphael's learning and experience, says, "You could best perform such a service by joining the council of some great prince and inciting him to do just and noble actions (as I am sure you would): for a people's welfare or misery flows in a stream from their prince as from a never-failing spring" (p. 13). Raphael denies that he has the ability to be a good adviser and then gives a few reasons why a king and his counselors would not be interested in what he has to say. Kings, Raphael points out, are mainly interested in the arts of war and in acquiring new kingdoms rather than governing well the kingdoms in their charge. The counselors are either wise enough to advise the king on their own, or they regard themselves as sufficiently wise. And without exercising good judgment, they approve whatever the kings' special favorites say, no matter how ludicrous.

Raphael seeks to prove his point by telling about his experiences in England at the table of Cardinal Morton, who was at the time Chancellor of England. Raphael told Cardinal Morton that England is making a serious mistake by imposing the death penalty on both murderers and petty thieves because the latter really have an incentive to kill the theft victim in order to cover up the crime. "Thus," Raphael adds, "while we strive to terrify thieves with extreme cruelty, we really urge them to kill the innocent" (p. 22). Morton's advisers disagree with Raphael's suggestion not to subject thieves to the death penalty, but Morton himself says that it would be worth a try. As soon as Morton reacts positively to Raphael's idea, all the cardinal's advisers enthusiastically do the same. This story doesn't prove Raphael's point, since the cardinal actually listened to

Raphael, although the advisers were closed minded. Raphael, however, doesn't advert to the significance of the cardinal's willingness to listen.

Raphael proceeds to give more evidence that no one in the halls of power would listen to him. Then Morus says to Raphael that he should not give advice, even if well-grounded philosophically, which he is certain would be rejected. Morus adds, "This scholastic philosophy is pleasant enough in the private conversations of close friends, but in the council of kings, where great matters are debated with great authority, there is no room for it" (p. 34). Morus argues that Raphael should be guided by a philosophy that adapts itself to the situation at hand. "If you cannot pluck up bad ideas by the root, or cure longstanding evils to your heart's content, you must not therefore abandon the commonwealth. . . . Instead, by an indirect approach, you must strive and struggle as best you can to handle everything tactfully – and thus what you cannot turn to good, you may at least make as little bad as possible" (p. 35). Sounding like Plato or Aristotle in dialogue with modern political philosophy, Morus concludes his argument by saying both seriously and with humor, "For it is impossible to make everything good unless all men are good, and that I don't expect to see for quite a few years yet" (p. 35).

One example of what Morus is talking about can be found in John Paul II's *Evangelium vitae* (1995). After discussing the immorality of laws permitting abortion, John Paul II discusses the possibility of a legislator supporting an imperfect law that would not ban abortion, but limit the number of authorized abortions. The great pope's judgment is that a legislator could support such a law in good conscience as long as his position on the immorality of all abortion was known (see no. 73).

Raphael has no interest in discussing Morus's proposal, but accuses Morus of recommending the telling of lies and of covering up the teaching of Christ. "Indeed, if we dismiss as outlandish and absurd everything that the perverse customs of men have made to seem alien to us, we shall have to put aside, even in a community of Christians, most of the teachings of Christ" (p. 36). Raphael then tells Morus that he would get nowhere with his "indirect approach," even though he had previously admitted using "ingratiating speeches" to get along with people in a land where Vespucci had left him and his companions. Then he adds, for good measure, that the only way to bring about real improvements in any regime is to abolish private property as the Utopians did. This proposal, which Morus roundly rejects with cogent reasons, sets the stage for Book II, which contains Raphael's thorough laudatory

description of the Utopian way of life. (Why author Thomas More would have Hythlodæus celebrate a flawed commonwealth is a subject for another day.)

This dialogue of counsel, as it has been called, could deepen Catholics' understanding of Catholic social doctrine by making us think about the way they could and should participate in the public square. May Catholics embrace Morus's indirect approach without violating the teaching of Christ and depriving a nation of the complete truth about love, justice and the common good? Does Morus's indirect approach sometimes lead Catholics to withhold teaching that could possibly get a hearing or do Catholics just misinterpret it? Does Thomas More's real life provide some guidance in answering these questions?

Here is the beginning of an answer. The setting of the dialogue seems to indicate where More the author stood. Recall that the real Thomas More did actually go on a mission in Flanders on behalf of King Henry VIII and the people of England. Others participating in the discussion on behalf of King Henry were men of learning and virtue and still opted to be royal advisers. More chose to be an adviser to King Henry despite the limitations on his freedom of speech. He became Chancellor of England in 1529 but resigned in 1532 when he realized that, if he continued in King Henry's employ, he was going to be put in a situation where he would be forced to act against his conscience. He eventually was put in such a position when he was pressured to recognize King Henry VIII as the head of the Church in England. He refused and suffered imprisonment and death.

More could not rely on some kind of indirect approach to save his life. Like Peter Giles, Thomas More remained prudent as a serpent and innocent as a dove. And Catholics are called to do the same today with full awareness that prudence and innocence cannot save a person from all distress and harm. The great Catholic author Alessandro Manzoni came to the same conclusion at the end of his famous novel, *The Betrothed*: "Troubles often come because we bring them upon ourselves, but that the most prudent and innocent conduct is not enough to hold them at bay; and that when they come, whether by our fault or not, confidence in God softens them and renders them useful for a better life." Despite his troubles, More never gave up this belief. ✠

#### Endnotes

- 1 Historical sources reveal that Thomas More and Cuthbert Tunstall actually did go a mission for King Henry VIII as part of a five-member group established by a royal commission on May 7, 1515.

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